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Quando el Maestro No Habla Español: Children's Bilingual Language Practices in the Classroom

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This article reports on a study of the language use practices and beliefs of bilingual students enrolled in a fourth-grade class taught by a teacher who is only minimally proficient in their native language, Spanish. Combining an ethnographic and a quantitative perspective, the study is based on two major data sources: extensive field observations of the classroom and interviews with the students and teacher. In addition to drawing upon interview data that describe the language choices and attitudes of the students as a whole, this article focuses on the language use of three case-study children who were observed longitudinally in the classroom at regular intervals over 14 months. The results depict a classroom where students and teacher are committed to the maintenance and further development of Spanish. Spanish-speaking students, particularly girls, used considerable amounts of Spanish in the classroom despite their teacher's reliance on English. Children in the classroom consistently held very positive attitudes toward Spanish and bilingualism regardless of their language practices at home or school. However, our data reveal that a substantial shift toward English over the school year characterized the sociolinguistic environment of this classroom. Most children in the class reported using greater amounts of English as they progressed through the grades, and the case-study children's use of English in the classroom increased considerably over the course of the school year. In addition to addressing the different factors at work in the way students use and develop their native languages in school settings, we describe ways English-medium teachers can foster the maintenance and development of their students' native languages.

Bilingualism plays an important role in the personal and social lives of children who live in ethnic minority and immigrant communit-

ties throughout the U.S. Children who acquire two languages have access to a wide range of resources that are largely unavailable to monolingual English speakers. It is commonly believed that bilingualism, if maintained, leads to social and economic rewards. In addition, literature on the cognitive functioning of balanced bilinguals (i.e., children with equal or nearly equal levels of proficiency in both languages) suggests that bilingualism, compared with monolingualism, offers children a number of cognitive advantages (Diaz, 1985; Duncan & DeAvila, 1979; Hakuta & Diaz, 1985; Kessler & Quinn, 1980).

Yet for many immigrant groups living in the U.S., bilingualism is a temporary phenomenon (Fishman, 1966; Grosjean, 1982). Immigrant children typically arrive in the U.S. as monolingual speakers of their native languages, develop bilingualism as they acquire English, establish English-speaking households once they are adults, and raise their children to be English-speaking monolinguals. Thus far, research yields an uneven picture about the degree to which language shift is occurring among Spanish speakers living in the U.S. Depending on the aspect of language under investigation (i.e., language choice, proficiency, or attitude) and the methodology being used, research on this group has either provided evidence of a relatively rapid shift toward English or a tenacious preservation of the native language. For example, survey data have portrayed Spanish as seldom used beyond the second or third generation of immigrants (Lopez, 1978; Veltman, 1988). Some studies have even found that first- and second-generation Latino children lose their ability to speak and understand Spanish at an early age. Based on her collection of parental reports, Fillmore (1991) reported a shift toward English in young children who attended preschools in which English was used during all or part of the school day. According to many of the parents Fillmore and her colleagues interviewed, formerly Spanish monolingual children who were enrolled in these preschools no longer spoke Spanish well, nor did they use it much at home. As Fillmore has described, communication between these children and their non-English-speaking parents was impaired, thereby jeopardizing the parents' ability to socialize their children.

Yet other research that distinguishes between different components of language shift conveys a view of ethnolinguistic vitality among Spanish-speaking children and their families. For example, Hakuta and D'Andrea (1992) found that high school students born in the U.S. to Mexican immigrant parents reported using mostly English at home and in school. However, in terms of language proficiency, they had maintained as much Spanish as their counterparts who had immigrated from Mexico in the last 5 years. Similarly, in our research focusing on Mexican-origin children between the ages of eight and ten (Pease-

Alvarez & Hakuta, 1993), we found that children retained high levels of proficiency in Spanish although they did not necessarily participate in a sociolinguistic milieu where Spanish predominated.¹ Where do schools fit in this mixed view about native language maintenance? Does the classroom contribute to children's maintenance or loss of their native tongue? Overall, schools in the U.S. do not consider the development and maintenance of bilingualism among immigrant populations to be a central goal. In line with an assimilationist perspective on the schooling of ethnic minority children, most schools serving them focus on the acquisition of English and assimilation into the mainstream curriculum (Moll, 1992). The central goals underlying federal bilingual education legislation are to develop the English language and to help language minority children make the transition to an English-only curriculum.

However, many who work in schools are aware of the advantages associated with being bilingual and multicultural. Many teachers argue forcefully that language minority children should have access to schooling that contributes to the development and/or maintenance of their native languages. Despite these sentiments, a number of factors impede teachers' ability to work toward that goal. Perhaps the most glaring is teachers' usual lack of proficiency in their students' native languages. Given this limitation (one that is not likely to change in the foreseeable future), an important question is whether, and to what degree, monolingual or nearly monolingual English-speaking teachers can foster the maintenance and development of their students' native languages. Our ongoing investigation (Pease-Alvarez & Hakuta, 1993) of Spanish language maintenance and loss in a Mexican immigrant community we call *Eastside* (all names of people and schools are pseudonyms) provides a theoretical and empirical base from which to address that question.² The study referred to in this article was designed to describe the language use practices and beliefs of bilingual students enrolled in a fourth-grade classroom at one of *Eastside's* elementary schools, which we will call *Oakside*. This classroom, like many in the district, is labeled an *English-only* or nonbilingual classroom and was taught by a teacher, Randy Dean, who was only minimally proficient in Spanish.

¹This study focuses on both the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic manifestations of language shift in a group of 64 children of Mexican origin from different immigration backgrounds. Children and their family members participated in interviews and activities investigating their language proficiency, attitudes, and language choices. Findings from interviews and various measures of children's oral proficiency in English and Spanish (i.e., analyses of children's narratives in English and Spanish, their performance on a translation task, and their scores on English and Spanish versions of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test) indicate that children who immigrated to this country or whose parents immigrated as adults were successfully maintaining oral proficiency in Spanish despite considerable variation in their language choices and those of their family members, teachers, and friends.

the native language of the majority of the students. The present study, combining both an ethnographic and a quantitative perspective and drawing upon two major data sources—extensive field observations and interviews with the students and teacher—addresses the question of how students use English and Spanish in a classroom in which the teacher, although open to and supportive of native language maintenance, relies almost exclusively on English and for whom the development of Spanish is not an explicit instructional goal. Initially, the goal of the project was to describe in detail the school language practices of three case-study children who had also participated in the larger study on language shift (Pease-Alvarez & Hakuta, 1998). However, during the course of our classroom observations the students in the classroom used Spanish in complex ways for both academic and non-academic activities. Thus, to better assess the role that Spanish and English played in the classroom, we decided to expand the study by conducting student interviews to tap the attitudes and language practices of all the students in the class, none of whom were in the full study except for the three case-study children.

