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**RENEGOTIATING  
CULTURAL *DIVERSITY*  
IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS**

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## CHAPTER 3

# PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT IN MEXICAN-ORIGIN STUDENTS

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Recent perspectives on bilingualism across the disciplines of linguistics, anthropology, and psychology emphasize the positive side of being bilingual and living in an ethnic minority community. For example, a sizable literature on the cognitive functioning of language-minority children who are balanced bilinguals (i.e., with equal or nearly equal levels of proficiency in both of their languages) suggests that bilingualism may promote cognitive growth (Diaz, 1985; Duncan & DeAvila, 1979; Hakuta & Diaz, 1985; Kessler & Quinn, 1980). A growing body of ethnographic research focusing on the everyday lives of bilingual children, their families, and communities emphasizes the range and depth of the social contexts that surround and involve them as well as the skills acquired through operating across cultures (e.g., Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Vasquez, 1992). For example, translation, a common activity for many bilingual children from immigrant backgrounds, represents an occasion when children take on positions of responsibility in their homes and communities. Moreover, recent research suggests that children's involvement in this activity may enhance their metalinguistic awareness and language proficiency (Malakoff & Hakuta, 1991).

Despite these advantages, bilingualism is generally a transitional phase or way station on the road to Americanization for most immigrants (Fishman, 1966; Grosjean, 1982). Historically, children from immigrant families who become bilingual in English and their native language become the parents of English monolinguals (Lopez, 1978; Veltman, 1988).

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According to survey data on the language choices of Latino groups, even Spanish—a language thought to be fairly enduring in the U.S. context and frequently discussed as an important marker of Latino identity—seldom lasts beyond the second or third generation. Despite this evidence of intergenerational shift toward English for most Latino immigrant groups, relatively little is known about the nature of language shift in the children and their families. That is, to what degree and at what level does shift characterize the experience of Latinos in the U.S.?

In this chapter we describe our experiences with two research activities that address this gap in our understanding about bilingualism in the U.S. Both of the studies investigate native language shift and maintenance in children of Mexican descent living in California. Thus far our findings seem to concur with that of other researchers: there is a rapid attrition of Spanish. However, upon closer inspection there are some interesting points to be made about our findings that may be of special significance to educators, especially from the perspective of those who value the maintenance of linguistic diversity in our student population.

Before proceeding with any description of research on language attrition, it is necessary to lay the groundwork by describing what is meant by language shift. Language shift is most often thought of in terms of three components: (1) an individual's actual proficiency in two languages, (2) an individual's language choice, and (3) an individual's attitudes toward the cultures associated with each language. Although these components are clearly related (for example, language choice by necessity entails sufficient proficiency in the two languages to make choice possible), they are related to distinct disciplinary perspectives—proficiency being the principal domain of psycholinguists, choice the principal domain of sociolinguists, and language attitudes of social psychologists.

### THE WATSONVILLE STUDY

In the first study to be described here, Hakuta and D'Andrea (1992) looked at the patterns of language choice, attitudes, and proficiency in high school-aged students of Mexican descent and from different immigration backgrounds. These students were all residents of Watsonville, a community with a large Latino population. Direct assessments of students' language proficiency in Spanish and English and self-reported information on their backgrounds, language proficiency, language choice, and language attitudes were collected for these students. In order to capture the roles of generation and length of residence across the different components of shift, students were divided into six groups:

- Group 1: Born in Mexico, arrived in the U.S. > 10 years old.
- Group 2: Born in Mexico, arrived in the U.S. between the ages of 6 and 10 years old.
- Group 3: Born in Mexico, arrived in the U.S. at age 5 or younger.
- Group 4: Born in the U.S., both parents Mexican born.
- Group 5: Born in the U.S., at least one parent born in the U.S.
- Group 6: Born in the U.S., at least one parent and associated grandparents born in the U.S.

As shown in Figure 3.1, tests of language proficiency revealed the largest difference in English proficiency to exist between Groups 1 and 2. Also, we see that youngsters in Groups 2 through 4 are only slightly different from each other and have acquired English with very little loss of Spanish proficiency. Another way of saying this is that immigrant students who arrived between the ages of 5 and 10 are more similar to students whose parents were born in the U.S. (Groups 3–6) than they are to recently arrived students (Group 1) with respect to English proficiency.

However, in terms of Spanish proficiency, for youngsters born in the U.S. with at least one parent born in the U.S. (Group 5) there is a significant drop in their Spanish language proficiency. In a very real sense, then, Groups 2–4 represent a tremendous window of opportunity for full development of bilingual abilities.

