



Exploring Biliteracy: Two Student Case Examples of Writing as a Social Practice

Author(s): Luis C. Moll, Ruth Sáez and Joel Dworin

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *The Elementary School Journal*, Vol. 101, No. 4, Special Issue: Writing (Mar., 2001), pp. 435-449

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1002131>

Accessed: 15/11/2012 15:18

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The University of Chicago Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Elementary School Journal*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Exploring Biliteracy: Two Student Case Examples of Writing as a Social Practice

Luis C. Moll

University of Arizona

Ruth Sáez

University of Puerto Rico

Joel Dworin

*Southwest Educational Development Laboratory,
Austin, Texas*

Abstract

This article addresses issues related to biliteracy development in children. It presents 2 case examples as illustrations, 1 of "incipient" biliteracy, obtained in a kindergarten classroom, and 1 of "instructed" biliteracy, obtained in a third-grade classroom. Both examples highlight how children use the social processes and cultural resources at hand to develop their literate competencies in Spanish and English. In addition, special challenges, such as the predominance of reductionist forms of schooling, and special resources, as found in "additive" circumstances for learning, are discussed in relation to the formation of biliteracy in classrooms.

When children become literate, it is usually considered a remarkable accomplishment. After all, becoming literate represents an impressive achievement by children, as they actively develop "theories," conceptual constructions, to understand written language, acquire new knowledge about how these representations work, and learn how to make meaning with written language. As Ferreiro (1986, 1996) proposed, in facing such a complex system of representation, children need to go through a process of reconstruction, that is, of reconceptualizing this cultural object, the written system, into an object of knowledge in order to assimilate it or make it their own.

But becoming literate is not solely an individual accomplishment. Children inherit the historical conventions of written language and learn them with the assistance of others (adults and peers) in specific socio-cultural contexts or settings. We are referring here to more than the general circumstances for learning—to how the specific ideas and activities that constitute those cir-

The Elementary School Journal
Volume 101, Number 4

© 2001 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved.
0013-5984/2001/10104-0005\$02.00

cumstances help determine what literacy (or literacies) may come to mean for children or how it may form part of their lives.

The intellectual consequences of becoming literate have been explored vigorously and from several perspectives (see Cole & Nicolopoulou, 1992; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Wagner, Venezky, & Street, 1999). Olson (1987), for instance, stressed how becoming literate creates new options for thinking by mediating access to the valued resources of a culture, including its literary, religious, scientific, philosophical, and governmental resources, in short, by providing access to society's written archival forms and institutions. But in particular, Olson (1994, 1995) emphasized how through literacy children are introduced to radically new ways of thinking about language. He underscored the development of metalinguistic awareness—the acquisition of concepts for talking and thinking about language—as the central intellectual consequence of becoming literate.

Others have emphasized a more context-specific perspective on the relation between becoming literate and its intellectual implications, if any (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1995). This perspective underscores the need to study what people do with literacy and how what they do is shaped by the cultural conventions and ideologies found within specific social settings or institutions, such as what happens (or fails to happen) in school. In this respect, for example, Wells (1989) addressed the possibilities of developing in schools what he refers to as "literate thinking": those uses of language in which its symbolic potential is deliberately exploited as a tool for thinking (p. 253). And Wolf (1990) called for "reflective literacy": opportunities for students, including elementary school children, "to think about what exactly literacy does for a person and how it changes how they work and think" (p. 134). Both authors address children acquiring control over the (mediational) means of expression and thinking, that is, children learning how to exploit their own

linguistic resources to serve communicative or intellectual goals.

If becoming literate can be considered a transforming event, a developmental landmark in any child's life, as Vygotsky (1978), among others, suggested, then becoming literate in two languages, especially in childhood, must truly be something special. Consider that all of the intellectual advantages cited above, from gaining access to valued cultural resources, to developing metalinguistic awareness, to deliberately exploiting literacy as a tool for thinking, may be enhanced, amplified, if you will, and facilitated by children becoming literate in two languages. Or so it would seem.

It is somewhat surprising, therefore, given the predominance of bilingualism in the world and the proliferation of studies about literacy, that there is a paucity of research on becoming literate in two languages, or more.¹ In what follows, therefore, we start by reviewing selective literature on biliteracy, providing a sense of the state of the field. We then present two case study examples of biliteracy, gathered from kindergarten and third grade, concentrating on depicting writing, the theme of this special issue, as a social practice, that is, as a practice mediated by the social organization of classrooms, including broader social and ideological factors (Moll & Dworin, 1996; see also Barton & Hamilton, 1998). These examples do not form part of a systematic study of biliteracy *per se* (but see Dworin, 1996); rather, they represent our attempts at exploring biliteracy by selecting revealing examples gathered from our previous investigations and examples that represent children in various grades and circumstances (see Moll & Dworin, 1996).²

For present purposes, we start with examples from a kindergarten class and then move to third grade, what we refer to, respectively, as examples of "incipient" and "instructed" biliteracy. Our first case study example focuses on how two kindergartners produce bilingual text, even before coming to control the conventions of alpha-

MARCH 2001

betic literacy in either language. We highlight how, within the conditions of their classroom, the children themselves function as "cultural agents" as they try to capitalize on their interests and experiences and represent them symbolically in interacting with others.

