Monolingual vs. Bilingual Education

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by

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The following journal discusses the complicated factors involved with educating students whose native language is not English. The problem exists in the disagreement about which type of education—bilingual or monolingual—is most effective for the second language acquisition of these second language learners. Although evidence could be found which support both types of education, it is my opinion, based upon my classroom observations, research, readings, and personal experience that bilingual education is the most effective method of educating these second language learners.

A main objective of this journal is to give the reader insight into the complexities in which a bilingual student experiences as a second language learner. The skill of learning a new language not only involves memorizing and pronouncing new words, but rather, using one's personal, cultural, and literary background to make connections with this new knowledge. Bilingual education perceives the child's native language as an asset to his/her education. It utilizes the child's native language to teach him/her basic concepts with the terms and language that the child understands. This method then causes the child to be more comfortable in his/her setting and helps strengthen his/her self-concept as a learner. In my opinion, for a child to have a strong self-concept of him/herself is one of the most important gifts that a teacher can pass on to a student. Once a student's strong self-concept is established, it has the potential to allow him/her to continue to succeed in a school, community, and family environment which, in turn, helps build a strong society.
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As a prospective bilingual education teacher, I feel that it is important to consider the challenges with which I will be faced in teaching students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). What I will be specifically exploring through classroom observations are two different approaches in teaching students whose native language is not English---English as a Second Language and Bilingual Education. The latter focuses on instructing students in their native language, and the former uses English to instruct LEP learners. Before comparing the two approaches, one issue that needs to be considered is: What are the objectives in teaching students with Limited English Proficiency? Is the goal for them to master the English language immediately, to use their native language only until they can master English, or to maintain their native language as they learn English? The state policy for schools which contain LEP learners simply specifies that schools need to provide an "equal" education for bilingual students, and each school district develops and implements a program which they feel will best meet their students' needs. Thus, there are many "bilingual education" programs throughout the United States. In order for me to attain effective teaching skills for LEP students, my intention is to avoid implementing a program which fails to meet the multifaceted needs of bilingual students. The results of the classroom observations, along with my personal experience as an LEP learner and insights about concepts which contribute to an effective bilingual education program, are included in the following journal. Through the information gathered in this journal, I intend to evaluate which approach to bilingual education is the most beneficial to students who have limited English proficiency, in my opinion.
September 7, 1994

After meeting with Dr. Carger about my capstone project, I was excited to begin learning about approaches of bilingual education that are the most beneficial to linguistically diverse children. We decided that I would read a variety of books and articles that pertained to bilingual education as well as perform a comparative study between two schools which practiced different approaches to bilingual education. One school implemented an English as a Second Language (ESL) approach, in which the children were instructed mainly in English. The other school implemented a bilingual approach, in which the children were formally instructed mainly in their native language.

I had mixed opinions about which program was best for the bilingual students. I believe it is important for students to learn and master English throughout their formal education years, and I thought that perhaps if they learned it right away when they were in kindergarten or first grade, they wouldn't have a problem developing their English skills for the following grade levels. I thought that it might be the same as a child whose native language was English were learning English skills in kindergarten or first grade.

One of my friends is student teaching in a classroom which contains 9 bilingual students (in a class of 22), most of whom participated in a pull-out ESL program each day. She admitted that it was difficult to communicate with the children regarding specific assignments and skills for which they were responsible. Nevertheless, she commented that the children translated for each other and that they were doing "fine" in the classroom. In fact, she was impressed by the rate at which one of the children was picking up English language skills of speaking, reading and writing. What I thought about as she said that was, "What kind of effect was it having on the social well-being of the child?" That is, is the student's rapid acquisition of English affecting his/her native language maintenance and skills? My friend took the standpoint of many educators today, "They are in the United States now, so they need to learn to speak English right
away." As a child with LEP, I would not agree with this statement because I experienced the negative impact which the bilingual education I received had on my native language skills. I realized that perhaps there wasn't a "best" approach to teaching LEP students, but I believe that discouraging the use of their native language would not be in their best interest.

Before I observed in the classrooms, I read some history of bilingual education in the United States. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968, under Title VI, first authorized use of funds for programs which met the special needs of LEP students. As a result of a 1974 Supreme Court case, Lau v. Nichols, in which 3,000 LEP students of Chinese ancestry were denied equal treatment and educational opportunity, schools were mandated to provide instructional programs appropriate to the needs of these students. The new federal guidelines after the Lau decision stated that schools which had 20 or more students with a language other than English as their primary or home language needed to provide an instructional program for linguistically different students. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court did not specify an exact approach that districts needed to use in order to provide a meaningful education for LEP students. In fact, school districts were strongly encouraged, but not required, to implement bilingual programs. The overall objective that federal policy mandates for bilingual education is "to establish equal educational opportunity for all children and to promote educational excellence" (Multicultural Education, 83).

According to the Act, the common objectives for language minority students in a bilingual education program are the following: "a) to attain high levels of proficiency in English, b) to achieve academically in all content areas and c) to experience positive personal growth" (Multicultural Ed., 86). To attain all three of these objectives simultaneously is the ultimate goal of bilingual education. The following are various
types of bilingual education programs and alternatives (for students whose native language is not English) which differ in their purpose and language use:

1) maintenance bilingual education -- Designed to provide instruction and language development in both languages, thus establishing full bilingualism.

2) transitional bilingual education -- Designed to help students adjust to English instruction by teaching them in their home language until they are able to exclusively function in English.

3) English as a Second Language -- Provides special instruction in English in schools where bilingual education is not feasible.

Educators are divided in their views on bilingual education. There are some who believe that students should "put their native languages aside" (Multicultural Education, 88) if they are going to succeed in learning English. Others state that bilingual education increases the "social disadvantage" and promotes linguistic and cultural pluralism that is politically and socially divisive to our country. Still others criticize the role that the federal government is taking in educational programs which promote maintenance of ethnic cultures and languages (88). An issue which requires attention by our society is whether or not the languages spoken by minority groups in the United States should be developed or eradicated.

The supporters of bilingual education express reasons why they feel it is important for students to utilize their native language in the classroom. For one, research suggests that development of the first language appears to provide the underlying foundation for development of a second language. Also, insisting that students learn English first (instead of formal instruction in their native language) can delay their academic development since a considerable amount of time is needed to
acquire a second language. Finally, bilingual education advocates feel that affirmation and acceptance of individual students' language and cultural heritage promotes academic achievement and development of a positive self-concept (Multicultural Education, 86).

After reading this section on bilingual education, I had a better understanding about how bilingual education evolved into federal policy. It seems so simple for me to think that all schools need to do is meet the special needs of these LEP students, but I realize that this is a controversial issue among schools today. What makes more sense to me is to incorporate a child's native language into their formal instruction of language because it would be the language in which they would best associate concepts, experiences and vocabulary. For the Supreme Court to not require school districts to have bilingual education seems unfair. Since they did not specify a particular program to provide for LEP students, there is not a consistent program among school districts. Thus, bilingual students who are not receiving native-language instruction might be having a more difficult time in learning English than those students who are instructed in their native language.

Some educators and policy makers argue that it is not the place of the federal government to promote the maintenance of other languages and cultures. This argument seems narrow minded because it is difficult to even define what the "American" culture is, since the majority of the people living in the United States today originated from countries outside of the United States. If an objective of the United States government is to provide equality for all races, perhaps they must reevaluate the means by which they are trying to achieve this goal. By discouraging the use of a native language in a classroom, they are hindering a student from formal development in that language and possibly his/her academic achievement.
I am beginning to read the novels. *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, *Always Running* by Louis Rodriguez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez and *Hunger of Memory* by Richard Rodriguez. The books represent actual experiences of people who were somehow affected by their limited English backgrounds throughout their child and adulthood. These books will account for a humanistic aspect in favor of bilingual education. Sometimes educators and policy makers get caught up in the qualitative facts and figures of how children learn best, but to examine the sociological and psychological affects that bilingual education programs can create provide evidence which suggests the need to improve the way school systems meet the needs of students with limited English proficiency.
The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

September 17, 1994

My first reaction as I read the preface to this book is that I could relate to the experience about which the author was writing. My family immigrated to the United States after my parents married. As a child, I wished that we could live in a home like the rest of the kids with which I went to school. We lived comfortably, but it was by no means an upper-class, valiant home that I would be proud to "show-off" to my friends. It was a home in which I felt very comfortable in with my family, but when others besides my family were involved, it was a different story. My parents did not discourage us from having friends at school, but family always came before friends. Thus, I spent most of my childhood years with my 4 sisters. We were rarely allowed to have friends visit our home because my parents felt that "American" values would begin to disrupt the close-knit, traditional family which we had established.

This is somewhat the case in House on Mango Street. Esperanza's family is important to her because she can relate to them through her language and customs. Other people, such as the neighbors or townspeople that weren't part of her culture seemed to be the outsiders of the book. For example, when she referred to "Cathy Queen of Cats" (Cisneros, 12), I got the impression that she felt inferior to her. It might have been because Cathy was wealthy, but it also could have been caused by the language barrier that she had and Cathy didn't. If her society was anything like ours now, it did not look highly upon people who spoke other languages because those people were not as "advanced" or "educated" as people whose native language is English. They are not considered productive citizens if they are not able to speak the language of the country and hold professional jobs.
Esperanza feels ashamed of her own culture because it seems as if it is not promoted at her school or on her neighborhood. For example, she comments, "At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver.... I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name like the real me, the one nobody sees" (11). I found something disturbing about how she compared the pronunciation of her name in English and Spanish, and she seemed to be more in favor of the way it sounds in Spanish. The way that they pronounce her name at school is probably not the way that she really wants them to pronounce it. Even though this may not seem like a major issue, it could be just one aspect of how Esperanza feel like she is "different" at school. One reason for this may be that the teachers at her school do not acknowledge or respect her language or culture.