METHOD

The Subjects

The Classroom

Dean's fourth-grade class is located at Oakside School, one of four Eastside schools where children have access to bilingual education. Most children who are classified as dominant speakers of Spanish attend classes taught by bilingual teachers for their first 3–4 years at Oakside. Once deemed to be sufficiently proficient in English, they are reclassified as either transitional or fluent English speakers and assigned to classrooms where English is emphasized throughout the curriculum. Like Dean, most of the teachers in these classrooms speak little or no Spanish. Although Dean speaks very little Spanish in his classroom, he is somewhat proficient in the language. He is able to read and write Spanish at what he describes as a second-grade level, and he frequently corrects students' Spanish syntax and spelling.

Like other teachers in the school district, Dean realizes that acquiring English and moving students into an English-only curriculum is the main goal of the district's bilingual education program. Nevertheless, he feels that a classroom taught by a teacher like himself, who is only minimally proficient in Spanish, may not always meet the academic needs of Spanish-speaking students. He particularly worries that some

students will not grasp important instructional concepts that he presents in English. He also wonders if he is contributing to the eventual demise of his students' bilingualism, an ability that he feels will help them secure employment and improve their economic well-being.

In line with the pedagogical approach embraced by the entire Oakside faculty, Dean advocates a child-centered, holistic pedagogy. A self-described whole language teacher, he believes students should spend time engaged in activities they find meaningful rather than on the mastery of discrete skills. Under his guidance, children in his class spend a good portion of each day reading and writing about topics of their own choosing. Time is also set aside for students to interact with one another while they discuss books, compose stories, and seek input about their writing.

Dean's class includes 18 children of Mexican descent, 1 student from Costa Rica, 2 students of Tongan descent, 1 African American student, 1 Samoan student, and 1 student of Indian descent who recently immigrated to Eastside from the Fiji Islands. Twenty (83%) of the 24 children in the classroom (all students for whom we had parental consent to participate in the study) were interviewed for the study. Sixty-five percent of the students were born in the U.S., and most had attended schools in Eastside since kindergarten. However, 95% of the students' parents were born outside of the U.S. With the exception of one student, all the students of Mexican or Latino origin were proficient in English and Spanish. Most students began kindergarten in bilingual classes, and the majority told us that in kindergarten they had used more Spanish than English with their teachers and classmates. Only a few reported having used mostly or exclusively Spanish with their teachers and classmates in first grade.

The Case-Study Children

Three students (Sebastián, Raúl, and Cristina) from the classroom were observed longitudinally. All were born in the U.S. to immigrant, working-class parents who did not complete high school. Upon entering Oakside School, each child was first enrolled in classes taught by bilingual teachers and, based on their self-reports, used mostly Spanish in the early primary grades. All three first learned to read and write in Spanish.

Because the three children had participated in the larger study, we had access to additional data on their language proficiencies and choices. Compared with the students in the larger sample, the three case-study children displayed either average or above average proficiency in both English and Spanish. Measures of vocabulary, translation skill, and narrative quality in each language revealed that although

the three children had approximately equal levels of Spanish proficiency, Sebastián was the most proficient in English, followed by Cristina and then Raúl.

When queried about their home language environments, the case-study children and their parents told us that the children spoke Spanish almost exclusively at home with their parents and, in the case of Cristina and Sebastián, with their preschool-aged siblings. In each home, parents spoke only Spanish with one another. Raúl and Sebastián reported using mostly or exclusively Spanish with their parents, but Cristina told us that she spoke both languages equally with her mother and more Spanish than English with her father. All three reported using more English than Spanish with their closest siblings.

Procedure

Student Interviews

One of two female researchers interviewed students individually during school hours in a separate room of the school. The students were familiar and comfortable with the two interviewers because of the researchers' extended presence in the classroom from earlier studies. All students were interviewed within a span of 2 weeks during the sixth month of the school year. Interviews followed a structured protocol, were conducted in the language that was most comfortable to the student (Spanish or English), and lasted about 50 min. Each interview was tape recorded.

The interview protocol was designed to obtain the following six types of information: (a) children's current language use patterns in both the home and school; (b) students' general attitudes about Spanish, English, and bilingualism; (c) children's historical recall of their language use patterns since the beginning of school; (d) students' current language choices for reading and writing; (e) students' prior use of language during literacy events; and (f) basic demographic information about the family. Questions concerning language use took the following basic form: "When you speak with _____, what language do you use?" (*¿Cuándo hablas con _____, qué idioma usas?*). A visual aid with a 7-point scale was used on each of the questions. The scale was 1 = All Spanish (*No más español*), 2 = Almost all Spanish (*Casi todo español*), 3 = More Spanish than English (*Más español que inglés*), 4 = Both languages equally (*Las dos igual*), 5 = More English than Spanish (*Más inglés que español*), 6 = Almost all English (*Casi todo inglés*), 7 = All English (*No más inglés*). Subjects indicated in this way the degree to which they spoke Spanish and English with their parents, their peers and teachers at school, and each of their classmates. They

were also asked to recall the language they used with peers and teachers in all previous years of school, one grade at a time. After indicating the appropriate location on the scale for each of the language-use questions, students were asked to give reasons for their reported language use patterns.

We assessed language attitudes by asking a series of questions of the following form: "How important do you think it is for you to _____?" (*¿Qué tan importante es para ti _____?*). The blanks included such items as being bilingual, speaking each language well, and reading and writing in each language. These questions used another scaled visual aid indicating degree of importance on a 5-point scale ranging from zero to four large, black stars. Subjects pointed to the column with the number of stars they felt best represented their view. Children were also asked which language they thought was more important and which they preferred. In addition, students were prompted to give the reasons for each of their answers.

Classroom Observations

Over the course of 14 months (1 full school year plus the last 2 months of the previous academic year), one of three observers (two male, one female) followed one of the three case-study children for roughly the entire school day. On these days, case-study children wore a miniature microphone that transmitted to a receiver and headphones (worn by the observer) that recorded all child speech. Using a time-sampling procedure, observers watched the target child for 30 s and, after hearing a prerecorded time signal in the headphones, recorded their observations on a behavioral observation checklist for the next 30 s. Then the headphones sounded again and the next 30-s observation began. In addition to taking running field notes about classroom activities, observers noted on a behavioral observation checklist instrument the child's (a) language (English, Spanish, both, none), (b) interlocutor(s) (peer, self, teacher, other adult, entire class, none), (c) location (in class, outside, computer room, other room, cafeteria), (d) participant structure (individual, small group, large group), and (e) activity (on task, on and off task, play, other).

