ASU College of Education Professor Jeff MacSwan insists that officials at the Arizona Department of Education cannot report adequately on the effectiveness of English immersion programs due to a lack of good data ("Bad data poison language study," My Turn, Friday).

Interestingly, MacSwan and his cohorts used ADE "bad data" to argue in favor of bilingual education just a few years ago.

During the 1999-2000 campaign to end bilingual education for English learners, MacSwan insisted both in newspaper columns and public debates that "a careful look at the reports of the Arizona Department of Education reveals that children in bilingual education consistently outperform their peers in immersion on the Stanford 9 English reading test, at each grade level" (Arizona Republic, June 12, 2000). Likewise, state Sen. Joe Eddie Lopez talked on television about some amazing new system for collecting data at the ADE that had proved bilingual education was superior to immersion education in Arizona.

The truth is, only small percentages of bilingual education students were generally included in the Stanford 9 testing, due to a law that allowed test exemptions. On the other hand, schools tended to test all the English learners in immersion programs.

The exemptions are no longer allowed. The testing includes all students identified as English learners throughout Arizona. Thus, the test results are certainly more reliable and valid than when MacSwan quoted them as proof in support of bilingual education.

As the saying goes, "It depends on whose ox is being gored."

- Johanna Haver, Phoenix