Socially, however, a very different picture emerges from the data, as seen in these students' language choices. As evident in Figure 3.2, there is a trend toward the use of English across all of the groups, even within the groups that evidence strong bilingual proficiency (Groups 2–4). It is clearly this social aspect of language use rather than language proficiency that triggers the loss of bilingualism. In short, native language proficiency appears to be relatively resistant to attrition within generations even though there is a steady increase in the use of English.

Additional data were collected in this study on the attitudes of the students towards bilingualism and their own ethnicity. The results show that attitudinal factors are related to language choice for these students, but not to their language proficiency. Those with a maintenance orientation toward Spanish report that they used it more than students with a more assimilationist view. However, these same Spanish maintenance-oriented students do not necessarily score well on tests of language proficiency. It appears that the complexity of language loss and native language maintenance among bilingual students is considerably underestimated when one looks only at the cognitive and academic aspects of language proficiency. That is, favorable orientations toward the maintenance of

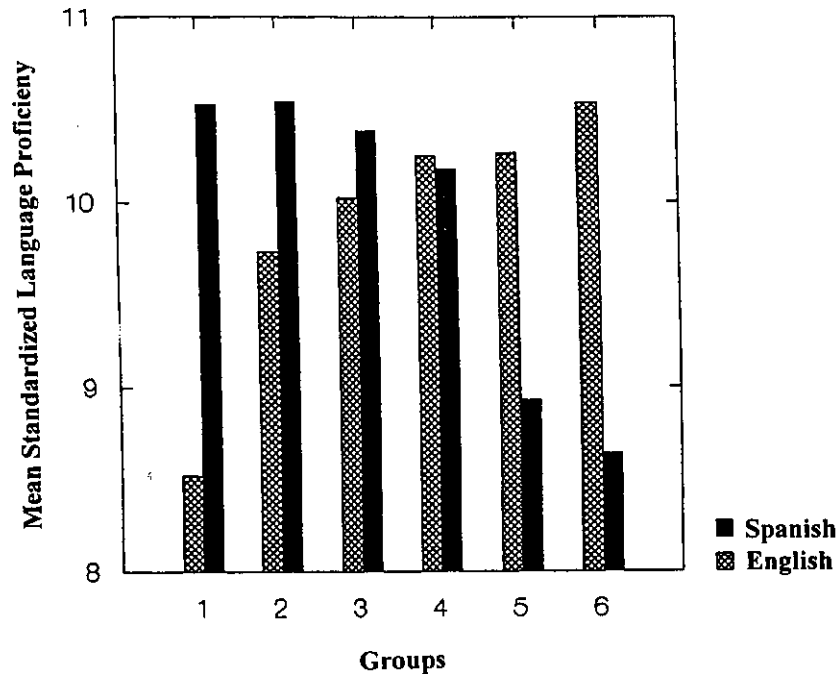


FIGURE 3.1 Mean Standardized Spanish and English language proficiency measures for six groups (Group 1: Born in Mexico, arrived in the USA > 10 years old; Group 2: Born in Mexico, arrived in the USA between the ages of 6 and 10 years old; Group 3: Born in Mexico, arrived in the USA when 5 years old or younger; Group 4: Born in the USA, both parents Mexican born; Group 5: Born in the USA, at least one parent born in the USA; Group 6: Born in the USA, at least one parent and associated grandparents born in the USA). Source: Hakuta & D'Andrea (1992).

Spanish may still hold true and influence children's decisions to use Spanish even though they do not predict their proficiency in that language.

### THE "EASTSIDE" STUDY

Building on this work, we have undertaken a three-year study of variations in language proficiency, choice, and attitude in a suburban Bay Area community that we have called Eastside. Like many communities in Northern California, Eastside has become increasingly more diverse with regard

to income and ethnicity. In the mid-1960s, the community was populated mostly by working-class Anglos; now it is home to immigrants from Southern Europe, the Pacific Islands, and Latin America. Among these groups, working-class immigrants from Mexico are the most numerous, and along with other Latinos, represent more than 50% of the school-age population. To illustrate the trend over time, Figure 3.3 shows the numbers of Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in the elementary school district since the beginning of this immigration trend in about 1964.