Children were usually observed for their entire school day (from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.) minus a brief lunch break for the observer and occasional time-outs for technical reasons. However, because of abbreviated school days and observers' schedule requirements, 8 (36%) of the 22 observation occasions lasted somewhat less than a full day (usually half a day). Cristina was observed 10 times (6 full school days, 4 partial days), Sebastián 7 times (5 full, 2 partial), and Raúl 5 times (3 full, 2 partial). The typical time interval between observations for

each child was approximately 3–4 weeks. A total of 3,924 30-s observations were carried out for the three target children. Selected portions of the audiotapes were transcribed.

Reliability of Observation

During the final piloting of the checklist instrument, two observers followed the same child for 68 observations to assess the reliability of observation. Percentage agreements were language spoken = 84%, first interlocutor = 82%, second interlocutor = 70%, location = 100%, participant structure = 89%, child's activity = 100%.

RESULTS

Student Interviews

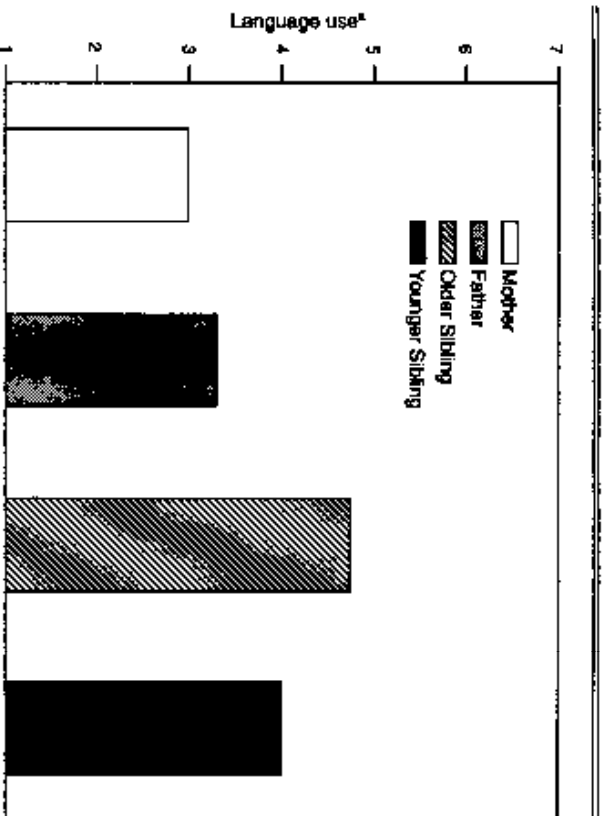
Language Use at Home

Figure 1 shows the mean for the 20 students in the class for the languages used with their mother, father, closest older sibling, and closest younger sibling, according to students' self-reports during the interviews. Children in this class used more Spanish than English with their parents and, on average, slightly more English with their fathers ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 2.09$) than with their mothers ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.89$). Students used more English with their siblings than with their parents and more English with their older siblings ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.73$) than with their younger siblings ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.86$). Students spoke both languages equally more often with siblings (32%) than with their parents (25% with mothers, 18% with fathers). Thus, the majority of students in the classroom spoke a significant amount of Spanish in the home.

Language Use at School

Figure 2 shows the language(s) students used, on average, with Dean, with their friends at school, and with all classmates, reported separately by gender. Whereas children in this classroom spoke almost exclusively English with their teacher, Dean ($M = 6.15$, $SD = 1.04$), they used a fair amount of Spanish with their school friends ($M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.29$), and girls used more Spanish with their friends ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.26$) than did boys ($M = 5.67$, $SD = 1.23$). An average of the children's ratings for their four closest friends showed that seven girls

FIGURE 1
Students' Reported Language Use in the Home



1 = all Spanish; 4 = both equally; 7 = all English.

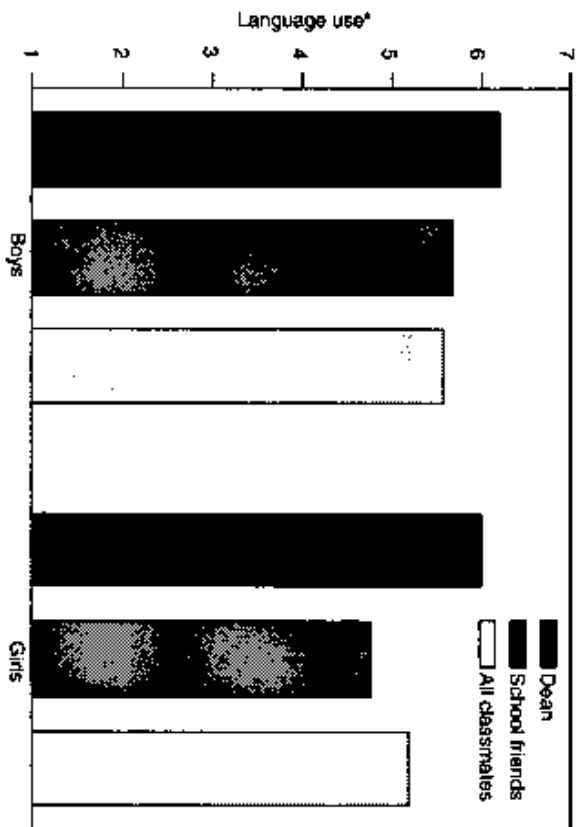
(78%) and one boy (9%) used both languages approximately equally (4) with them.

Because the numbers reported above for the children's overall language use with their friends are aggregates of what language(s) the students used with their four closest friends, there were two possible ways to obtain a 4 (both languages equally) on this score. Either the child used both languages in tandem all the time with all their friends (i.e., $M = 4$, $SD = 0$), or they used English with some friends and Spanish with others (i.e., $M = 4$, $SD = 3.5$). In this class, for the girls the former seems to apply, and for the boys, the latter. That is, the girls who spoke Spanish in this class tended to use both Spanish and English back and forth with most of their friends, whereas the boys showed more differentiation in their language choices by more often using predominantly English for some people and Spanish for others. This observation is supported by the fact that (a) the standard deviation for the friend aggregate is smaller for girls (.79) than it is for boys

(1.03), and (b) the majority of girls who indicated that they spoke both languages equally overall with their friends did so with each of their four friends.