Our second case study example, gathered in a bilingual third-grade classroom, concentrates on those special aspects of literacy that Wells (1989) labeled "literate thinking," in this instance, how writing in two languages is used as a tool for thinking. The example features the bilingual writing of one of the students (see also Moll & Whitmore, 1993; Whitmore & Crowell, 1994). We highlight three aspects of the student's writing that illustrate key characteristics of her biliteracy: how she is able to read in one language and write about what she reads in the other; how she uses her lived experiences in one language to produce text in the other language; how she collaborates with another student in (deliberately) creating a new and bilingual text. We conclude with a discussion of special challenges and resources in creating the necessary conditions for schooled biliteracy (see also Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 1998).

Overview of the Literature

Studies of biliteracy have been primarily of three types. The first one involves quasi-experimental studies. These studies usually feature matched samples of monolinguals and bilinguals performing a series of contrived, well-defined tasks under controlled conditions. Performance on the tasks attempts to shed light on a specific component or aspect of reading or writing, for example, the speed of processing words or the strategies for word segmentations in two languages (see, e.g., Geva, Wade-Woolley, & Shany, 1997; Tolchinsky & Teberosky, 1998; see also Durgunoglu & Verhoeven, 1998). A concern is often to document what advantages, if any, bilingualism offers the subjects. A recent example would be the work of Bialystok (1997), who investigated preschool

children's emerging concepts of print. She contrasted the performance of a sample of monolingual children to two kinds of bilinguals (French/English; Mandarin/English), equally proficient in both languages, on two tasks that assessed knowledge of correspondence between print and language. The results indicated advantages of the bilingual children in understanding the representational properties of written language.

A second line of research features studies that focus on process by isolating reading and writing for analysis, often within a case study format (e.g., Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). For example, Jiménez, García, and Pearson (1995, 1996) have presented a case study of a proficient (Spanish/English) bilingual reader, a sixth grader, whom they contrast with a proficient English-monolingual and a less proficient bilingual reader. They report that although the proficient bilingual reader articulated a logocentric or word-driven view of reading, paying special attention to vocabulary, something not present in her English-monolingual counterpart, she also emphasized meaning construction as central to her reading. As well, she displayed considerable ability in using Spanish and English cognates as a reading strategy, especially in deciphering words and in monitoring her comprehension of texts in either language, showing an "integrated" view of reading in both her languages (see also Calero-Breckheimer & Goetz, 1993). In contrast, the less proficient bilingual reader considered her bilingualism a source of confusion, seemed to display "fragmented" strategies for reading, and could not use the metalinguistic knowledge facilitated by her bilingualism to decipher text. It seems that except for exceptional readers, the successful integration of reading strategies across languages, such as the use of metalinguistic knowledge to monitor comprehension, may necessitate considerable instruction and practice.

The third line of study, and the emphasis of this article, involves the analysis of

biliteracy as part of broader social contexts, such as homes or classrooms.³ The classroom research generally addresses the conditions for learning or the development of the children's work in one or both languages (see, e.g., Hornberger, 1992; Howard & Christian, 1997; Langer, Bartolomé, Vásquez, & Lucas, 1990; Maguire, 1994; Moll & Dworin, 1996; Reyes & Costanzo, 1999). Dworin (1996), for example, studied children's English-Spanish biliteracy development by examining three interrelated aspects of a second/third-grade bilingual classroom: (1) the classroom as a social system of instruction; (2) the teacher's perspective and philosophy; and (3) the students' literate practices and perspectives on learning. In particular, he explored the ways that the teacher organized the children's work to maximize peer interactions, thus promoting naturalistic language use, including code switching, so that the students themselves became important resources for each other's language and literacy learning. The study brings into question the traditional emphasis on individual learning and the common assumptions about the concepts and roles of "first" and "second" language in literacy learning within academic activities. Dworin suggests the importance of understanding bilingual children as bilinguals by recognizing the interplay of languages in bilinguals, thus proposing that one must understand biliteracy to include special forms of literacies and discourses not found in English monolingual classrooms.