### The "Eastside" Community

Before describing this study and our findings thus far, we feel that a few words about Eastside are in order. The presence of the Mexicano community is obvious in Eastside. The streets are alive with commercial and social activity reminiscent of Mexican towns, Spanish is commonly used throughout the commercial as well as the residential sectors of the

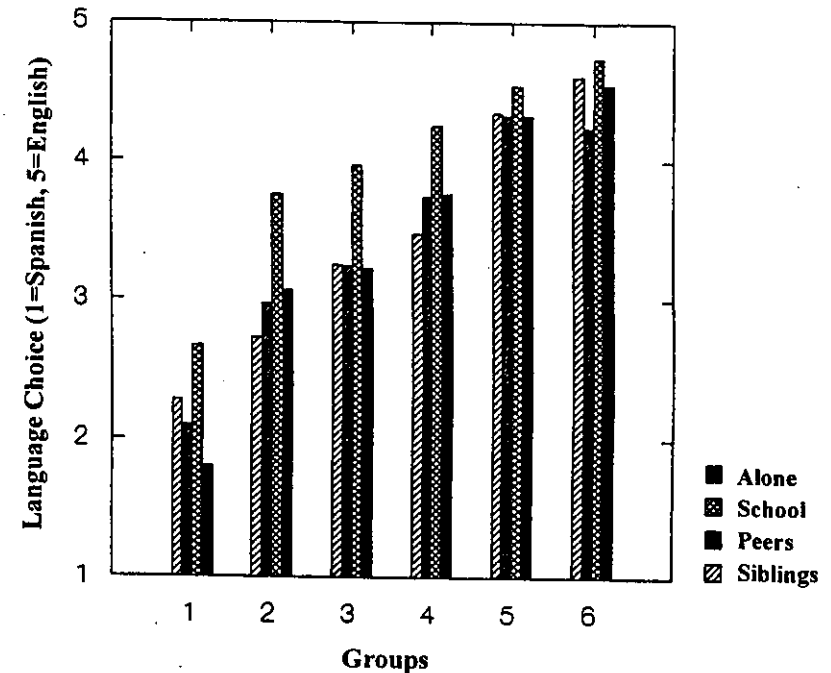


FIGURE 3.2 Language choice with siblings, with peers, for academic purposes at school, and when alone, by group. Source: Hakuta & D'Andrea (1992).

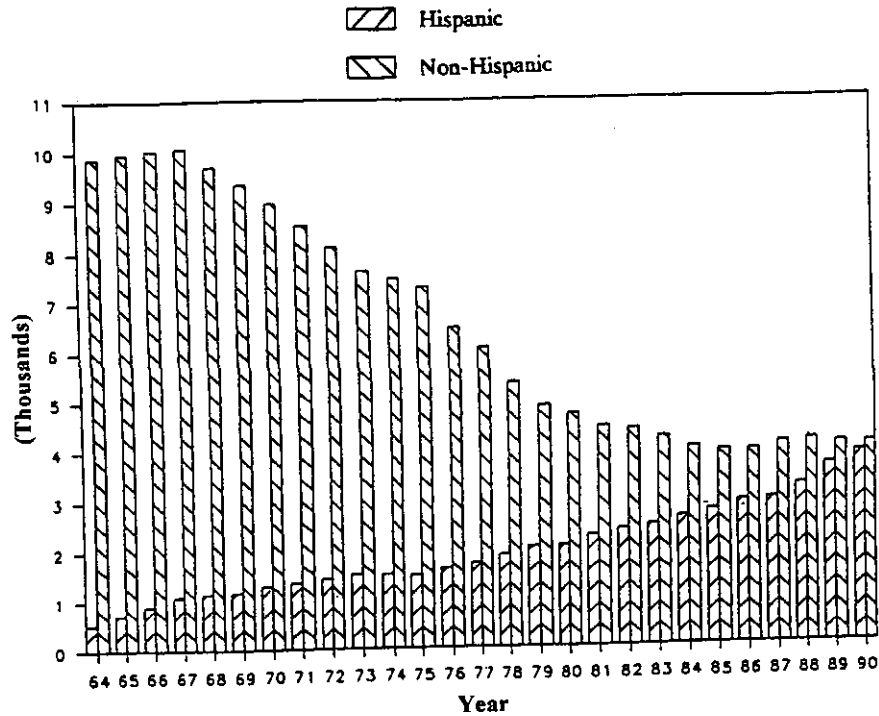


FIGURE 3.3 Numbers of Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in the elementary school district that serves Eastside during 1964-1990.

community, and Mexican traditions are an important feature of everyday life for Eastsiders. Although Eastside is more than 500 miles north of the Mexican border, community members maintain strong ties with Mexico. Many make yearly visits to Mexico to be reunited with family and friends. For others, their connections with Mexico fulfill needs that cannot be met in the U.S. For example, several Eastside families that we know make frequent visits to Tijuana to visit the only doctor they trust. And families who were dissatisfied with the education that their children have received in Eastside schools have sent them to school in Mexico.