Also depicted in Figure 2 is the language used, on average, by students with all of their classmates. Both boys and girls used more English than Spanish with their classmates (but still a fair amount of Spanish) ($M = 5.62$ for boys, 5.28 for girls). In addition, students reported that they read more often in English than Spanish at school ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.70$) and that they wrote more often in English than in Spanish at school ($M = 5.45$, $SD = 1.39$). These numbers, combined with the fact that only a quarter of the class reported that they read and wrote exclusively in English, indicate that the students spontaneously chose to use Spanish for academic literacy activities fairly often. Thus, the students, despite the fact that they received instruction exclusively in English, used a fair amount of Spanish in the classroom—most often between friends and more among female friends than among

FIGURE 2
Students' Reported Language Use in the Classroom, by Gender



See note to Figure 1.

male peer groups. The girls' pattern of language use was characterized by more frequent code switching than the boys', and the boys' pattern more by the use of predominantly Spanish with some peers and English with others.

Attitudes About Bilingualism

Overall, students held very favorable views toward Spanish, English, literacy in each language, and bilingualism. Students thought it very important (on a scale of 0 to 4) to be able to speak both English and Spanish well and not more important to be able to speak one language over the other (importance of speaking English, $M = 3.6$, $SD = .64$; importance of speaking Spanish, $M = 3.6$, $SD = .5$), and boys and girls did not differ on these items. Although boys and girls did not differ in how important they thought it was to be able to read and write in English, girls thought it was more important to read and write in Spanish ($M = 3.8$, $SD = .44$) than did boys ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.0$). Also, girls reported that it was slightly more important to be bilingual ($M = 3.9$, $SD = .33$) than did boys ($M = 3.5$, $SD = .93$). When asked which language they thought was more important in general, the majority (68%) of the students thought both languages were equally important whereas 21% reported English to be the more important language. Interestingly, two (22%) of the girls reported Spanish to be the more important language, but none of the boys did. Thus, the students all seemed very positive about maintaining their Spanish language proficiency, and the boys, although still positive, seemed to think that reading and writing in Spanish was somewhat less important than girls did.

Relationship Between Attitudes and Use

Little correspondence existed between the language the students used at home or at school and their reported attitudes about language, as indicated by zero or near-zero correlations between the language use questions and the attitude questions. For example, none of the attitude items correlated with the languages used with students and their friends. Language use with the teacher, however, was associated with how important students thought it was to be literate in Spanish ($r = -.46$), which indicated that the students who reported reading and writing in Spanish to be more important were also those who spoke more Spanish with their teacher. The only attitudinal item associated with the children's language use with their parents was students' beliefs about the importance of speaking English well ($r = .32$ for language

used with mother, $r = .49$ for language used with father). That is, students who spoke more English with their parents thought it was more important to be able to speak English well in general. Interestingly, language use with one's older sibling correlated somewhat with attitudes about the importance of being bilingual ($r = .30$), speaking Spanish well ($r = -.32$), and being literate in Spanish ($r = -.31$). Thus, students who felt that maintaining fluency and literacy in Spanish was important also spoke more Spanish with their older sibling.

Case-Study Observations

Before discussing the results for each case-study child individually, we describe the language patterns used by the three children as a group. Our extended classroom observations showed that the language patterns described below for the three case-study children together adequately represent the language patterns for the entire classroom, on average. Of the 3,924 observations, 1,777 (45%) were of Cristina, 1,257 (32%) of Sebastián, and 890 (23%) of Raúl. In 48% of the observations the children were *not* speaking. Thus, children were speaking more than half (52%) of their school day, which is not surprising given the child-centered and small-group nature of the classroom. The overall distribution of the children's interlocutors was peers = 66%, whole class = 9%, teacher = 9%, and self = 19%. The majority (79%) of our observations occurred in the classroom itself, 14% outside, and 7% in another room at the school.

Table 1 shows the percentage of observations in which the children were speaking Spanish, English, or both (within the 30-s period), by interlocutor, location, participant structure, and activity. Overall (the last column), the children spoke exclusively English 67% of the time, Spanish 17% of the time, and both languages for 14% of the observations. That children spoke Spanish 31% of the time they were talking (combining Spanish and both) during their school day is somewhat surprising given that their class is labeled an *English-only* rather than a *bilingual* classroom.

Language by Interlocutor and Participant Structure

As can be seen in Table 1, Spanish was quite prevalent when children were with their peers and in small groups. Forty-one percent of these children's conversations with their peers included at least some Spanish (26% Spanish + 15% Both languages). Note that for all interlocutor categories except Peers the Both row in the table means that code switching occurred within the 30-s period with the same interlocutor. For the Peers column, however (and for the rest of the table), because

TABLE 1
Observations (%) in Which Target Children (Combined) Spoke Spanish, English, or Both,
by Interlocutor, Participant Structure, Location, and Activity

Language used	Interlocutor			Participant structure			Location				Activity				Overall (n = 2,057)	
	Peers (n = 1,350)	Self (n = 392)	Teacher (n = 182)	Entire class (n = 190)	Individual (n = 97)	Small group (n = 914)	Large group (n = 198)	In class (n = 1,538)	Other room (n = 90)	Cafeteria (n = 70)	Outside (n = 359)	On task (n = 1,297)	On & off task (n = 103)	Play (n = 119)		Other (n = 558)
Spanish	26	9	4	3	7	25	7	14	43	39	22	15	18	20	23	17
English	57	85	85	92	92	56	83	71	49	36	59	73	50	62	57	67
Both	15	1	11	5	0	17	7	13	6	21	16	11	24	12	18	14

Note. n = Number of 30-s observations in the particular condition in which the target children spoke some language (not the total number of observations). Number of observations across levels of a variable may not add up to the total in the overall column owing to excluded categories or nonmutually exclusive categories (i.e., >1 interlocutor during the observation). Reported percentages reflect the percentage of observations in the particular conditions in which the target children spoke some language. Percentages within a column may not add up to 100% owing to excluded observations in which the language being spoken by the children could not be determined.

children often talked to more than one peer within the 30-s-observation periods. Both includes instances of code switching with one partner as well as instances of using two languages with two people.