Esperanza thinks that knowing English is an advantage because without knowing it, one doesn't get too far. In the chapter, "No Speak English," Esperanza talks about Mamacita, who never comes out of her house. Esperanza seems to think that one reason she does not leave home is because she is afraid to speak English if she comes out. Mamacita isolates herself in her home so often that she is not exposed to English enough to learn it. She simply limits herself to her Spanish music and stays upstairs. Esperanza sees this as a disadvantage to Mamacita because she is not doing anything constructive. Perhaps if she were to know English, Mamacita could get out more often, learn more English, and associate with others in the neighborhood.

Throughout the book, Esperanza describes her experiences of living in a home of which she is not particularly proud and a culture which seems to detain her from her wishes and dreams. She believes that she can succeed at her goals because she is able to speak English and exist as an active member of society. Although she sincerely cares for her family, she feels as if she needs to detach herself from her language and culture in order to have a typical "American" lifestyle for which she longs to live. At one point,
she begins to even consider that the life she is living now will not pertain to her future. "The Three Sisters" had an impact on Esperanza that she did not forget. One day, one of the sisters reminded her, "When you leave, you must remember to come back for the others ... You will always be Mango Street. You can't erase what you know. You can't erase who you are" (105). Esperanza didn't understand what the sister told her then, but as she reflected upon it later, the words became more meaningful to her.

For some time, Esperanza wanted to deny that she was from Mango Street, and that once she left there, she would never have to go back. Nevertheless, she realized that she could never really erase her past. She says, "...what I remember most is Mango Street, a sad red house, the house I belong but do not belong to ... I put it down on paper and then the ghost does not ache so much" (110). Now that she is an older, Esperanza does not enjoy recalling her past experiences on Mango Street. However, denying her past would be like forgetting those people who had such an influence on her life. For the sake of those that she loved and cared for, she will return to Mango Street. Nevertheless, Esperanza feels fortunate that she was able to leave her past environment once she achieved her goal of being "productive" in society.

She also realizes that some people will not have the choice to leave Mango Street, and these are the people for which she is determined to come back. There is a strong bond which she has with her cultural past that makes it worth maintaining. If every person who came to the United States forgot about their background, then we would all conform into one common culture. Having many cultures existing in the same society is the essence of multicultural society. Without distinct cultures, people would eventually feel as if they didn't "belong" anywhere but to a large mass of people.

This novel does an excellent job of emphasizing the importance of maintaining one's culture and showing the negative effect a non-accepting society can have on an individual. If we don't feel as if we belong somewhere, then we are bound to get "lost in the crowd." The way that I see this relating to younger children is how important it is to
emphasize the importance and relevance of their background so that they can feel important in a classroom environment. The way in which a child perceives him/herself can make an impact on the way he/she learns and functions in society as a whole. We as educators need to keep this in mind when we have a classroom of culturally and linguistically diverse students. We need to acknowledge and appreciate the background and actual experiences that they have in order to make learning meaningful and positive for them. By taking the experiences and knowledge that they already know and using them in conjunction with literary skills, they may begin to see their background as more of an asset than a hindrance upon their education and social adaptations.
Always Running by Luis Rodriguez

September 20, 1994

Always Running by Luis Rodriguez is an autobiographical novel about Rodriguez's life growing up on the streets of Los Angeles. Rodriguez shares the knowledge and wisdom that he learned first hand through being involved in the gang warfare as a teenager. His early life was one of much pain, yet triumph prevailed as he became older. He persevered through obstacles in order to leave the lifestyle which caused him great trouble, grief and failure. In his novel, he shares these traumatic experiences with his readers as a means of inspiring them to strive for positive focuses of life. Rodriguez manages to improve the quality of his life through the help of others, and he would like to compensate these efforts through positive messages for the youth of today.

The novel begins with recollections that Rodriguez has of his family moving from Mexico to Watts, California. For as long as he could remember, he had been entangled with the corruption of the gangs in L.A. Before he was even a teenager, Rodriguez was involved with gang activity, although the actual behaviors didn't seem to be anything out of the ordinary for him. He associated with people of his race (Mexican) because they were the people who he could relate to the best. He didn't have to act like someone that he wasn't, and he felt as if he had an identity within the "gang." Rodriguez and the boys that he grew up with in his life on the streets as a gang member were practically like family to him. He was able to learn from them because he felt comfortable with them and they accepted him for who he was.

Rodriguez did not feel comfortable in the schools that he went to, so his early educational experiences was not as beneficial as they could have been. Teachers considered him to be incapable of learning, and after a while, he convinced himself that
this was actually true. They placed him in lower tracks for ability grouping and did no put an extreme amount of effort into motivating him to learn and discipline himself to study. It is not surprising that he did not find an interest or need in going to school. His teachers didn't have high prospects for him, so he didn't feel the need to meet high expectations for anyone. He was comfortable with the place that he had in his gang because he felt needed and a part of the group.

One negative experience that he had with the educational system was that teachers underestimated what he could accomplish in school. When Rodriguez enrolled in a high school, the counselor put him in classes such as auto mechanics and shop. Without explicitly saying anything, the teacher was setting low academic expectations for him low. The counselor could have challenged him to other content area courses, but that didn't seem to be an option. Rodriguez could tell that he was seen as someone who would not reach high levels of intellectual learning and achievement. He needed to release the anger and energy that he felt toward a system which he felt was unjust to him.

Rodriguez, along with the other members of the gangs, showed their anger toward society in a way of persistent fighting for what they felt was just. Even though many of them didn't take much interest in school, they knew the language and culture of the streets because it is where they lived. They isolated themselves from the rest of society because they felt as if they were outcasts. They spoke a different "language" than those who were educated in schools. Their way of communicating with those people who they felt wronged them or were unjust to them was through drastic measures. It was frustrating to want to get a point across when no one from the other end is listening. The gang members felt helpless in their efforts of trying to fit in to the "mainstream" culture, yet they needed to get their message of anger and revenge to the rest of society.

How did the community leaders—police officers, teachers, principals, etc.—react to the gangs' form of communication? With just as much vengeance and revenge, yet with more power and authority than Rodriguez and his friends possessed. The reaction
of the people in society was to keep them away from the rest— isolate, imprison, suspend, criticize them. Instead of getting to the "heart" of the matter, society simply swept its outcasts "under the rug." One of the first things that society does is place blame on people or institutions to rationalize the "crazy" things that gangs commit. What rarely happens, such as in this case, is that they seek to find the aspects of society that might be causing this violence.

What becomes apparent in Always Running is that the lack of social interaction among all members of the community creates disrespect, misunderstanding, and disunity. There were a few instances when Rodríguez tried to set himself straight with the help of advisors and teachers, but to no avail, because he didn't feel as if the school was truly taking him seriously. The school wanted him to behave and participate in activities, but their incentives weren't motivating. After a while, it became a power struggle, with the school board always coming out on top. There wasn't an equilibrium with the communication that they had among each other. Rodríguez began to feel as if he wasn't accomplishing anything for himself. If he were to feel as if he was making a positive impact on society as a productive citizen, his attitude perhaps would have been different.

Being a productive citizen and contributor to his community was the goal for which he ultimately strove. He could see the impact that he could have upon the gang, but when he dealt with other members of society, he felt as if he wasn't given a fair chance. It was almost as if he were doomed to fail since he was first in his gang at age 11. Even though he mostly sought the gang for support and unity, it was perceived that he purposely joined a gang which would cause harm to others. Violence wasn't really what he wanted. What he did want was the feeling to be needed.
Hunger of Memory, an autobiographical novel by Richard Rodriguez discusses the experiences that Richard Rodriguez had with bilingual education. When I first read this novel in 1991, I had mixed feelings about the issue of bilingual education. The way in which the novel was presented in class, there was somewhat of a bias which did not advocate bilingual education. Even though both sides of the position were presented, the instructor seemed to supply more evidence supporting the immediate use of English people come to the United States. After reading it for a second time, I have gained insight about why the author feels the way he does about bilingual education.

Richard Rodriguez grew up in a home where Spanish was the predominant language. He was very close to his family and spiritual faith in the Catholic Church. Although Richard felt comfortable in his family by speaking Spanish and partaking in Mexican culture, he realizes that Spanish is the "private" language that he uses in the home. English, on the other hand, is the predominant "public" language, one that he needs to know in order to succeed in the society. He does not agree that his home language should be used in the school because it belongs in the home. Although it is a challenge for him to speak English at first, he knows that it will serve him well in the longrun.