### The Study Participants

Participants in this study include 70 children of Mexican descent and their families. Thus far 38 3rd graders, their parents, and in some

cases, their siblings have participated in interviews and activities investigating their language proficiency, attitudes, and choices. Unlike the work done in Watsonville, this study combines qualitative and quantitative techniques and relies on observational as well as self-report data. Again the focus is on children from a variety of immigration backgrounds, with somewhat refined distinctions from those used in the Watsonville study:<sup>1</sup>

- MM: Both mother and child born in Mexico.
- MU/A: Mother born in Mexico, child born in U.S.  
Mother moved to U.S. at age 15 or older.
- MU/C: Mother born in Mexico, child born in U.S.  
Mother moved to U.S. at age 10 or younger.
- UU: Both mother and child born in U.S.

### Preliminary Findings

Although we are at the beginning stages of our research, we have found evidence that concurs with the findings from our previous study. In the case of a preliminary survey used to help identify our sample, we found evidence that participants in this study are also making a rapid shift towards the use of English. Within each of the groups mentioned above, the children use somewhat more English than the adults. The UU group (roughly, second-generation Mexican Americans) has shifted almost completely to English while the children of Mexican-born immigrants (MM, MU/A, and MU/C groups) rely predominantly on Spanish. Interestingly, children of mothers who came from Mexico as children (MU/C) rely on Spanish more than those from the other two immigrant groups. Also, the later-born children of the group whose mothers came as adults (MU/A) tend to use more English than their older siblings.

Though far from complete, our interviews with children and their parents about their language choices and attitudes toward bilingualism are an important source of information about the way they view their social worlds and the role that languages play in these worlds. For example, when we ask children to describe their reasons for using a specific language with a specific interlocutor, they usually tell us that the interlocutor's proficiency or choice of language influenced their language choices. However, some children also refer to ethnicity and culture as factors that influence their language choices (e.g., "Hablo español con él porque es Mexicano/I speak Spanish with him because he is Mexican," "Hablamos inglés porque ella es Americana/We speak English because she is American"), thus giving the impression that languages are to a certain extent delineated by people's cultural affiliations. Sometimes, though very rarely,

this kind of talk leads to more intriguing discussions about the scope of these cultural affiliations. For example, one child felt that the negative attitudes that some Anglo children have towards Mexicanos would be diminished if Anglo children learned Spanish:

Como dijo la niña, como aquella niña güera, a ella no le importaba los mexicanos, no le importaba ninguno. . . . Pero si ella supiera en español y sabía como muchas cosas bonitas que puede aprender uno en el mundo, entonces ella no diera eso de los Mexicanos.

[Like what that girl said, that Anglo girl. She doesn't care about Mexicans. But if she knew Spanish and knew about the many nice things that one can learn about the world, then she wouldn't say that about Mexicans.]

Parents have also talked about the degree to which languages are permeable across social contexts. This is most notable when we ask about the role Spanish plays and should play in their homes. All are committed to the maintenance of Spanish and advocate its use to varying degrees in their homes. Most are confident that their children will not lose Spanish, even though they can provide examples of other children who are no longer proficient in Spanish or who no longer want to use Spanish. Interestingly enough, the one parent who feels that her child is losing her ability to speak Spanish also talks about how the school has influenced language-choice patterns in her home.

Mi esposo habla inglés con los niños ahora porque las maestras le han dicho a él que tiene que ayudarlos para que no atrasen en su ciclo escolar. Cuando los niños no entienden bien no pueden aprender. Entonces le decía la maestra que le hablara más a él en inglés y para las tareas.

[My husband speaks English with the children now because the teachers told him that he has to help them so that they don't fall behind in school. When children don't understand well, they can't learn. So the teacher told him to speak with him (their son) in English (and when helping him with) homework.]