Interestingly, the great majority (85%) of the children spoke to themselves in English. Only 9% of children's private speech utterances were in Spanish, and children rarely (1%) code switched between the two languages when speaking to themselves. Private speech (i.e., speech not explicitly addressed to another person) is quite common among elementary-school-aged children during school tasks (Berk, 1986; Winsler & Diaz, in press) and is known to serve a variety of self-regulatory functions for children (see Diaz & Berk, 1992). Consistent with the literature on private speech, the target children in this study talked to themselves on average during approximately 10% of our observations. Although reading to oneself was counted as private speech in this study, a great deal of the private speech we observed was self-regulatory in nature. That these bilingual children chose to use English as their private language and their language of thought at school suggests that they have internalized English to be their language for at least school activities. Children also seem to pick one language for private speech and rarely code switch. This finding is consistent with other research that has found bilingual children to code switch very little in their private speech while working on cognitive tasks (Diaz, Padilla, & Weathersby, 1991).

Speech to the teacher was, as might be expected, predominantly (85%) in English (Spanish = 4%). Code switching with the teacher (11%) occurred mostly during one-on-one conferences when the teacher was helping students with their writing. That 15% of children's speech with their teacher contained some Spanish is encouraging and reveals that students in this class at least felt comfortable using their native language with the teacher and that they did so on occasion. In the large-group setting, where children talk to the entire class, English is clearly dominant (92%). The 5% figure for both languages and the 3% figure for Spanish used with the group reflect mostly the moments during sharing time when students would read, translate, and discuss the stories they had written.

Language by Location and Activity

Children spoke the least Spanish in the classroom, where 71% of all speech was in English. When students were outside, either during recess or during an outdoor academic activity (i.e., physical education), they spoke slightly more Spanish (22%). Of most interest was that the case-study children spoke a relatively large amount of Spanish during lunch in the cafeteria (39% Spanish + 21% Both) and in other school-

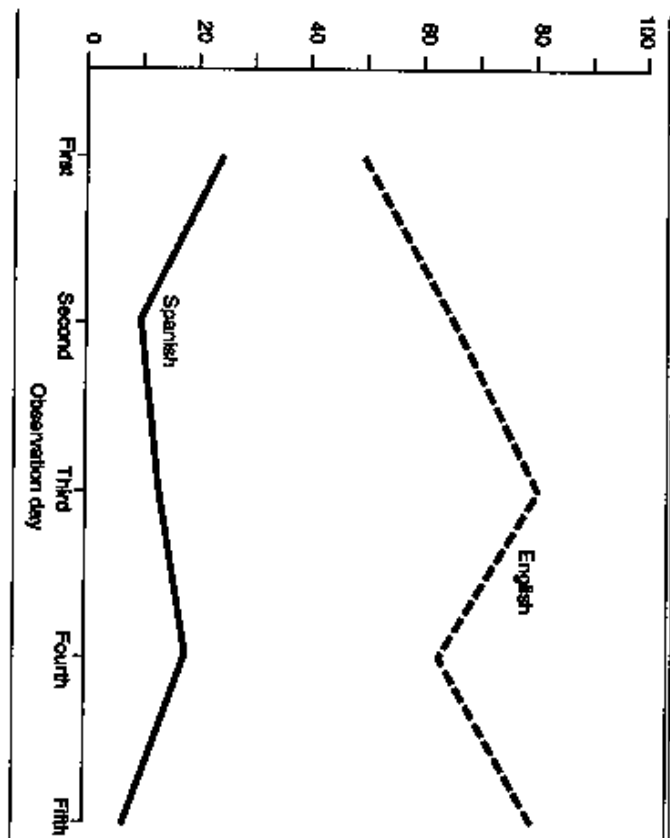
rooms (43% Spanish + 6% Both). In the cafeteria the children could be with their younger siblings who attended the same school and ate lunch at the same time. This change of social context, combined with the possibility that students perceive eating as a nonschoollike activity associated with the family, could account for the extra use of Spanish in this setting. The two major activities that took place in other schoolrooms were computer sessions in the computer room and tutoring sessions in another classroom when the target children would help a younger child, usually with reading. The frequent use of Spanish during the tutoring sessions in other classrooms was to be expected, as the target children were often paired with younger, mostly Spanish-speaking students. However, the frequent use of Spanish in the computer room was surprising and especially encouraging given that it was one of the few clearly academic contexts in which Spanish seemed to have a strong foothold.

Also shown in Table 1 is how case-study children's language patterns varied as a function of their activity. English was most prevalent during on-task, academic activity whereas Spanish emerged more during play and other activities. The On & Off Task category is especially interesting because of the relatively low frequency of English (50%) combined with the high frequency of both languages appearing within the same observation (24%). During most of the observations in which both languages were used, children were working on an academic task in English (on task), then briefly chatted with a classmate in Spanish about an unrelated topic (off task), and then returned to the task at hand, usually in English again. This pattern was common for children in this classroom.

Language Shift

Because we observed the same children repeatedly over the course of a year, it was possible to obtain a solid measure of how children's relative use of English and Spanish changed throughout the school year. Figure 3 shows the amount of Spanish and English the target children used as a group over time. Although children spoke Spanish 29% of the time they were talking on the first day of observation, by the fifth day of observation (approximately 5–6 months later) that percentage had declined to 8%. Correspondingly, English usage started at 53% and finished at 83%. The amount of time children used both languages in tandem did not show any particular pattern of movement over time. Thus, even though Dean held a positive attitude toward language maintenance and was completely open to having Spanish in his classroom, considerable language shift from Spanish to English occurred within the span of only 1 year.

FIGURE 3
Amount of Target Children's Speech in English and Spanish, Over Time (%)



Sebastián Lopez

Table 2 displays the percentage of Sebastián's speech during our observations that was in Spanish, English, or both by each of the context variables. What stands out is Sebastián's complete reliance on English and his extremely infrequent use of Spanish across all contexts. Sebastián used exclusively English 95% of the time, with occasional code switching (2%) and practically no Spanish at all (1%). Recall that he started his academic career speaking Spanish at school. Interestingly, Sebastián used the most Spanish with peers in other schoolrooms (6%) or in the cafeteria at lunch (7%). Also notable is that during the entire academic year of observations, Sebastián used absolutely no Spanish with his teacher. Thus, Sebastián seems to have chosen English to use exclusively at school, even though his performance on the Spanish version of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and other

TABLE 2
Observations (%) in Which Sebastián Lopez Spoke Spanish, English, or Both,
by Interlocutor, Participant Structure, Location, and Activity

Language used	Interlocutor			Participant structure				Location				Activity				Overall (n = 588)
	Peers (n = 345)	Self (n = 98)	Teacher (n = 56)	Entire class (n = 99)	Individual (n = 24)	Small group (n = 184)	Large group (n = 81)	In class (n = 485)	Other room (n = 17)	Cafeteria (n = 15)	Outside (n = 71)	On task (n = 378)	On & off task (n = 30)	Play (n = 14)	Other (n = 166)	
Spanish	2	1	0	2	0	2	2	1	6	7	1	3	0	0	4	1
English	96	92	100	97	100	97	94	95	94	87	97	96	100	100	94	95
Both	2	0	0	1	0	5	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	2

Note. See note to Table 1.