Rodriguez became a successful writer as an adult. He now considers himself to be a middle-class American who has the opportunity to enjoy all of the advantages and luxuries of a typical American life. Rodriguez explains that as a result of mastering the "dominant" language, he has now become a public man. No longer is he a "socially disadvantaged" child, alienated from the public view, that he was known as years before. He feels confident that his assimilation into the society has made him the successful man.
that he is today. He couldn't have achieved what he did had he not been given the opportunity to learn English and progress in school just like the other children in his classes. Nevertheless, Rodriguez also admits that the change that he experienced in his life was one of losses as well as gains.

In this novel, he exposes the reader to personal accounts of the closeness of his family, which is considered very personal. What Rodriguez continually mentions is that the success that he experienced in his public life affected the closeness that had been established within his family. No longer were he and his brothers and sisters isolated from the rest of the "gringos" because of a language or cultural barrier. They were now part of the "American" culture which they had felt apart from years before. When they came to visit their parents during the holidays, the tradition and closeness was apparently not how it had been when they were children. Now, all of the children were successful adults. They didn't speak Spanish at home as they had done before because the sons and daughters-in-law did not speak Spanish. Richard's mother knew that one day her children would be successful and rich, but it broke her heart to realize what affect this had on them as adults.

Becoming assimilated into another language and culture has a very high price in maintaining that culture within a family. Rodriguez commented on how his parents used their "visitor" voice even during family functions with the husbands and wives of his siblings. For people of another race to enter into a family causes somewhat of a disunity among the original family structure. All that Richard's mother wanted for he and his siblings was to survive in the new society that they came to as Mexican immigrants years before. They always referred to people outside of their family as the "gringos," the "other" people. His parents were hoping to raise their children in an environment which focused solely around the family, but the children soon realized that they weren't going to get very far in this country by merely staying with the family and their home language. Richard's parents held a solemn silence and had a sadness within themselves because
they saw the next generation— their own children— assimilate into a culture and society instead of their own. Richard, specifically, had reached a point in his life where there was no turning back on his past. What he was as a boy is now long gone; he is now a new person.

The story that Richard Rodriguez tells about his family and personal life is one that I can associate with my own family, but it is also one that I do not completely agree with. He feels that a child's home language belongs in the home, not in the schools. The language that should be instructed in the dominant language of the society in order to advance and be empowered in that society. I agree that a child needs to learn to speak English in this country because in most states, it is the dominant language. It is a shame, however, for children to lose the knowledge of their native language in the process of learning another one. When a child comes to school, the language which they speak and the culture to which they belong is only part of the "big" picture of their identity. How a child feels about themselves in the classroom is influenced by the way they are perceived by the teachers and other students in the classroom. If they are given the impression that their native language and culture do not belong in the classroom, then they feel disadvantaged, and they begin to feel self-conscious about their identity. On the other hand, if they are told that their native language is important and is worthwhile to them in their learning process, they realize that they are being acknowledged and appreciated, and they feel better about themselves. It is not impossible for LEP children to learn English right away in a classroom. However, when one considers the affect that this could have on their native language, I feel that the matter is worth reconsidering.

A program which places students in classrooms in which they are not able to use their native language to communicate their ideas and develop a positive identity seems to place an injustice on the students. If this program were to be implemented in programs throughout the country, cultures and languages would soon be eradicated. If that is what this country expects from its citizens, then perhaps that is what education is achieving for
the government. Under the Constitution of the United States, this country fosters the existence of other cultures living together through peace, justice and equality. Thus, what the education system needs to be doing is preserving, rather than eradicating, the languages and cultures of all children. Insisting that children learn a language in place of another conveys a message that one language is better or more beneficial than the other. In my opinion, this should not even be an issue. What should be an issue is: Which language would be most beneficial for the student to use while they are learning to be literate, productive citizens. Ultimately, I think it is necessary that citizens of the United States establish a language by which they can communicate with one another. However, the means by which students establish this common language affects the way they perceive school, society and, most importantly, themselves. If we as educators do not take into consideration the long-term affects that can occur by eradicating a child's native language from their education, as seen in *Hunger of Memory*, then we are committing an injustice to the preservation of various languages and cultures in our society and to the self-image of children who must sacrifice their native languages to achieve success.
How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents by Julia Alvarez

October 5, 1994

Julia Alvarez's How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents describes the personal experiences of a family who immigrated to the United States in 1960 from the Dominican Republic. I enjoyed the genuine openness of the author's style because it sets the stage for a story that touches the hearts of many immigrant families such as my own. Just as in Richard Rodriguez's novel, the author reveals many family insights which normally should not leave the home, but which add an authentic quality to the context of the story. Some of the experiences which the author describes are one which I have personally experienced and can relate to very well.

One of the many trials which the four sisters in the family face is their use of Spanish in their new country. They realize that they must now speak the language of the United States, and to speak Spanish is considered inappropriate to use in their public lives. They associate Spanish to the close-knit family life which they have, so they would prefer to keep their native language inside of their home. This association of their native language was not directly expressed to them by Americans, rather, it was an insinuation which they gathered from the attitudes of our society. When immigrants venture to the United States, the common trend is to assimilate into the "American" culture. They feel that in order to be accepted by society, it is necessary to conform to American values, customs and attitudes. The concept of preserving their native country's culture in the United States is uncommon; in fact, I would be inclined to say, "inappropriate."

As often as it claims to, our society actually does not foster a multicultural society. If one thinks about the people living in the United States, there are a select few who could say that they are native Americans. Otherwise, the rest of the population is
comprised of people who immigrated to this country at some point. Thus, I believe that the "American" culture has evolved from a system of values, beliefs, customs and languages which were established by people who weren't truly native Americans. This culture is one which people have assimilated into once they entered the United States. They believe that once they become citizens of the United States, they are now Americans and need to conform to this set of beliefs. If they don't, then they are considered to be unpatriotic or not truly "American." The Garcia sisters were caught in a bind between their native culture and the "American" culture. It seemed to them as if they needed to decide which one they would abide by now that they lived in the United States. They wanted to be accepted by the American people which they met, but they didn't want to abandon the love that they carried for their homeland in the Dominican Republic and their native Spanish language.

Through the course of the novel, the sisters struggled to "fit in" with the people in the United States, but their longing to belong to their native homeland still lingered inside their hearts and minds. They could not forget their family and experiences that they had in the Dominican Republic, but it was the price they were paying for living in the U.S. In the U.S., the lifestyles of women were different from that in their homeland. The sisters were curious to explore the role of being independent, educated women in the United States since this role did not exist for women in the Dominican Republic. Once the sisters became accustomed to the American ways, the price that they were paying by being away from their homeland and language became less drastic. It seemed as if their background would become a part of their past which they would leave forever now that they lived in the states. However, as the sisters discovered, this separation was not as easy as they had expected.

By giving up the culture that they once had in their homeland, they are severing the characteristics which make them unique women that they are. When the girls become adults and think back to their past in the Dominican Republic, they reminisce about the
people they once were and how much their ways of living had changed once they moved to the U.S. As much as they wanted to erase their background from their current life, they realized that they couldn't. The culture that was a large part of them when they grew up will be with them—at least, in spirit—throughout their lives. The adolescent phases of conforming to the American society seem insignificant to the mature adults that they grew to become.

The theme which transpires through How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents is the concept of having an identity. There was a period when they questioned their identity because they weren't exactly sure about who they were, how to act, and how to speak when they first immigrated to the states. If they would have had the will to preserve their native identity when they first arrived, they might have been more confident in their behaviors as they grew up. In our society, this would be difficult, but not impossible, to achieve. At times, it seems as if we call ourselves a "multicultural" society merely because there are people of different cultures living together. If our society were to foster a culture which respected and preserved the cultures and languages of other races, it would then be appropriate to call it a multicultural society in the true sense of the concept rather than what we often claim it to be.
CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

In order to get a better idea of how bilingual education functions in actual classrooms, I performed a comparative study in two schools, one which contained an ESL pull-out program (School A), and the other which provided a self-contained bilingual program (School B). I observed each classroom three times, for periods of 2-3 hours each visit. During the observations, I noted the following aspects of both classrooms: the setting, bulletin boards, teacher's desk, use of children's literature, cultural aspects. In discussions with the teachers, I also learned what type of testing the students receive to be placed in the program, parental involvement and input, and the teachers' educational background.

School A
October 28, 1994

I first observed at the school which contained the ESL pull-out program. The school has one ESL teacher for the entire building for grades 1-5. The teacher's role as the ESL teacher includes a few aspects:

1) A few times a week (times vary) the ESL teacher visits classrooms which have bilingual students who need help with their homework and other in-class assignments. These are students who have been involved in the ESL pull-out program previously, but no longer need as much personal assistance with content area material. She does not take these students aside during class, but she does follow-up with their progress on an individual basis.

2) For about a half hour each day, the ESL teacher meets with a group of students from grade levels 1-5 who are pulled out of their regular classroom for special
English instruction. These students are ones who, according to their language test results, have just recently been placed in the ESL program. The teacher commented that these students are usually new to the country and have little or no English language skills and vocabulary. These students are given informal instruction in English through means of literature, speaking and writing.

3) Once a week, the teacher visits classrooms which contain bilingual students and teaches the entire class a lesson in Spanish. Generally, the extent to which Spanish is used includes reading a book in Spanish, having a discussion about the book and giving directions for a guided activity afterwards. The teacher does alternate the use of English and Spanish throughout the lesson, but the focus is for the children to be exposed to Spanish words and cultural characteristics.