Despite their commitment to Spanish at home, parents do not agree about the role of Spanish in the school. Most are grateful to have their children enrolled in bilingual classes where teachers use Spanish when giving directions and explanations. One parent expressed the less common opinion that Latino children should have access to Spanish instruc-

tion throughout their elementary school careers to combat the loss of that language. As she reasoned:

El inglés aquí lo van a ir aprendiendo. Me preocupa más el español—que no se les olvide. O sea que lo practican bien en escritura, en dictado, y en lectura porque cuando pasan a quinto, sexto grado casi no le van a dejar en español. Entonces yo quiero que adquieran muy buenas bases en español como están haciendo allí (at school).

[Here they'll learn English. I'm more worried about Spanish—that they don't forget it. That is, that they practice writing, dictation, and reading because when they go on to 5th, 6th grade there won't be much Spanish (in school). So I want them to acquire a strong foundation in Spanish like they're doing there (at school).]

As the following comments indicate, some parents worry that the use of Spanish in the classroom will jeopardize their children's acquisition of English.

Teachers should focus on the English just because I think they tend to speak too much Spanish to the Spanish speaking and they get lazy and they want to go the easy way which is the one they understand which is Spanish. I think that loses (confuses) them too sometimes in their English and their academics.

Deberían de practicar mas inglés en la escuela porque casi saben todo el español. Entonces lo que necesitan es el inglés. Tengo mucho interés en que lo aprendan. Me gustaría que aprendan pronto. Mis hermanos tienen muchos años aprendiendo (inglés) y lo han aprendido escuchando puro inglés.

[They should practice more English at school because they know Spanish. So they need English. I'm very interested in having them learn it. I would like them to learn soon. My brothers have spent many years learning (English) and they have learned by listening to only English.]

Overall, these findings are consistent with the attitudinal data toward language and schooling obtained from Mexican-American (and other ethnic minority) adults in the Detroit area (Lambert & Taylor, 1990), who find strong support for the maintenance of home language and culture, but some hesitation when it comes to the role to be played by the schools.

The data we have collected so far only begin to probe the complexities of language shift in this community. The data, for example, are based

on interviews and thus allow inferences and explanations only about self-reported language practice (generally touching on the technical fields of social cognition and metalinguistic awareness). As we proceed, an important component of our studies will be observations of children's language-use practices, across a variety of settings, using case study methodology. For example, we will identify and describe key events when Spanish prevails in the lives of children and their families. We will also investigate the degree to which language issues—particularly those having to do with native language maintenance and loss—occupy the attention of parents and other community members. Finally, we will continue to work toward gaining a better understanding of the role of the two languages in the community. For example, it will be useful to know about the views and language-use practices of established and influential community members. We are interested in finding out the degree to which bilingualism really places people at an economic advantage and which bilinguals seem to reap the economic benefits of being bilingual. Thus, a series of questions will be used to explore the validity of the commonly held belief that bilingualism will lead to economic advantages and enhance one's standing in the job market.

Thus far, our research moves us towards a more explicit definition of shift for Mexicanos living in the U.S. Although by no means complete, our findings indicate the need to consider shift at two different levels: use and proficiency. From the standpoint of use, shift appears to be occurring both across and within generations, whereas shift in language proficiency appears to be an intergenerational phenomenon. Thus, children whose use of Spanish decreases with time may not lose their proficiency. However, as adults they may not be inclined to establish a Spanish-speaking home environment that will lead to Spanish-language development in their children.

### COMBATING SHIFT/PROMOTING NATIVE LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE: IS IT POSSIBLE?

As both advocates of bilingualism and language educators, we are somewhat disheartened by the view of shift we have presented. We are constantly struggling with the sense that the phenomenon we are describing is inevitable and that much about the children's contexts and experiences contributes to shift. Certainly, the visibility of the English-only movement attests to the pervasiveness of antibilingual views in the larger society (Crawford, 1989). Schools, even bilingual education programs, have done little to counteract this trend. In fact, most bilingual education

programs in this country have contributed to a deficit view of bilingualism. In general, the acquisition of English and eventual transitioning of language-minority students into an English-only curriculum is the primary goal of bilingual programs.<sup>2</sup>

A possible interpretation of our findings would be to recast shift as a problem of making sure children retain the kinds of attitudes that lead to their continued use of Spanish across settings. It is worth underscoring the fact that standard arguments for transitional bilingual education programs in this country have framed the issue around the importance of establishing cognitive and academic language proficiency in the native language as a basis for the development of those abilities in English (Cummins, 1981). Although a cognitive and academic base in the two languages is clearly important for school success, social and attitudinal aspects of language may perhaps be even more critical in the case of native language maintenance.