Spanish language measures indicates that he is quite proficient in that language.²

The little Sebastián did speak occurred early in our observations, and by the end of the school year he spoke exclusively English the entire day. His shift from mostly English to completely English is seen in the amount of time Sebastián used English and Spanish by order of observation day. During the first session Sebastián used English 90% of the time. This number increased across each observation session until at the end of the year he spoke English 100% of the time.

Sebastián's self-reports during our interviews differed somewhat from our observations of his language choices. He told us that he used mostly (not exclusively) English with Dean and that he favored English in his conversations with 17 of his classmates. He reported that there was no one in his class with whom he conversed in only Spanish. Although he claimed to use both English and Spanish equally with 6 of his classmates and mostly Spanish with 1 of his classmates, we very rarely observed him conversing in Spanish with anyone. In fact, we never observed Sebastián engaged in an extended conversation using only Spanish. He even used English when conversing with classmates who initiated their conversations with him in Spanish. When we asked Sebastián about the languages he used with his closest friends and with the children seated at his table, he reported using mostly or only English because these children either knew no Spanish or preferred to use English.

Since first grade, Sebastián has been using English almost exclusively for reading and writing because, as he put it, English is the language of everything and everyone around him. He also told us that he had to write in English so that others in his class would understand what he had written. During the course of the last academic year, we never observed Sebastián reading or writing in Spanish. He wrote all of his stories and reports in English, as well as his journal entries. He read from chapter books and textbooks written in English even though Dean's classroom library contained several Spanish books.

Although Sebastián relied mostly on English when speaking, reading, and writing, he held very positive attitudes toward both his languages and bilingualism. He repeatedly told us that bilingualism and being able to speak Spanish well enabled him to help friends and family members who are Spanish monolinguals. He also explained that knowing English was essential for successful communication with his teacher. He stated that he liked both of his languages equally and

felt that they were of equal importance. When responding to the questions, "How important is it for you to know how to read and write in English/Spanish?" Sebastián chose the highest rating on our scale for both languages. As he explained, being able to read and write in English was necessary for doing homework, but a strong foundation in Spanish literacy was necessary for corresponding with friends and relatives who live in Mexico.

Raul Carrasco

Overall, Raul used 79% English, 10% Spanish, and 9% both, as reported in the last column of Table 3. Several of the percentages in Table 3 need to be interpreted with caution because of the small number of observations during which Raul talked. For example, because Raul rarely spoke to large groups of people or to the whole class (i.e., eight large group observations the entire year), the percentages for this column are not reliable.

For the most part, Raul's pattern of language use mimics that of the entire group of case-study children already discussed. However, we found a number of interesting deviations from this pattern. The first was the surprisingly large amount of Spanish Raul spoke with the teacher (14% Spanish + 33% code switching = 47%). This difference may be due to the fact that the majority of Raul's observations with his teacher occurred during one-on-one conferences about his writing, which was often in Spanish, at least at the beginning of the year. The second deviation was that Raul's Spanish emerged more during academic on-task activities than during play and other off-task pursuits. This may have reflected his tendency to elicit help from Spanish-speaking peers when he was having difficulty with a particular assignment. Over the course of the year, Raul also showed considerable shift from Spanish to English in his language use, using 20% Spanish at the beginning of the year and 8% at the end.

Not exactly consistent with our observations, Raul told us that he spoke only English with Dean. English was also the language he reported favoring when interacting with the majority of his classmates (16 out of 24). He reported using equal amounts of English and Spanish or greater amounts of Spanish than English with nine of his classmates. He favored English when speaking with five of the six students with whom he interacted most frequently (i.e., close friends and those who sat at his table) and both languages equally with the sixth. When asked to provide reasons for his language choices, Raul told us that his decisions were based on his interlocutors' language proficiencies or preferences. Unlike Sebastián, Raul sometimes contributed to conversations with peers and classmates using only Spanish.

²On the Spanish version of the PPVT all three children scored well within the range of scores obtained from the Mexican metropolitan norming sample—i.e., well within one standard deviation of the Mexican norm.

TABLE 3
Observations (%) in Which Raúl Carrasco Spoke Spanish, English, or Both,
by Interlocutor, Participant Structure, Location, and Activity

Language used	Interlocutor				Participant structure			Location				Activity				Overall (n = 426)
	Peers (n = 271)	Self (n = 112)	Teacher (n = 43)	Entire class (n = 8)	Individual (n = 51)	Small group (n = 243)	Large group (n = 6)	In class (n = 354)	Other room (n = 10)	Cafeteria (n = 8)	Outside (n = 54)	On task (n = 303)	On & off task (n = 11)	Play (n = 39)	Other (n = 73)	
Spanish	12	3	14	100	3	14	0	11	0	25	2	12	9	0	5	10
English	78	90	53	0	94	70	67	77	100	63	89	75	82	92	88	79
Both	8	0	33	0	0	14	0	10	0	13	0	11	0	0	4	9

Note. See note to Table 1.

When bilingual classmates initiated conversations with him, Raúl followed their lead and used the language that they spoke.

Raúl began the school year writing exclusively in Spanish. Getting his teacher to provide feedback and help him with his Spanish writing did not appear to be a problem for Raúl. During the first half of the school year, Dean conferred with Raúl in English about stories written in Spanish, and Raúl usually incorporated his suggestions into subsequent versions of his stories. By January, Raúl had switched to English for writing stories and reports. At the time of our interview in late March, he reported writing mostly in English. Yet despite this shift, Raúl continued to write in Spanish in one journal used for summarizing the day's activities and for taking notes on films shown in class. Although his writing was characterized by a shift to English, Raúl's choice of language for reading was consistent throughout the school year. He read exclusively in English from the library of children's literature in Dean's classroom. When asked why he read in English, he told us that he preferred the English stories to the Spanish ones available in the classroom. He also chose to read English versions of math and social studies textbooks.