I had the opportunity to observe the teacher in two of these roles. The first setting I observed was when she taught second a lesson in Spanish.

October 28, 1994, 9:15 - 10:00am

The second grade classroom in which the ESL teacher presented the lesson had a clam, relaxing atmosphere. The children's (approx. 25) desks were positioned at the front of the classroom in three large groups along with the teacher's desk, which was positioned on an angle at the very front of the class. There was a large carpeted area at the back of the classroom for activities, including reading. Bulletin boards were neatly decorated, and some of the children's work, such as stories and art projects, hung from each wall. In one particular section of a bulletin board, there were exhibits in Spanish. For example, the teacher posted laminated posters of numbers, colors and shapes labeled in both English and Spanish. In addition, there was a bulletin area labeled, "Fiesta Time," and it contained pictures of ethnic dancing and cultural attire from the bilingual students in the classroom.
The teacher read *Anasi the Spider* in Spanish. Afterwards, she asked them context-related questions about the story and asked them to respond in Spanish. When the students did not know a word in Spanish, she asked the bilingual students to help the other students. The teacher also alternated her use of English and Spanish throughout the lesson in order to ensure that all students understood the story and questions. The answers were generally fact questions about the book, so they were not intended for the students to infer complicated conclusions from the book.

After reading the story, the teacher introduced the class to a factual book about spiders. The class had been involved in a spider unit, so both books corresponded to what the regular classroom teacher was doing in her classroom. The ESL teacher found an enlarged picture in the book and reviewed the parts of the spider (in Spanish) with the class. She then asked them to go back to their desks, where she would be leading them in a brief art activity.

Once the students were back at their desks, the teacher began the art activity. She handed each of them a manila colored piece of construction paper and asked them to place their crayons on their desks. As soon as they did this, she called their attention to the chalkboard and asked them to watch her trace an outline of the spider; once she was finished, they traced the same pattern on their paper. She continued to draw various parts of the spider using different colored crayons and had the students imitate her drawings. By the end of the activity, the class had a picture of a spider with all of its parts in different colors.

Throughout the activity, the teacher gave directions mainly in Spanish, and she used English when it appeared that the class was not comprehending her directions. As the class was doing its art activity, the teacher asked them to name the colors she was using in Spanish. Most of the kids could identify the colors if they were given its name in Spanish, but very few could recall the exact word independently. The students were not given formal instruction in Spanish, they were merely exposed to Spanish words.
As I was observing the actions, behaviors and attitudes of the children during the lesson, I noticed mixed reactions. Most of the students seemed to be excited about having the ESL teacher in their classroom and being spoken to in Spanish. I heard others, however, comment, "Why do we need to speak Spanish?", "or" I don't understand Spanish, why can't you just talk in English." Overall, I think the teacher did a good job in meeting at least one of the objectives for the lesson, which was to expose the entire class to Spanish literature and words. Some of the English-speaking students do not understand why they need to be given Spanish lessons since they are not evaluated on them and the rest of their school instruction is in English.

October 28, 1994, 10:00-11:15 am

The rest of the morning was supposed to be spent observing two more classrooms in Spanish. However, there was an assembly at the junior high that the classes needed to attend. The ESL teacher and I continued to talk about the ESL program that the school provided for LEP students. In this school, the students first took the Language Assessment Scales test to determine whether they needed additional help in English. Once they took the test, their parents could choose whether or not they would participate in the program. The ESL teacher explained that generally, the kids who are new to the school are provided with the pull-out program, whereas the students who have been attending the school for a couple years are just provided with extra English help in their regular classrooms. The main objective for this ESL program is for the students to learn English as quickly as possible.

According to the ESL teacher, the enrollment of the bilingual students has been rapidly increasing over the 12 years that she has spent at the school. Currently, there were approximately 75 students who needed some form of linguistic assistance. She mentioned that there was a possibility that the school would be having a self-contained bilingual classroom(s) next year because of the large amounts of students who needed
special instruction in English. The kindergarten level already had a bilingual classroom, so it is possible that there will be more bilingual classrooms at the school in the near future.

During this visit I also met the ESL aid who helps the ESL teacher with some students that are pulled out of the classroom. The aid is currently in training to be an ESL teacher, so she doesn't go out to the classrooms as the ESL teacher does. Instead, she stays in the ESL classroom and helps students who need special help in reading and writing English. The ESL teacher usually helps the most recent students enrolled in the program, and the aid helps those students who have been in the program previously.

School A
November 1, 1994, 12:15-1:00pm

In the second visit that I had to School A, I had the opportunity to watch the ESL teacher teach the students in her own classroom. The classroom was a regular sized classroom with a divider in the middle of the room; the ESL aid helped students on the other side of the divider. A few large tables were adjoined in the middle of the area, and there was a large carpet square off to the side. I noticed that there were only a few posters, which were pictures of other countries, on the walls, and the teacher had a homework chart near the front of the room. One entire side of a wall contained shelves of books, audiocassettes, worksheets, class books, resource books, and content-area books (math, reading, spelling, etc.) Both the students and the teacher sat together at the large tables during the lessons.

There were nine students in the group, eight of whose native language was Spanish and one whose native language was Indian. The group worked on letter sound drills during this class time. The teacher had a pile of cards with pictures on them, and the students needed to identify the object in the picture and tell what letter sound the picture began with. Once they identified the letter sound, the students put the cards
inside pockets of an alphabet chart. After the students finished drawing all of the cards in the pile, they did a similar activity with the cards, except the second time they needed to act out what the card said instead of placing the cards in the appropriate alphabet slots. These two activities with the cards concluded the day's 30 minute ESL instruction.

Although the students responded well to the teacher personally, they really seemed to be struggling to identify the letter sounds correctly. There were only a couple students who knew the correct letter sounds; the rest of the students seemed to be merely guessing at what the sounds of the words were. The students tried to help each other out during the activity by speaking to each other in Spanish, but the teacher kept insisting that they speak in English. The teacher's goal is for the students to learn English right away so that they can begin to understand the material in other content areas. However, there is evidence which suggests that incorporating a student's native language and culture in the school program will at least not impede academic progress (Cummins, 25). Further, the teacher's attempt to replace the students' native language with English may be sending a message to the students that their language is not important. Teachers can become an agent of empowerment to students in the attitudes which they have toward second language acquisition. That is, if they consider having an "additive (adding a language)," rather than a "subtractive (replacing one language with another)," approach in teaching bilingual students, they can convey a message that knowing two languages is important and beneficial in a student's educational experiences (25).

In general, throughout the course of the class, the students mainly spoke Spanish with one another. The teacher spoke mostly in English, but once in a while, when it seemed as if they were struggling to understand directions or a concept, she would speak Spanish to them. Although the students struggled with the skills practice, they seemed to be comfortable in the classroom because they were allowed to speak Spanish. In this particular situation, I felt that it was important for the students to be comfortable in their learning environment because it shows a sense of responsiveness from the teacher (Faltis...
and Hudelson, 465). That is, the teacher acknowledged the need for the students to converse with one another in the language with which they feel most comfortable.

When I asked the teacher after class what the curriculum of the class was, she mentioned that there really wasn't a specific curriculum required for the ESL lessons, but she does structure them as much as she can. That is, she begins with a new word list every couple weeks and helps the students develop writing and reading concepts through activities using these words. She begins with letter sound and word identification, then she will progress to having them make sentences and class books. The words that she uses are very basic, such as colors, numbers, animals, shapes, etc. Once the students get a mastery of these concepts, she will get into more complicated words and concepts. It is difficult to determine the rate at which the students work because they are all at such distinct levels (grades 1-5).

The activities which the students were performing earlier in the day didn't seem to be the most constructive for learning because it was evident that they really didn't associate with the words. It seemed as if they could identify some of the words by merely memorizing them. They did not seem comfortable speaking English because it wasn't the language they are accustomed to speaking at home with their parents. They had a difficult time reciting experiences that they have had in English because they are used to using Spanish vocabulary and sentence structures. By asking them to say things in English when they haven't actually had experience in reading and writing them does not enhance their language acquisition process (Hudelson, 78). Second language learners need to construct knowledge that serves a purpose for their needs, and these drill exercises did not seem to be serving a specific purpose. I noticed that some students didn't even know the meaning of the words they were saying. The teacher told them what to do if they didn't know how to act something out, and this happened quite regularly.
Each of the students was at a different level of English proficiency, so the teacher needs to keep their varying strengths in mind during instruction. When the students enter the program, they have specific strengths and areas of concern of their knowledge of English. It is the job of the schools to ensure that the special instruction that the individual students are receiving correspond to their knowledge of English (Faltis and Hudelson, 465). The teacher discusses the progress of each child with his/her parent(s), but a letter grade is not given for the performance in the class. The students are given homework regularly, but they fail to turn it in many times because a grade isn't given for its completion. The teacher has a homework chart in the classroom and marks a star each time the student has completed his/her homework assignment and, the majority of the students were not up to date with their homework assignments.