Thus, from our perspective of native-language maintenance, a worthwhile goal would be to influence the attitudes of those who are part of the social milieu available to children outside of their homes. Schools that foster positive attitudes about Spanish, as well as make bilingualism a goal for children from a variety of backgrounds, may represent a move towards this kind of social milieu. Another means of encouraging native-language maintenance would be for teachers to capitalize on the community- and home-based language-use practices involving Spanish that are available to bilingual children. By incorporating and building upon these language-use practices in the classroom, teachers would be providing students with familiar and authentic contexts for native-language development.

Drawing on our combined experiences, we have firsthand knowledge of two occasions when schooling has taken on one of these approaches. The first example is the instance of a school district taking an active role in advancing bilingualism as a goal for all students. What is particularly interesting is the evolution of this commitment in the context of a community not known for liberal attitudes toward bilingualism. In the case of the second example, a teacher organized her high school Spanish curriculum around translation, an activity that was part of the everyday experiences of her Latino students.

### Two-Way Bilingual Education in a Northern California Community

Bilingual education has been part of the educational scene in a town we call "Lawson"—a community of 8500 people located in the Northern California wine country—since 1979. The goal of the original program was to move limited English proficient (LEP) students into the regular cur-

riculum. According to former program participants, teachers barely proficient in Spanish themselves seldom used it in their classrooms.

In the early 1980s, "Antonio Vargas," a migrant-education teacher new to the district, began laying the groundwork for a bilingual program that would provide Anglo and Latino children with opportunities to develop oral fluency and literacy in Spanish and English. Vargas, who was well aware of the need for district, parental, and community backing for the program to work, embarked on a campaign to educate teachers, district administrators, community members, and parents about the benefits of bilingualism. His approach included informing board members of other maintenance-oriented bilingual education programs, involving them in a variety of relevant staff development opportunities (e.g., Spanish-language courses, methods of organizing instruction in two languages), and becoming a key figure in community activities (e.g., joining Rotary, organizing a sister-cities program with a Mexican community). In addition, he developed a good relationship with the staff of the local newspaper, which has continued to spotlight the accomplishments of the bilingual program to this day.

Vargas also enlisted the support of the district superintendent, who gave him and two of the district's elementary school principals the go ahead to write the Title VII grant that funded the bilingual education program from 1983-1988. In this new program, unlike many bilingual programs, student enrollment was fairly evenly distributed between Latino and Anglo students and the development and maintenance of Spanish as well as English was a central goal. According to Vargas, the superintendent supported his efforts and continued to give him free rein to seek ways to improve and build on the program once it was funded. One of the improvements he envisioned and worked toward was to set the stage for a Spanish-immersion strand so that Anglo and Latino children would receive almost all of their instruction in Spanish.

Once again, Vargas embarked upon a campaign of informing the community, the school board, and school administration about Spanish-immersion programs. Initially, he and the bilingual teachers in Lawson discussed articles describing immersion programs in Canada and the U.S. Later these articles were circulated among district administrators, school board members, and parents. With the administrators' support, Vargas invited an expert on Spanish-immersion education to make a series of presentations for parents in the spring of 1986. Afterward, Vargas took a group of ten Anglo parents to a nearby community to visit their two-way Spanish-immersion program. As one parent put it, "We were excited about immersion education before our visit. But we were convinced afterward."

In May of 1986, Vargas and a group of interested parents, most of

them Anglo, obtained permission from the school board for a Spanish-immersion classroom at the kindergarten level. Because the district did not approve additional financial support for this pilot project, parents raised funds to buy Spanish-language materials and books and to send the immersion teacher to conferences on immersion education. They also recruited new parents into the program and worked with district administrators to determine criteria for admittance into the Spanish Immersion Program. By this time the parents interested in immersion education had joined together to form a Lawson chapter of Advocates for Language Learning (L.A.L.L.), which included, for the most part, Anglo parents interested in promoting the spread of second-language immersion education throughout the country. "John Dolan," the president of this group, says that his vision "is to have immersion education in 50% of the schools in this country because kids in immersion programs achieve academically as well as or better than if they were educated in English, plus they learn Spanish. They get everything and then some."

Since the program began, a grade level has been added each year so that at the time of this writing, the program has grown to include Spanish-immersion classes in kindergarten through 4th grade. Thus far, teachers use only Spanish with their students, both in and out of the classroom. Another teacher, aide, or parent offers 20 to 40 minutes of English language development, which usually consists of reading to children in English or participating in a hands-on activity. Students also participate in the range of special activities that are available to the entire school in English (e.g., music classes, art classes, assemblies). Initial literacy is introduced in Spanish and thus far teachers have decided to wait until the second half of 3rd grade before providing literacy instruction in English.