In terms of writing in two languages, the most prominent work has been that of Edelsky (1986, 1989). Her studies involve both classroom observations and the collection of multiple writing samples over a prolonged time. An important contribution of her work has been to criticize fallacies about literacy learning in bilingual contexts (see also Barrera, 1983). Most of these fallacies are adaptations of beliefs common in monolingual settings, such as that oral proficiency precedes literacy learning; however, Edelsky observed a number of children

during the course of her research who were writing in their "second language" (English) prior to having oral ability in that language. Another fallacy is that a fixed sequence for learning is desirable in a second language, instead of considering how multiple paths are available for becoming literate in two languages. Edelsky (1989) concluded that practice in any given classroom will be influenced by a host of locally varying factors arising from many larger contexts, resulting in considerable variability of instruction among classrooms.

Our past research has also emphasized the importance of students' meaning-making strategies and the role of teachers in mediating children's active involvement in multiple activities with literacy (see, e.g., Moll & Dworin, 1996; Moll & González, 1994; Moll & Whitmore, 1993; see also Martínez & Moore-O'Brien, 1993; Whitmore & Crowell, 1994). The case study examples presented below are in line with this type of work.

Incipient Biliteracy

These initial examples were collected in a bilingual kindergarten class with a holistic emphasis on children using print in a variety of forms to make meaning. It is a crucial characteristic of this kindergarten that even if the children cannot write conventionally, their intellectual work is respected and their uses of both languages are facilitated and encouraged. In contrast to classrooms emphasizing copying, in this classroom the children engage intensely in writing. Sometimes the teacher suggests a subject or genre. Other times she demonstrates the writing, like in a writing workshop. The majority of the time, however, the children are left to freely explore writing, selecting the topics they wish. At times they write notes to others, labels, signs, journal entries, stories, and so on. Thus, the genres vary as the functions and needs vary.

We quote from the field notes (of Ruth Sáez) in introducing the first example, fea-

MARCH 2001

turing Krystal, a 5-year-old Mexican-American student:

While observing the children write, I noticed that when asked to read what they had written, they answered in the language they were asked. When asked in Spanish, they answered in Spanish, and when asked in English, they responded in English . . . I approached Krystal and told her that I knew that she was doing a lot of writing and that I was interested in it. I asked (in Spanish) if she would write something. She immediately agreed and said (in Spanish) she would write about the garden the children (in her class) had planted (in the school's yard). She began to write. She (first) drew many plants on a horizontal line. (see Fig. 1)

When Krystal was done, she showed Ruth her "writing"; after complimenting her, Ruth asked Krystal to read it to her. Ruth reports: "She looked distressed, and after looking at me and at her paper, she began to write." It was, Ruth observed, as if Krystal realized that Ruth was asking her to produce not a drawing but an alphabetic script, and that it was from such a script that she was expected to "read" her text; she

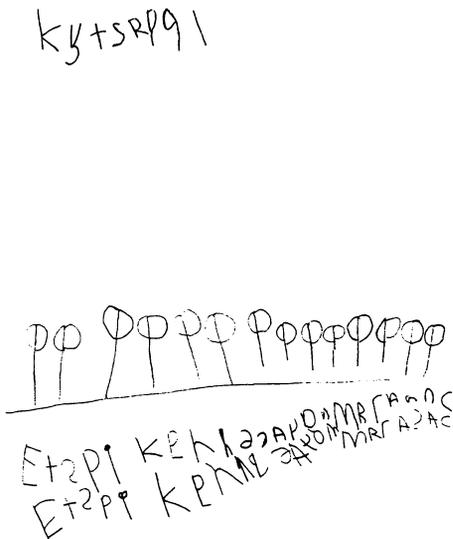


FIG. 1.—Krystal's writing

needed to say something about the garden, and the drawing would not do, at least not in this instance.

Krystal then wrote the first string of conventional script under her drawing. As Ferreira (1990, p. 15) has pointed out, the difference between drawing and writing for a child like Krystal is in the way the lines are organized. When she draws, the lines are organized following an object's contour; when she writes the lines do not follow the object's shape. In changing from drawing to writing, Krystal recognizes that letter forms are arbitrary, in the sense that they do not reproduce the form or shape of the object, and that the letters are ordered in a linear fashion, characteristics that appear early in young children's writing. Also notice that the letters are varied, and that they start and end according to the length of the drawing that preceded them.

Once she was finished, Ruth asked Krystal to read it to her; as the child "read," she pointed to the script, the string of letters. At first each letter represented a noun or a verb, but not articles; she read deliberately as follows: "El jardín, que crezca el jardín rápido, pa' que crezcan las matitas, pa' que crezcan las flores, las zanahorias, . . ." ["The garden, that the garden grow rapidly, so that the plants grow, so that the flowers grow, the carrots, . . ."]