I noticed that the students' lack of turning in their homework was beginning to become a concern for the teacher. A couple of reasons why I felt the students did not take their homework responsibility seriously are: 1) they are not given assignments which they find purposeful to their daily experiences, or 2) they have a feeling of inferiority by learning the English language of the "dominant" group due to attitudes at home, in their regular classroom and in the community. In response to reason 1): the students' assignments are not comprehensive enough for them to become meaningful to the students. The skills have structure in the 30 minute/day ESL session, but they do not relate to what the students are doing in their regular classroom. Thus, they are learning skills in isolation from the daily activities and experiences which they have instead of incorporating their existing personal schemas to write in journals, personal narratives or other meaningful content material (Hudelson, 77). In response to reason 2): In his article, "Empowering Minority Students," Jim Cummins discusses "bicultural ambivalence," which is the "lack of cultural identification of students in relation to both the home and school cultures" (Cummins, 22). This concept states that minorities attribute lack of success in school due to their feelings of inferiority by the dominant
group due to social and economic discrimination. The students could be feeling pressure to learn English from teachers and peers, but at home, they are able to speak in Spanish. Thus, they might associate their need to learn English as an expectation set by the dominant group's need for them to conform to the predominant language.

November 1, 1994, 1:00-2:15pm

For the second half of the day, I observed the ESL teacher help two 5th grade ESL students (who were just previously in her classroom). The classroom was set up similar to the second grade class that I had visited earlier. It had laminated posters of letter, colors, numbers, days of the week, and shapes posted on the bulletin boards. There were also some Spanish phrases on the bulletin board which related to a "pumpkin" theme that the class was involved with. The two students who needed extra help sat at a table at the back of the room with the ESL teacher while everyone else worked at their desks. The classroom teacher gave instructions for the day's lesson in English, and the rest of the class period was spent working on a worksheet.

I helped the ESL teacher with the two students. They didn't seem to be struggling as much in math as they were with their language arts skills. For the most part, they were working independently on their worksheets. They were able to work through the multiplication problems at an average rate, but they did misunderstand the exact directions of the activity at the bottom of the worksheet. The teacher explained to me that one of the students just came to the country from Mexico and she seemed to be progressing fine. The other student, on the other hand, had lived in the United States for a few years and she wasn't at the appropriate (overall) academic level that she should be at. I wondered if it was because when the latter student came to the United States, she was in 2nd and she was still in the process of learning concepts in her native language, so she wasn't able to successfully transfer this knowledge to English. I asked the teacher how the ESL students in the building perform in general. She mentioned that if they
come to school with a basis of knowledge for basic concepts in their native language, then they usually end up doing well in an English-instructed classroom. If they come to school without concrete knowledge of even their native language, then they tend to "flounder" in the classroom.

What the ESL teacher mentioned about the students' "floundering" in the classroom relates to a current theme relating to effective ESL instruction which states: "Second language learners can use their primary language to understand and exchange ideas about subject matter before they attempt discussion or writing in English" (Faltis and Hudelson, 461). If the students were allowed to learn the concepts in their native language first and then transfer this knowledge to English, it would most likely not hinder their future academic progress. According to every bilingual program that has been evaluated during the past 50 years, the promotion of the native language shows no loss in the development of English academic skills (Cummins, 20). In addition, the most successful bilingual programs appear to be those which emphasize and use the students' native language (23). Thus, instructing the students in their native language in order for them to learn major concepts first would perhaps be more beneficial than instructing them in a language which they do not completely understand.

ScboolA
November 8, 1994, 12:15-12:45pm

Once again, I observed the ESL teacher in her classroom of new ESL students. Today there were 11 students. Last week, one student was absent, and she recently received a new student who could not speak English at all. Today the class worked on individual books which repeated the words, "I Like ..." The day before, they had drawn pictures of things that they liked and read a story book which began, "I Like ..." The teacher gave a photocopy of the book, "I Like ...." to each student so that they could have
their own copy. Once the students received their books, they needed to practice reading it. First, the class read the book all together. Then, the teacher went around the entire table and asked the students to read the book in pairs. Finally, the students could practice reading the book independently. The students were assigned to read the book to five people and have each person sign their book. The teacher allowed them to read the story to one another, but she also encouraged them to take the books home and read them to their parents.

A few of the students approached me and asked if they could read their book to me. Besides a few pronunciation errors, they read the book well. However, I'm not exactly sure if they understood what they were reading. The book was a repetitive, rhyming book, and since they picked up on the book's rhythm right away, they could tell how the proceeding words sounded before they even saw or said them. It was almost as if they were going through the sounds and motions of reading the book and not really reading for meaning. In one instance, one of the students lost his place in the book, and from that point on he wasn't able to determine what other words, besides "I like" said. He was so accustomed to the pattern and rhythm of the book that when he lost his place, he really didn't know what came next. I realized through this activity that this reading activity seemed to be serving more of a routine drill practice than for actually reading for meaning. Although the students might eventually learn phonetic sounds and strategies through drills, they will not get the full literary experience until they are able to construct their language knowledge into meaningful purposes from information that they already know (Faltis and Hudelson, 461). The students can construct this knowledge through the following methods: journals, small group activities, using authentic texts, drama and literary responses (462). Having the students repeat words and phrases may benefit their identification of sight words, and help develop oral fluency, but a firm understanding of language involves 1) learning how it works, 2) learning the language in social contexts and interactions, 3) utilizing language for a real purpose and 4) using oral and written
language development simultaneously (461). Once a teacher integrates these components with students, then they will begin to internalize, instead of memorize, their knowledge of a language.

**November 8, 1994, 1:00-1:30 pm**

The second classroom that the ESL teacher and I visited was in a 1st grade classroom. The teacher worked with two students at the back of the classroom to help them with their letter recognition skills. The students played a game in which they needed to roll a die and identify a correct letter sound (determined by the letter which they landed on) in order proceed on their turn. I was amazed at the amount of difficulty which the students had in identifying the correct letter sounds. Since the students could not proceed on their turn unless they correctly sounded the letter upon which they landed, they barely moved around the board. Even by the end of this 30 minute activity, the students did not make it halfway across the board. It was apparent that they were struggling in saying the sounds. After a few minutes, they became frustrated and inattentive to the game.

It seemed as if this game was somewhat inappropriate for their level because they were playing a game which required a skill which they hadn't mastered yet. I think it would have been more beneficial for the students to participate in a more concrete activity which actually focused on teaching them the sounds of letters (instructional level) instead of expecting them to play at which they reached their frustration level. One of the students was new to the school and didn't have any formal English instruction before, whereas the other student was repeating 1st grade for the second time. The teacher mentioned that the student who is repeating 1st grade might have a learning disability; I would be interested in learning if having a lack of native language instruction is having this negative affect on his learning progress. Cummins emphasizes the need for
diagnostic and prescriptive assessment of bilingual students in order to learn the actual cause of their problem, instead of first labeling them "learning disabled," and to identify possible remedial interventions (Cummins, 33). In recent years, the drop out rate among Mexican-American and Puerto Rican students is between 40 to 50 percent compared to 14 percent for Whites and 25 percent for African Americans (Cummins, 18). There is an evident problem in the performance of minority students, and the causes attribute to a lack of empowerment of minorities from their schools, homes and communities. According to Cummins, we need to identify the reasons for failure of minorities and utilize teachers as agents for empowering students to succeed (Cummins, 21).

November 8, 1994, 1:30-2:15pm

The last classroom which I observed was a 4th grade classroom. The classroom was set up similar to the other classrooms, with students' desks near the front of the classroom (clustered in groups) and the teacher's desk at the very front of the classroom. Also, like the other classes, there was space in the back of the room for activities. The bulletin boards had the same laminated colors, shapes, numbers, days of the week and months in English and Spanish that the 1st, 2nd and 5th grade classrooms had. Today the ESL teacher came to teach a Spanish lesson the entire class.

The lesson began with a continuation (from week before) of a video presentation about a character named "Muzzy." The video was all in Spanish, but it used many visual cues, so it appeared that the students understood the story line well. The video was repetitive and included basic information that students could use in a conversation. Words/concepts such as, "who, what, when, where, this/that, alphabet, commands, and time-telling usage" were the predominant focus of the video. After the video, the students were asked questions about what happened to "Muzzy" throughout the story. Although the students seemed to be interested in the video, they became disruptive
during some parts of the video; the teacher needed to stop the video until the students quieted down.

Next, the ESL teacher directed their attention to the chalkboard at the front of the classroom. The ESL teacher wrote, "De donde vienes?" on the board, and as she called on each student they needed to respond, "Vengo de ______." The students gave various responses as to their ancestral backgrounds. As the students told where they (or rather, their ancestors) were from, the ESL teacher tallied their responses on the board to see what the predominant backgrounds were. Then, she wrote, "¿Qué te gusta?" and the students needed to respond, "Me gusta ______." The students listed the type of foods they liked, and the teacher tallied their responses again. Even though I think the teacher had good intentions of taking a tally of the students' ancestral background, I was getting an impression from the students that they considered some races to be more "popular" than others. The tallying was beginning to create a competitiveness among the various racial backgrounds that existed in the class. I think that students should be aware of other students' backgrounds in order to enhance their insight about other cultures, but when it becomes competitive, it can send a discriminatory message that we as teachers should not convey.