A number of factors contributed to the establishment of this two-way program for bilingual education. First and perhaps foremost, Vargas' visions and efforts have had an incredible impact on the development of bilingual education in the community. Administrators, teachers, and parents agree that he was responsible not only for getting the bilingual program off the ground but also for the dual-language development goal of the program. Vargas also made sure that other key figures shared his vision. He communicated his plan to teachers, administrators, parents, and community members and convinced them of its merit.

Although his success must be attributed, in part, to characteristics that are unique to him, he employed strategies that could be adopted by others. To convince those in power of the efficacy of a bilingual approach that capitalizes on students' linguistic resources, he backed up his ideas with articles and information about current programs. He also brought in experts to work with administrators and teachers. As he stated, "I did



nothing that was a surprise," meaning he carefully laid the groundwork for each innovation he planned. Working gradually, he first presented the idea to key figures (e.g., the superintendent and school board members), he then showed them effective programs, and finally, he encouraged them to talk to experts in the field.

Vargas fostered an environment where teachers and parents, as well as administrators interested in bilingual education, felt that they had a voice in the decision-making process. Although in many ways Vargas brought bilingual education to the community, he was supported in his efforts by a superintendent who believed in giving his staff free rein. Moreover, once convinced of the efficacy of the approach, the superintendent actively supported Vargas and the teachers he hired in their efforts to implement and improve the bilingual program. Fortunately, the district's new superintendent also supports the program and continues to back the efforts of those involved in extending its scope to English-only classrooms.

The fact that Vargas and a core group of teachers shared a similar vision of bilingual education cannot be overlooked. Obviously, Vargas played an important role in laying the groundwork for this vision. However, many key players did not need Vargas to convince them of the benefits to be derived from a bilingual approach. As one teacher put it, "Many of us have been committed to bilingual education and dual language maintenance for years." Interviews reveal that many people in the community have had experiences that have led to or enhanced their appreciation of culture and linguistic diversity. For example, many program participants include former Peace Corps volunteers, the sons and daughters of farm workers living in California and the Southwest, immigrants from countries where bilingualism is respected, and people who have lived abroad for extended periods of time, most notably in Latin American countries.

The community context also played an important role in the establishment of this unique program. Our knowledge of the community suggests that school-related issues have not led to divisiveness across ethnic boundaries, a main feature surrounding the history of bilingual education and desegregation in other communities. This may, in part, be attributed to the more liberal (and possibly benevolent) attitudes of the Anglo residents of Lawson toward Latino immigrants. Anglo school administrators repeatedly reported that citizens of the majority community had a tradition of responding to the needs of Latino families. The churches were frequently cited as institutions that provide for needy Latinos. Latino as well as white residents of the community also reported that the conservative white growers and business people had more respect

for Latinos, especially Mexicano immigrants, than their counterparts in other parts of the Southwest. As one Chicano teacher who has lived in many different regions of the Southwest put it, "Even the most rednecked ones are not as bad as they are in other places."

Finally, the size of the school district may have had a significant influence on the development of bilingual education in Lawson. Obviously, a small program, operating in a small district of only two elementary schools, can make certain changes more easily than a very large district. It is likely that communication between administrators and teachers follows a much more direct line than in larger districts, thereby contributing to an articulation of shared goals and inclusionary strategies for involving teachers in decision making. Also, because the Latino population has not yet reached the proportions of larger school districts, administrators have not had to deal with the complexities of a large immigrant population.

In many respects, the establishment of this program stands out as a laudable accomplishment. It is a rare example of an occasion when the linguistic resources of a minority community have been considered valuable and made available to the majority community. At the same time, we find certain features that led to the institutionalization of this program worrisome. The most notable has been the unequal involvement and access to the schooling process on the part of Anglo and Latino parents. Anglo parents, not Latino parents, played a critical role in generating the needed support and resources that led to the establishment of the Spanish-immersion program. They continue to wield more influence over the decision-making process. For example, a group of Anglo parents have demanded that they play a role in the hiring and firing of Spanish-immersion teachers. According to teachers, they are also much more inclined to question or complain about what goes on in their children's classrooms than Latino parents. In our opinion, there is something undeniably ironic about an instructional program that has done so much to recognize and incorporate an important resource of its minority students, in this case the Spanish language, in a school context where Anglo parents' voices and concerns predominate.