Like Sebastián, Raúl held favorable views of bilingualism, biliteracy, and each of his languages. In our interviews, he emphasized the economic rewards associated with being bilingual, or as he put it, "*Puedes ser rico si eres bilingüe*" (you can be rich if you're bilingual). In his interview he also told us that knowing English was essential for working or for shopping, whereas knowing Spanish was essential for communicating with friends from Mexico. When asked which language he preferred, Raúl told us that he liked using English more than Spanish because very few people at school spoke Spanish. Yet he told us that both languages were of equal importance. When asked the questions, "How important is it for you to know how to read and write in English/Spanish well?" Raúl chose the second-highest rating on the 5-point scale. When justifying his responses, he, like Sebastián, attached different functions to Spanish and English literacy: Being able to read and write well in English would help him achieve his ambition of becoming an author, and learning to read and write well in Spanish was a means of enhancing his ability to learn and think in Spanish.

Cristina Galvez

Table 4 shows Cristina's language use patterns in the classroom. She spoke quite a bit of Spanish in the school setting (29% Spanish + 23% Both). The majority of Cristina's Spanish emerged when she was with peers in small groups. Cristina, like the rest of the children, spoke significant amounts of Spanish during lunch and in other classroom settings. Her frequent code switching is evidenced by the relatively

TABLE 4
Observations (%) in Which Cristina Galvez Spoke Spanish, English, or Both,
by Interlocutor, Participant Structure, Location, and Activity

Language used	Interlocutor				Participant structure			Location				Activity				Overall (n = 1,043)
	Peers (n = 734)	Self (n = 182)	Teacher (n = 83)	Entire class (n = 83)	Individual (n = 42)	Small group (n = 487)	Large group (n = 111)	In class (n = 699)	Other room (n = 63)	Cafeteria (n = 47)	Outside (n = 234)	On task (n = 616)	On & off task (n = 62)	Play (n = 66)	Other (n = 299)	
Spanish	42	17	2	5	14	39	11	24	60	51	32	25	29	36	37	29
English	31	77	90	86	86	34	77	52	29	15	40	58	23	36	29	46
Both	24	2	7	10	0	25	12	23	8	30	25	17	40	21	32	23

Note. See note to Table 1.

high percentages of observations in which she used both languages, across most contexts. A common pattern for Cristina was to speak both Spanish and English in tandem during academic tasks and to switch back and forth between the languages while alternating between on-task and off-task activities. During play activities with friends inside and outside the classroom she spoke predominantly in Spanish. Cristina's frequent use of Spanish, however, did not carry over to her speech with Dean as she conducted 90% of her contacts with him in English. Toward the end of the year, Cristina used slightly less Spanish than earlier but did not shift as much from Spanish to English over the course of the observations as did the other two case-study children. In our early observations Cristina spoke more Spanish (49%) than English (30%), but during our last observation day she spoke 40% English and 33% Spanish. Notably, her language use fluctuated greatly from day to day, and her use of one language did not consistently increase or decrease over time. On some days, English made up 80% of her language use; on others, only 20%. This variation suggests that Cristina's use of her two languages is highly context dependent, varying according to what classroom activities are scheduled for the day.

When asked about her language choices at school, Cristina told us that she used mostly English with her teacher. However, unlike the two boys, she relied much more on Spanish when conversing with classmates. She reported using English and Spanish on an equal basis with 8 students and somewhat more Spanish than English with 4 students. She relied exclusively or primarily upon English in her conversations with 11 students. As was true for the boys, Cristina did not rely exclusively on Spanish when talking with any of her classmates. When asked about her language choices with her four closest friends, Cristina claimed to use both languages on an equal basis, citing her interlocutors' bilingualism as the factor underlying this decision.

We observed code switching in many of Cristina's conversations with the bilingual girls in her class. In her conversations with girls that focused on nonacademic topics, code switching often entailed the use of an English phrase or word in the context of a Spanish conversation. A similar pattern characterized conversations that accompanied academic activities. For example, we observed Cristina and her friends speak Spanish as they worked through math problems that they found challenging. They were usually consistent in their use of Spanish throughout these conversations with the exception of references to numbers, which were always in English.

Cristina reported using mostly English when reading and writing. Based on our observations, Cristina began the year writing several stories in Spanish. As was his practice with Raúl, Dean provided Cristina with input on her Spanish writing in the context of writing confer-

ences conducted primarily in English. Despite Cristina's shift to English for writing by January, she often alternated languages while working with other girls on writing tasks or while conferring about her own writing. When jointly composing stories in English, Cristina and her collaborators alternated between English and Spanish when deciding on what they would eventually write in English.

Cristina also holds positive views of bilingualism although, unlike the two boys, she feels that English is more important than Spanish because, in her words, "*asi en todas partes no mds hablan ingles*" (in most places people only speak English). Like the boys, she feels it is important to know both Spanish and English but for different reasons. Spanish is the language used in her home and the only language spoken by many of her family members. Knowing English allows her to function at school and will eventually help her land a good job. When responding to the questions, "How important is it for you to know how to read and write in English/Spanish well?" she chose the highest rating on our scale for both languages, arguing that being literate in each language was essential in her written transactions with people from different language backgrounds (i.e., family members in Mexico and English-speaking teachers in the U.S.).

DISCUSSION

As language minority children progress through the grades, their use of their native languages at school tends to decrease and in many cases disappear altogether. By the time many children reach the fourth grade, even those who previously came from bilingual programs are participating in an English-only instructional milieu. However, we found that the sociolinguistic environment in Dean's fourth-grade classroom, at least during the first 4 months of the school year, contradicted this typical scenario. During this time, we observed Spanish-speaking students in his classroom use considerable amounts of Spanish when conversing about nonacademic topics and when participating in small-group instructional events despite Dean's reliance on English. Our interview data, collected in late March, further contributed to our description of a classroom where Spanish played an important role. Most children in this class reported positive attitudes toward Spanish and bilingualism regardless of their language practices at home or school. Although no student claimed to rely exclusively on Spanish with any one classmate, girls tended to use more Spanish than boys. Moreover, most Spanish-speaking girls told us that they spoke both languages on an equal basis with other Spanish-speaking girls. Some girls, who, like Cristina, reported using both languages on an equal

basis with their friends, tended to code switch when conversing with other children. In contrast, most boys, including Raúl and Sebastián, tended to stick more with one language while conversing with peers.