In fact, the teacher, at the end of the lesson, was commenting about how every person came from a different place that has different culture and language, but now that they were all in the United States, it's time to speak English. I found this comment to be disturbing because it indicated a message of a monocultural rather than a multicultural classroom. According to author Sonia Nieto in *Affirming Diversity*, school affirmation of a multicultural setting includes the support of each person's language and culture in a "consistent, critical, comprehensive, and inclusive" (278) way. This means that the curriculum would include multicultural sensitivity and a variety of content and perspectives from the teacher. In addition, students' viewpoints, experiences and suggestions would be used in class activities and programs. I think that School A made
an effort to acknowledge the culture and language of the bilingual students to a limited extent. The school is making more of an effort to assimilate the students into their school society rather than including the students in their planning of class activities and programs. Their human rights of dignity, respect and equality are demonstrated through the teacher, but their cultural differences are not preserved as thoroughly as they could be. It is difficult at times to be considered a multicultural school because cultural values are subjective and constantly changing (Nieto, 279). Societies have the tendency to favor the "dominant" culture, and then it becomes unlikely that the other cultures have an equal contribution to what occurs in the society. By having multicultural education, we can attempt to change and increase the communication between the dominant culture and the dominated cultures in society in order to produce a more balanced regard for respecting and valuing one another person's language and culture.

The ESL teacher and I continued to have a discussion about the school's ESL program after my last observation. She also informed me of the qualifications she has in ESL/Bilingual Education. The ESL teacher has both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Education as well as Bilingual and ESL certification. When she first began helping LEP students, she did not have her Bilingual and ESL certifications yet. Twelve years ago, she went to various schools in the district each day from 8-11am. More recently, the number of bilingual students have increased so rapidly that now she stays in one school for the entire day. She certainly has the philosophy that students need to learn to be fluent in English as soon as possible since "they live in the United States now." At this point, I have seen how greatly the bilingual students are struggling to learn English that it does not seem logical to teach the students English quickly. If they do not possess concepts of reading and writing in their native language, how could teachers expect them to develop another language effectively? I wouldn't argue that there is one way to teach LEP students English, but I think that including their native culture and language in instruction would be more effective for them than having a monocultural education.
SchoolB

November 15, 1994, 8:15-9:10am

The second school which I observed for my study was one which provided self-contained bilingual classrooms throughout its entire district. I visited with a 1st grade classroom of 25 Spanish-speaking students. I was amazed to look around the classroom and see posters, books and bulletins in Spanish. The desks took up the majority of the classroom space, but there was still enough room for a few learning "centers" in the classroom. There was a table which had objects and material which related to science. One corner of the room was carpeted for the children for when they read books, and there was a table of various types of books in Spanish. The classroom aide's desk faced the back of the children's desks. At first, I thought that there were only a few bilingual students in the classroom, and I was very impressed to learn that the entire class was involved in the bilingual program. I imagined that the setting of the classroom and teachers would allow the children to be comfortable in their environment. Once the students walked in, I could tell that there was a sense of community among the classmates. They were able to speak Spanish to each other and their teachers and they didn't need to be worried about not understanding the meaning of what the teacher says.

The class began at 8:15 am with opening activities; all of the morning instruction is taught in Spanish. The activities include going over the date, day of the week, number counting by 2s, money value, number of school days. After the morning activities, the children began to write a letter to their parents, inviting them to visit the school the following day. As the children were working on their letters, the school nurse called a students in groups of 8-10 for a hearing test. The teacher hadn't guided the students in writing their letters yet. At this time, she merely asked them to write down what they thought they would like to write to their parents; she wasn't concerned about proper
grammar, spelling or format at this point. Once all of the kids completed their hearing tests, the teacher led the entire class in a class letter writing activity.

I was impressed by the way the students were able to use their native language for their writing purposes. The students seemed to have a fair understanding of the concept that words create meaning. Using a student's native language for writing instruction can have a variety of benefits. For one, it exposes them to the purposes of writing; in this case, one form of writing is through a letter to their parents. They are sending a message to someone they know for a specific reason. Next, having a writing ability in the naive language provides the students with resources that they can use when they learn the second language writing. The concepts that they are learning about writing in their native language can be applied to their second language. Finally, writing in their native language allows them to show what they know in a language over which they have control. They can show their competence in a language and perhaps be more willing to take risks in writing in English (Hudelson, 46).

November 15, 1994, 9:10-9:35

The teacher consistently asked the students for input throughout the entire activity. For example, she asked the students what would they would need to write at the top of a letter (date), how they would address someone in a letter ("querida" or "estimada"), how to begin a letter (greeting -- "Hola!"), what to say in the body of the letter (main message), and how to end the letter ("Adios, los quiero mucho."). The teacher wrote a draft of this letter on a large piece of paper at the front of the room, and the students copied it from the paper. She asked them to keep all of their pencils down as they were constructing the letter so that they could focus their attention on the letter.

After the letter was written, the teacher asked the class questions about beginning sounds and letters. The students responded very well to the questions; many of them were able to determine what sound a particular letter made and which words begin with
certain letters. During the letter writing process, I was impressed by the way the students constructed the letter so easily. They didn't need to struggle with vocabulary or word usage. Many of them seemed to have a schema for how to greet people, say good-bye, address adults properly, etc. If they were to be in a classroom in which only English was spoken, I don't think that they would be as open with the teacher and confident in themselves as they are in this classroom.

November 15, 1994, 9:35-10:15am

Next, the class worked on the letter "g" through practice homework worksheets (practicing their letter Gs) and a cassette which included many words with "g" in them. The cassette was in Spanish and the songs they included had a Mexican-style beat to them. The teacher provided students with a personal copy of the words to the songs, plus she wrote the words to the song on an easel, so it was easy for the class to follow along with the words as she played the cassette. She encouraged them to follow along with the song word-for-word, but only a few of them were able to correspond each word to the song successfully. Although the students weren't exactly sure of all of the words in the song, they at least knew the letters which they were focusing on in class and they have exposure to other words also. After the class recited these songs with "g" words, they also played songs about "a," "b," and "f." Once again, the students seemed to have mastered identifying the letters which they were concentrating on, and they skimmed past the other words.

After the students practiced the letter sounds with the songs, they practiced writing "g" as they had a "fruit" break (each child brings a fruit from home each day). As they finished up writing their Gs, the teacher asked them to think of words which begin with "g," and then she wrote them on the easel. I was amazed at all of the words they derived from their vocabulary that began with "g." When the teacher asked them to come up to the easel to identify certain letters in a word, most of the students that came up...
knew the beginning sounds, but were still working on using phonetic cues to help them sound out words. The class as a recited the entire "g" word list, but I think much of that was because of repetition and memorization of the words.

November 15, 1994, 10:15-11:15am

For the next 10 minutes, the students had the chance to select a book and read it to themselves or another classmate. Even though many of them weren't reading fluently yet, they became really excited when the teacher announced that it was time to read their books. As they took their books out, I noticed that they were pointing to words as if to follow along, talking to themselves, and looking at the pictures pensively. Overall, they seemed really engaged with what they were doing. When the 10 minutes was over, the teacher called them to the carpet square to read them a story. Before she read the story, the class did some more tasks similar to the opening activities. She asked them to fill in words to phrases such as, "Ayer fue___," or, "Hoy es__." This helps them in learning that words can be arranged into meaningful phrases. They see a model of proper syntax order and semantic strategies for when they begin to write.

The teacher now begins to read a story, Angus y El Gato. The book was small and not too colorful, but the students seemed to enjoy the storyline of the book. The teacher asked the students to predict what they thought would happen in the book, and they responded well to her questioning. For the most part, the students seemed to be comprehending the vocabulary and meaning of the book. The teacher asked them questions about the book and even lead them beyond basic knowledge into a discussion of the book. They were stating opinion and feelings toward the characters of the story. After reading the story, the teacher allowed them to read books again; this time, they needed to read to each other. They read from their reading books, Sonrisa— which includes stories and an activity workbook in Spanish. Before lunch at 11:15 am, the students took a math test.
The teacher uses whole language strategies, which favored practices in a multicultural classroom. For instance, the students have a daily journal in which they record notes from the morning activities. The teacher gives them the chance to write in their journals regularly throughout the day, she does concentrates more on their fluency of writing than on grammatical or contextual errors that they make. Having a journal increases the quality in which the students possess in self-reflection of their writing. They need to have various experiences in writing to help them understand that writing is a means of communicating to others. The teacher also includes various genres in the classroom books in order to expose the students to a variety of writing styles. The letter which the students wrote to their parents involved a brainstorm, rough draft and final copy of the letter to go home to the parents. This process of writing helps the students in their writing techniques and view writing as a constructive, creative means of communication.

Throughout the day, I was impressed by the classroom management techniques which the teacher used. She was explicit about the behaviors that she expected from the students, and she was consistent in giving positive reinforcement and corrective feedback when necessary. Most of her comments to the students were positive, encouraging, and humorous. She seemed to appreciate the uniqueness of the students' cultural diversity by the way she treats the students. She is very straightforward, respectful, and caring. I think the students respond to her style of teaching well because they know what behaviors she expects in the classroom and because she incorporates their cultural and linguistic backgrounds into their learning every day. They are able to take their daily experiences with language and expand upon their existing knowledge in this classroom.