#### A Translation Approach to Teaching Spanish for Spanish Speakers

Our second example, one teacher's approach to teaching Spanish to Spanish speakers, has particular relevance to those interested in facilitating the development and maintenance of native languages in language-minority students. Providing native Spanish speakers with instruction in Spanish at the high school level is not new. However, these classes often

resemble Spanish as Foreign Language classes that are available to nonnative Spanish-speaking high school students (i.e., the curriculum focuses on grammatical features of Spanish and communicative skills more appropriate for tourists than native Spanish speakers). From our vantage point, this approach to language learning does little to foster the kinds of language abilities and attitudes that contribute to native-language maintenance: These attitudes and abilities include student awareness about the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of their bilingualism. By psycholinguistic awareness we mean the knowledge and appreciation of the formal aspects of language, such as phonology (e.g., the /p/ and /b/ sounds are distinguished differently in English than in Spanish) and grammar (e.g., Spanish systematically marks the distinction between imperfect and preterit past tense on verbs, whereas English does not). Sociolinguistic awareness refers to knowledge and appreciation of language use and variation, such as the fact that people from different regions of the country speak differently.

Aída Walqui, a high school teacher in Salinas, relies on translation as a means of enhancing language awareness in her Spanish-speaking students of Mexican/Latino origin. As is the case for many language-minority students, translation is an everyday activity in their homes and communities. By involving students in translation and interpretation activities, Walqui's goals for them are to develop native-language and second-language proficiency, awareness of community language use and needs, and the ability to explore further education and job opportunities in the field of translation and interpretation. To achieve these goals, Walqui's students take part in translation and interpretation tasks, study sociolinguistic issues relating to both languages and multilingual situations (e.g., the English-only movement, dialect variation), and engage in community studies of bilingualism.

Interpretation tasks focus on a range of genres and contexts. For example, at the request of social studies teachers who teach in Spanish, Walqui's students translated texts about specific historical periods (e.g., materials on Nazi Germany) that were available only in English. In this activity, the students realized that they needed additional background information to translate the materials and conducted the necessary library research. In another project, students dubbed an English-only, Smithsonian-produced, video documentary on artist Diego Rivera. This project not only provided students with the opportunity to hone their research skills, it also fostered their appreciation for the painter's blending of painting and politics.

Walqui has also organized the classroom as a resource for the community. For example, one year the students advertised their services as

translators over the radio and television and thus generated numerous requests for them to translate letters, official documents, and brochures for community organizations. By having students reflect on and critique translations, Walqui has also encouraged them to develop an appreciation for literary translations. Comparisons of translations to originals provides adolescents with a sense of the strategies that translators employ as well as the nuances in the kinds of meanings that different translations of the same text evoke.

A formal evaluation of Walqui's program was conducted in which students wrote essays that compared alternative translations of poetry (one which provided a more or less verbatim translation, and another that took greater liberties in interpretation). A content analysis of the essays revealed that students in the program gave more relevant and reasoned arguments for choosing the better translation, as compared to a group of high-achieving students in a Spanish-for-Spanish speaking class (Villarreal, 1990).

## CONCLUSION

From our perspective, we are enjoying a period of increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in this country. In many schools, students who speak languages other than English are now in the majority. These bilingual individuals represent the best hope this nation has of developing competency in languages other than English. However, if history repeats itself—and if our own observations and the data of sociologists are correct—the native language of many of these students will not be passed on to their children. Our inquiry into the process of language shift suggests that shift is not a cognitive necessity, but one that is powerfully conditioned by social attitudes and beliefs. Further, we have pointed to some convincing demonstrations of school-based efforts to combat shift. Interestingly, these programs are not founded on cognitive principles, but rather, build on the social and community base of the language. We believe that in the absence of such social engagement, language proficiency, no matter how aggressively and elaborately developed, will not translate into sustained maintenance.

## NOTES

1. The decision to make the mother the target parent was influenced by two factors: (1) a desire to adhere to a consistent criteria when selecting children in groups MU/A, MU/C, and UU, and (2) demographic information, con-

sistent with our impressions, that mothers play a more important role in language transmission to their children than do fathers. (Veltman, 1983)

2. In a nationally representative survey of programs for limited English proficient students conducted in the early 1980s, only 15% of the programs reported a maintenance philosophy (Development Associates, 1984).

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