Why girls used more Spanish than boys may be related in part to differences in their social networks. When responding to our question, "With whom do you most often converse?" boys usually named one or more of the few boys in the class who were not proficient in Spanish, but girls most often named other Spanish-speaking girls. Eight of the nine girls enrolled in the class were Spanish speaking. Merissa, the exception, was a native speaker of Hindi and an infrequent participant in the other girls' social networks both inside and outside of the classroom. In contrast, two of the six non-Spanish-speaking boys enrolled in the class were very popular among all the boys. Our interview data lead us to speculate that the home environment may also help explain gender differences in the children's use of Spanish and English. Most children reported that their mothers used more Spanish than their fathers. As role models for their daughters, mothers may have indirectly influenced their daughters' language choices. Similarly, having an English-speaking male teacher may have affected the language choices of the boys enrolled in the class.

Despite evidence that Spanish played an important role in Dean's class and that students held positive attitudes toward bilingualism and their languages, our data indicate that a shift toward English did indeed characterize the sociolinguistic environment of the classroom. Most children told us that the amount of English they read, wrote, and spoke had increased across the grades. Moreover, data from our observations of the three case-study children document a shift toward English in their oral language practices during the course of a single academic year. Our informal observations throughout the year showed that most of the children who began the year writing in Spanish had switched to English by the end of the year. In fact, during the last 2 months of school, we observed only two students writing in Spanish whereas nearly half of the class had written at least one story, report, or poem in Spanish before January. The Samoan child in the class even wrote a story in Samoan during the first half of the year. This decrease in the amount children were writing in Spanish toward the end of the year also meant that children had fewer opportunities to discuss their Spanish writing with Dean or the rest of the class, which surely contributed to the observed decrease in the amount of oral Spanish observed in the classroom.

This study portrays the complex sociolinguistic environment of the children's classroom. The language choice practices of some children, particularly the boys, are closer to fitting a diglossic pattern (i.e., the allocation of each language to separate domains, interlocutors, or func-

tions), a sociolinguistic phenomenon that has been the subject of considerable controversy in discussions that focus on the maintenance of minority languages (Fishman, 1966; Hamel, in press; Hamel & Sierra, 1983; Petráz, Altinasi, & Hoffman, 1980). In contrast, girls frequently used both languages in their conversations with other bilinguals. Judging from Cristina's performance on measures of language proficiency, this tendency did not necessarily detract from her English and Spanish language ability. In fact, Cristina's code-switching style of language use in the classroom was associated with more use of Spanish and less shift to English over the year.

This study contributes to an understanding of language shift. As we have found in the larger study, the relationship between the different components of language implicated in the phenomenon of language shift (e.g., proficiency, choice, and attitude) may operate somewhat independently of one another. Both our interview and observation data indicate that this discrepancy between language proficiency, attitudes, and choice held true for many of Dean's students. Most notable were the positive attitudes toward bilingualism held by students who varied considerably in their language choice practices.

A question that remains for us, as language educators and advocates of bilingualism, is whether we should be concerned about the sociolinguistic environment of Dean's classroom. Many would argue that in this class Spanish is used sufficiently, is valued, and is allowed to flourish. After all, relatively few bilingual children have access to their native language in instructional settings after they have been deemed proficient in English (McGroarty, 1992). However, we worry that the substantial shift toward English that we observed (in only 9 months) will continue to characterize children's language choice practices across the grades. If this continues, children's use of academic Spanish will certainly diminish, especially if their opportunities to use Spanish at home also decrease. Worse yet, teachers will have lost the opportunity to further develop the linguistic resources that children bring to the school.

This study provides insights for educators interested in making schools places where students continue to use and develop their native languages. No doubt some of Dean's pedagogical perspectives and practices had a favorable impact on students' decisions to use Spanish in the classroom. The fact that Dean knew at least a little Spanish most likely contributed to students' decisions to share their Spanish writing with him. The one-on-one writing conference, in which the student and teacher discussed a student's Spanish story, turned out to be an excellent context for the teacher to use Spanish in a meaningful way in the classroom, especially a teacher like Dean, who felt more confident reading and discussing children's written Spanish than he did speaking

Spanish spontaneously. Dean's student-centered philosophy of teaching may have also contributed to a sociolinguistic environment where students spontaneously used their native language. In cooperative learning groups, an instructional practice grounded in a child-centered approach to teaching, some students, particularly bilingual girls, used Spanish. Yet small-group interactions involving many boys, particularly Sebastián, did not entail the use of much Spanish. Because cooperative modes of instruction do not guarantee the use of native languages, English-medium teachers interested in making sure that children continue to use their native language should be somewhat wary of this approach alone. Teachers may have to develop criteria for grouping students based on their own observations of the context and circumstances that influence students' decisions to use their native language.

We also urge English-medium teachers to consider more explicit ways of incorporating their students' languages into the sociolinguistic environment of their classrooms. It is clear from this study that if one's goal is to foster the maintenance and development of the classroom native languages, the sociolinguistic environment of the classroom cannot be left up to chance. Even in this class, where Spanish was highly valued, significant shift to English occurred during the year. As Sebastián's case strongly suggests, teachers with a child-centered pedagogy do not necessarily have students who use their native language in class. When working with students like Sebastián, it appears, teachers must on occasion insist that their students use their native language.

Students in this study engaged in a few practices that suggest teachers can insist that their students use their native language. Raul's decision to use Spanish when writing in one of his personal journals could be translated into a classroom policy. That is to say, teachers could insist that students use Spanish, or their native language, to maintain at least one journal they periodically share with the teacher or with whomever else the child feels comfortable. At the beginning of the school year, when several children were writing Spanish stories during the 1-hour block of time known as writers' workshop, they were very insistent about translating these stories aloud for non-Spanish speakers during the large-group sharing event that concluded the workshop. Perhaps translation could be used throughout the curriculum in ways that match students up with speakers of their native language. For example, children who write stories in English could translate their stories either aloud, using a tape recorder, or in writing, for a parent or non-English-speaking family member. The recipients of translated stories could also be kindergartners or primary-grade children who share the native language of the authors. Preparing videotaped, audiotaped, or live

performances of native language versions of children's stories for classmates, parents, and other community members represents another potential context for the use and development of children's native languages.

Finally, when contemplating how to enhance the role of minority languages in the curriculum, teachers should never underestimate the role these languages play in children's homes and communities. Features of Dean's pedagogy and personality may have contributed to students' decisions to use Spanish in the classroom, but the fact that the students live in a community where Spanish is valued and used in purposeful ways also affected the sociolinguistic character of their school and classroom. Students who are members of communities where Spanish plays a more subordinate role may be less inclined to use it at school. Consequently, it may be particularly crucial for their native language development to have teachers who insist that children use their native languages to some extent in the classroom. Given the potential for this kind of variation across communities, we see the need for similar studies in settings where native languages play different roles in children's lives outside of school.

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