After class, I asked the teacher about the bilingual curriculum at the district. The program usually begins for the student when they take the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) at the beginning of the school year to determine their level of English proficiency. If the student is placed in a self-contained bilingual classroom as a
kindergarten student, he/she usually proceeds to 1st and 2nd grade bilingual classrooms, or until they become proficient in English and, therefore, exit the bilingual program. If they enter the program when they are above the 2nd grade level, the same principle applies: they exit out of the program once they are proficient in English. More specifically for 1st grade, they are given formal instruction in Spanish and informal instruction in English. In 2nd grade, the formal instruction is in English, and the informal in Spanish. After each year that a student is in the program, he/she takes the LAS test again to document the improvement in English skills which he/she made throughout the year. A score on this test which indicates proficiency in English is what enables a student to exit the bilingual program. I asked the teacher what the success rate of the bilingual students was in academic areas after they exit the program. She commented that they are generally successful because they are not exited out of the program until they show a proficient level of English. The teacher has a Master's degree in Bilingual/Bicultural Education, so she is in favor of the cultural and native language incorporation in the classroom.

School B

November 18, 1994, 8:15-8:30

The second day of observing at the self-contained bilingual classroom was similar to the first visit because I came in the morning again. The class began with their morning activities like they begin each day. Today, in addition to the morning activities that they did on November 15, they practiced counting by 5s aloud and also using straws and blocks as manipulatives. The teacher also asked for volunteers to write numbers on the chalkboard. Then, the students stood up and counted backwards and forwards by taking steps to help them visualize these concepts. After these morning activities, the students had an awards assembly, which lasted for an hour.
November 18, 1994, 8:30-9:30am - Assembly

November 18, 1994, 9:30-10:00am

Once the students returned from the assembly, they finished their morning activities. The assembly excited the students because a few of them received rewards for their hard high achievements, extra effort, good participation and good citizenship. The teacher utilized a management technique which calmed the students down. She has a construction paper circle with one side red and the other green, that she alternates throughout the day. When the circle is red, it is a sign for the students to be quiet. When the circle is green, the students are able to talk quietly amongst one another. This technique seemed to work effectively in her classroom. Once the students became quiet, the class practiced counting forward and backward again, this time using the number chart on their desks.

November 18, 1994, 10:00-10:50am

Now that the morning activities were complete, the class worked on math for about the next hour. They discussed a couple of different math concepts. The first was math patterns (detecting similar patterns) and the other was adding by 2s. The students had a Spanish math book in which they worked, and they were able to work together to find solutions to the math questions. The students worked hard to complete their homework because they get rewarded for turning in their homework on time at the end of each week. For instance, if they turn in their homework for three days, they receive a written award; 4 days, the students receive candy; 5 days, sticker and candy. This system of being held accountable for the homework and bringing papers home to parents are two important aspects in getting their family involved in their school work at home.
November 18, 1994, 10:50-11:15am

For the remainder of the morning, the class worked on reading skills. The teacher began by reading various scenarios to students about cause/effect relationships. The students needed to listen to the scenario being read and then think about what they thought would happen next. After a couple of practice scenarios, the students did a similar exercise in their books. There was a workbook page related to the cause/effect activity in which they needed to look at a picture and then circle the most reasonable "effect" from a choice of 2-3 other pictures. The pictures didn't have words to them, the students needed to think inferentially about what they thought would happen. After this activity, the teacher redirected them for another reading activity. This time, the students needed to complete each sentence using a word(choice of two) which would be syntactic and semantically correct. These sentences referred to pictures in order to help them determine which word would make more sense to fill into the space.

In the first activity(cause/effect relationships), some of the students became confused with the concept of cause and effect relationships. The teacher did provide them with real-life examples at the beginning of the lesson so that they could conceptualize the information, and after the activity, she discussed the reasons for the "most reasonable" responses so that the students would be clear about the relationships. For the second activity, I was impressed with how most of the students knew the correct answers to fill in the sentences. They needed to use the information that was given to them(part of the sentence and the picture) and decide which word made the most sense. They seemed to have a good understanding of the vocabulary used in the activity as well as which words would and wouldn't be appropriate in the sentences.

After the students finished their reading activities, I looked around the room to get a observe literacy materials. Earlier, the teacher mentioned that they did many whole language activities in the classroom in order to expose them to a variety of literature.
Also, she provided the class with trade books (most is Spanish) at a table near the reading carpet square. The trade books seemed to represent a variety of genres, although I did not recognize many of the well-known children's authors in the books she had. Nevertheless, the teacher's main focus during the reading lessons seemed to be exposing the students to the reading cueing system (syntax, semantics, schema) through a bottom-up approach to teaching reading. For example, when the class created the word lists for the letter "g," she wasn't concerned that they knew how to spell or identify each letter and sound of the word, but rather, to identify the beginning sound of the word and to at least be exposed to the whole words. Once the students hear and see these words repeatedly, they might be able recognize them automatically.

School B
November 22, 1994, 12:30-1:00pm

This afternoon, I came to visit School B for the last time. I chose to come in the afternoon because the students receive informal English instruction each afternoon. I first observed the students in their gym class, which was instructed solely in English. The teacher gave directions in English, and the students seemed to understand what he was saying because he used many visual cues as well. A few of the students had a hard time staying on-task, so he did need to repeat the directions constantly. After a while, I was beginning to wonder if the students were taking advantage of the fact that he could not speak Spanish to them because the activity they were doing was somewhat repetitive and simple (running back and forth across the gym) and some of the students were not following directions. Another reason that the students were not fully attentive to the teacher was because he did not address them by their names. He abstract terms, such as "you," "go over there," "don't do that," "no!" in addressing the students. I could understand how they might get an unclear message since he is not specific in what he
says. Then again, their behavior might have occurred because the gym teacher is not their regular teacher that they are accustomed to so they do not feel as comfortable with him as well as their regular teacher.

Also, the class played a game, called "Come over my hill," which included detailed directions that the students had a difficult time understanding. The students followed each other during the game and really didn't understand what they needed to do. The teacher stopped the game repeatedly to give directions and he gave them visual aids on how to play, but when they began playing, they did exactly what they were doing before he announced the rules. After gym, the students went briefly to the learning center to check out a book. They came back to the class within 10 minutes and had a chance to begin reading their books to themselves or to a partner.

I thought that the teacher could have made more of an effort to learn the students' names so that they would feel more like a part of the class. Addressing the students as "you" and pointing to them for their attention does not seem to foster a respectful learning environment (Nieto, 114). Even if the teacher did not remember the students' names, he could have at least asked them. I thought that November was somewhat late in the school year for the teacher to not know their names. Besides the fact that the teacher did not know their names, I felt that his communication with the students lacked interaction. He was telling them what to do and rarely stopped to ask if they had any questions or problems.

1:10-2:15pm

Once the students "settled down" from gym and the learning center, the students formed a circle at the reading carpet square. The first thing the teacher did was show the students pictures of various family members and ask them to identify them in English. I noticed that the pictures were of people who seemed to have a Hispanic background; perhaps she felt that they could associate the family member names better this way since all of the children are Hispanic. The students kept shouting out their answers.
correctly in Spanish. Thus, the teacher repeatedly asked them to name the members in English. For the most part, the students could not generate the names independently. Rather, the teacher told them the name and they repeated her. First, the teacher asked for a group response and then she called on a few people for individual responses. It was evident that the students were having a hard time pronouncing the English words, but the teacher has established an environment in which they don't feel bad for making mistakes in practicing their English skills. The students named all of the family members in English a couple of times through, and then the class moved on to another activity.

Next, the teacher read the class Thanksgiving Day, a book which explained the tradition of this holiday as we celebrate it in the United States. In comparison to the material which the teacher read in Spanish, the students did not seem as engaged in what was being read to them. First of all, they didn't understand all of the words in the book, so it was difficult to follow along easily. For example, the teacher asked the class if they knew what the word "crowded" meant, and nobody raised their hand right away. A couple of students guessed, but their answers did not relate at all to the actual meaning. Since the students weren't sure of the meaning, the teacher explained what it meant using Spanish. The teacher seemed to monitor their comprehension of the story by asking questions as she read, and if it seemed as if they didn't understand what was being read, she paused and explained in Spanish. The teacher read through the story slowly, but not so slowly that the students began to lose interest and become frustrated with the material. Thus, English is only taught informally at the 1st grade level for the bilingual program.

The students came back to their desks and worked on finishing some paper-made pilgrims which they had been coloring earlier in the day. When the teacher asked the class to say what the word "pelegrina(pilgrim)" in English, an overwhelming response from the class said, "penguin!" I thought it was interesting that so many of them simultaneously responded the same word. As the class began to finish coloring their pilgrims, the teacher showed a filmstrip based upon a book, Samuel Eaton's Day.
related to Thanksgiving Day), which the teacher had read to them previously. The voice in the filmstrip used somewhat of a British accent, so it was difficult to understand everything that he was saying. The students seemed to be attentive toward the filmstrip, but I couldn’t determine if they were comprehending what the narrator was saying. Nevertheless, since the story had been read to them earlier, the filmstrip used as an extension of the story and its pictures were vivid and detailed enough so that the students could understand what was happening by following the sequence of the pictures.

I noticed art projects (mobiles) which were hanging from the ceiling. The teacher commented that a class from the intermediate classrooms came to work with this project with the 1st graders. She mentioned that these students come into her classroom periodically and work together with her students on a project or assignment. I favored the concept of another classroom coming into hers because it allows the bilingual students a chance to interact with older peers in a non-threatening environment. It also shows an effort on the part of the school that they are not segregating or physically separating the bilingual classroom from the rest of the school (Nieto, 165). In fact, the classroom is located in the middle of the hallway along with all of the other 1st grade classes. Bilingual classrooms have been criticized of segregating, instead of integrating students (165). Although the bilingual students are separated into this classroom, their learning environment is one which is conducive to learning. They are able to utilize their native language with reading and writing and as a resource for building their English skills, and are included in overall school functions and decisions like their classrooms.
November 28, 1994

The personal experience that I had in bilingual education from preschool through second grade was one of mixed review. I was originally enrolled in a preschool class which contained all bilingual students in preschool. At that time, I remember that I felt very comfortable in going to school and especially in interacting with my teachers. Both of my teachers communicated regularly with my mother, so I felt comfortable in knowing that they were familiar with my family and background. In fact, one of my teachers was a personal friend of our family with whom we visited often. The main thing I remember in being in the classroom was that I was glad the teachers spoke Spanish because my English skills and vocabulary were limited. The classroom itself was located in an isolated place in the junior high building, so I felt like I was "in my own world."

When I proceeded to 1st grade, I was once again in the bilingual program, but this year, I was placed in a regular classroom and pulled out for ESL regularly throughout the week. I had the same teachers as I had in preschool, so I was very comfortable in the classroom. I remembered working on Spanish skills through reading and writing using creative projects. My teachers always had some type of hands-on approach to what we did in the class, so I found my experience to be meaningful and enjoyable. I did think it was strange that there were students from different grade levels who were also in the classroom. I couldn't understand why we would work on the same assignments even though we were in different grade levels. Perhaps, as I reflect now, we had generally the same English skills. By the end of 1st grade, I began to feel different about being in the pull-out bilingual program.

I began to feel isolated from my regular classroom because I felt like I was missing the experiences they had in class while I was gone. I don't remember having had difficulties in comprehending concepts in English, so I felt capable of doing the things that they were doing. One day, when I came back from school and told my mom that I
did not want to be involved in the bilingual program anymore. I told her that I thought I would do fine without it since I felt I didn't need personalized help with English any longer. In fact, I remember thinking to myself that if I participate in the program any longer, I will make myself behind in other areas of school. I adamantly begged my mother to not "make me" go back to the classroom.

When I entered 2nd grade, my bilingual teachers asked me to fill out a form verifying that I would be in their classroom. I brought it to my mom and asked her if she could override my placement in the bilingual class. After much convincing on my part, my mother arranged that I would not be enrolled in the bilingual program. I was very satisfied because I truly felt that I did not need the extra English help. In fact, I was placed in the advanced reading and math groups in second grade. I did feel awkward whenever I saw my bilingual teachers because they were so close to me and my family that I felt disrespectful for leaving their class.

Thus, my years in the bilingual program were not extensive, but they did, for the most part, include meaningful learning experiences for me. Although I am satisfied that I exited in 2nd grade, I always wondered what would have happened had I remained in the program a year or two longer. For one, my formal Spanish skills may have been preserved more effectively. Growing up in a predominantly Caucasian community added pressures of learning English quickly; there was really not a purpose for knowing another language besides English in order to do well and communicate with others.

Unfortunately, over the years, as I began to become more fluent in English, I was gradually losing my fluency in Spanish. This did not bother me until I was in high school and I visited my family in Mexico. I was embarrassed that my Spanish conversational skills were limited, and I wished that I had never lost focus of my native language as a child. I always considered my fluency in Spanish as more of a hindrance than an asset in my primary years of school. Teachers or classmates never explicitly said things that were discriminatory toward my culture and language, but I realized quickly
that there really wasn't a "place" or purpose for Spanish in the classroom. As far as I was concerned, I needed to learn English quickly so that I didn't fall behind.

Ever since my early primary years, I managed to succeed in academic areas, and I attributed this to knowing English. There were people that I knew who were still in the bilingual program in third grade, and I felt like I had an advantage over them because I didn't need to miss any of the regular class instruction. I spent all of my time and energy constantly learning English that I began to forget my Spanish language. I realize now that my Spanish language is still part of who I am, and it is a skill which I intend on maintaining for the rest of my life. At one point in my life, I did not want to include my knowledge of Spanish as part of my identity because I didn't feel that it was valued by teachers and my community. My parents were the only ones who advised me to keep practicing Spanish because it would be a valuable asset in my future—they were right.

I believe that the extent to which teachers and parents communicate effects the success or failure of a student. Schools need to collaborate, rather than exclude, communication among parents and teachers. Both sides need to take an active part in the education of the students in order to enhance the learning experiences of students (Cummins, 27). This collaboration could mean communication such as a note or call to a parent and making an effort to speaking with parents who do not speak English. Evidence suggests that establishing a positive rapport among parents and teachers has a "pronounced effect" on the students' success in school (27). In my situation, my bilingual teachers went out of their way to collaborate ideas about my progress with my mom, and as a result, I felt more comfortable in the classroom.

A similar concept is true with the participation of the community in encouraging students' academic and cultural resources (Cummins, 32). In order for a society to truly foster a multicultural setting, they need to be ready to preserve the human rights and cultural values of each person. In doing this, they do not merely acknowledge that there are differences but, rather, they invite members from the representative cultures to share
their ideas with the rest of society. It should not be a matter of which culture will prevail in the society, but rather, how many can be respected and preserved. Teachers' attitudes toward this concept influence the way their classrooms view multiculturalism. If the teacher does not make an effort to explore the various cultures in the classroom through inquiry processes and other classroom activities, the students may think that their culture is insignificant. As a child, I did not feel as if my teachers provided a multicultural setting because the only culture that was emphasized was the "American" culture. I did not feel that my culture was valued and, therefore, I grew up thinking that I should leave my values and customs at home, "where they belong." It was easier to say that I was American than to explain the many ways that my family was different than a typical "American" family.
December 1, 1994

The concept of bilingual education is truly a complicated one because it involves both the culture and the language of the student. I believe that although teaching a student English in a monolingual environment is not impossible, it is not the most beneficial method for the student to acquire a language. For a student to fully learn a language, he/she needs to understand how the language works through meaningful reading and writing processes which serve a purpose for the student.

A student learning in an environment in which their native language is not used, such as in School A, is not able to easily communicate knowledge through the four major learning components of language, which are reading, writing, listening and speaking. In addition, a teacher needs to consider the existing strengths and personal schema that the student has in order to provide remedial instruction and build upon their base. By not including a student's native language in a classroom, the teacher is not easily able to confront the "heart" of what a student's limited proficiencies are. The student proceeds through the school system with incomplete or inaccurate academic concepts which might later cause them to be labeled, "learning disabled" or a "slow learner." Evidence suggests that incorporating a student's native language does not deter their future academic progress; thus, the most logical means of instructing a LEP learner would be through a language in which he/she has background knowledge and experiences in order to build more knowledge upon.

In addition to receiving native language instruction, a student in a bilingual classroom, such as School B, would benefit from the concept of building a strong self-concept as a learner. Creating a comfortable environment in which students can feel free to interact with one another and the teacher is what "sets the stage" for establishing a strong self-concept about their language and culture. The uniqueness of a bilingual classroom is that it is able to foster a multicultural setting in a classroom which might
otherwise be challenging for a monolingual classroom. In a bilingual classroom, students' cultures and languages are explicitly valued and, as a result, a student feels valued as a person. The self-concept that a student has of himself/herself as a child has an impact upon the way he/she views the native language and culture for the years to come. If students receive an impression that their culture and language are not valued, then they tend to assimilate into the "American" culture and lose sight of what their identity in their original background. The new identity which transpires is usually one which implies that a student's background is something in their past, and that is where they need to leave it. What evolves in this process of LEP learners losing their identity is the deterioration of the richness and ethnicity of multiculturalism in the "American" society.

Whether a LEP student is enrolled in an ESL or bilingual program, the fact still remains that they need special instruction in English. For a student in an ESL program, the opportunities for him/her to include background knowledge of experiences and schemas for developmental learning are fewer than a student in a bilingual program. The student in a bilingual program has the opportunity to incorporate their existing native language into valuable learning concepts. They can eventually transfer these learned concepts into English or, even better, maintain the formal skills that they developed in their native language to attain a true sense of bilingualism.

Having a bilingual program in a school which contains LEP learners is highly recommended through state policy. More important, however, is the attitudes which the teachers, school and community establish toward students learning a second language. If the "subtractive" attitude dominates teaching approaches, it is likely that there will be a negative impact on the attitudes of the LEP students. If, on the other hand, an "additive" approach is implemented into a school system, the views that students have of themselves as second language learners could be greatly improved.

In my opinion, a bilingual program such as in School B would best exemplify an efficient model for a bilingual program. As a future educator, it is my intention to
convey a message to LEP students, that knowing a language in addition to--not in place of--their native language will enable them to succeed in their educational experience. I believe that a major contributor to a student's academic success is his/her self-concept. If a student does not feel confident about how he/she is learning, their failure rate is likely to be high. On the other hand, if a student progresses at a rate that he/she is comfortable with, using his/her own language and background experiences, it is more possible for that student to succeed academically and personally. Most importantly, once a student achieves success, he/she can feel empowered to be an agent of change in a society which lacks a true meaning of what multicultural education entails.
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