Notice that the string of letters now represented more than the garden, including qualities of that garden, although children often recreate similar texts from pictures. After the middle of the line, perhaps noticing that she was running out of text but had plenty of letters left, Krystal switched strategies, and each letter began to represent a syllable so that she could conclude the text and the remaining script at the same time: ". . . las ce-bo-llas, pá que crez-ca el jardín." [" . . . the onions, so that the garden grow."]

Krystal knows that she cannot have letters left over, that the script must end with the story, that there is a correspondence between the oral words and their symbolic

referents. Krystal can also switch “theories” of reading depending on the circumstances, or in dealing with the conflict presented by the length of the string of letters, as we infer is the case here. She started with a notion that each letter represented a word, then switched to a syllabic hypothesis, that each letter represented a syllable. It is not uncommon for children to hold multiple notions about print, as Ferreiro (1991) has shown. Krystal, however, uses any letter for any syllable, with no correspondence between letters and the particular syllables they may represent. We did not notice that she used any particular letter or word to represent any sound. That is, she is not using the sound pattern of the words, in either language, as we show, to organize the written representation.

After her “reading” in Spanish, Ruth asked Krystal if she could write the text in English. Krystal nodded affirmatively. Ruth asked her how she would write it in English, and she responded: “Igualito que aquí.” [“The same as this.”] She then began to write under the Spanish (see second line of script in Fig. 1). As she wrote, Krystal looked at the Spanish text and copied one letter after another. It is as if Krystal figured that if one is going to write the same thing in another language, the text better look identical; indeed, she took great pains to make sure that the script looked the same. So her initial hypothesis about biliteracy is semantically driven: the same meaning requires the exact script, regardless of language. We are reminded of many cases in early bilingualism in which the children can speak both languages but, if asked, do not know which one is which, for they can use either language to communicate the same meaning. Here, it is as if the script is neutral; it must look the same if the same thing is being “said” in either language. We assume that this lack of graphic differentiation is also aided by both languages sharing the same alphabet (with minor variations); we might not find this phenomenon if the child

were asked to write in English and Chinese, for instance.

Ruth then asked Krystal to read what she had written in English. Krystal answered in Spanish: “Estoy cansada” [“I am tired.”] She then left to join her classmates who were leaving the classroom to go play outside. Was she tired? Did she want to go out to play? Or were the demands to reproduce the story orally in English too much for her or too taxing? After all, it would have been difficult to retell the same story twice, without assistance from the text.

Ruth also worked with another student named Aarón. This boy had developed a reputation in this classroom as a songwriter and lyricist. The teacher and Ruth approached him to ask him if he would write a song for Ruth. We quote from Ruth’s field notes:

The teacher is standing next to Aarón, who is known to be a songwriter. She asks: “Aarón, ¿le quieres escribir una canción a Ruth?” [“Aarón, do you want to write Ruth a song?”] “Bueno” [“Alright”], responds Aarón after looking at me and smiling. Aarón tells me he is going to write La Cucaracha. He first draws what appears to be a roach. He asks a mother, who is sitting next to him: “¿Como se dice cucaracha?” [“How does one say cucaracha?”] Another child sitting close by says “/c/, /c/”. Aarón proceeds to write the song La Cucaracha, in strings of conventionally written L’s, A’s, and an H, all in capitals. (see Fig. 2)

Aarón drew a line around the song and then wrote his name and the date, both conventionally. Notice that at the top of the paper there are two horizontal lines with zigzag ones over them. He also wrote another string of uppercase letters to the right of the paper, but outside the boundary of the song: H A R S.

Once he finished, Aarón said he was going to write another song. He turned the paper over and drew a turtle. He wrote L’s, A’s, and an H inside the turtle. He then wrote L’s and A’s to the left of the turtle.

MARCH 2001



FIG. 2.—Aarón's song "La Cucaracha"

On the bottom of the paper he wrote the date and his name. He then walked over to Ruth to show her what he had written (see Fig. 3).

He told Ruth to sing *La Cucaracha* (The Cockroach); Ruth asked him to sing it with her. He asked her to sing along, and she asked him to point to the lyrics as they sang. After that negotiation, they sang the song together; it is a well-known song in Spanish, and he pointed to the text as he followed it directionally, left to right and top to bottom. The scribbled lines at the top of the text turned out to be the musical notations, sheet music, according to Aarón, which he knows is a different symbol system from writing, because he had seen charts with notations that the teacher uses to sing songs with the class. The letters HARS at the side of the page, Aarón informed Ruth, are the name of the song in English. Note that in contrast to Krystal, Aarón differentiates English from Spanish by using different letters and word order.

Aarón then turned his attention to the song he had written on the back of the sheet, *La Tortuga*. We quote again from Ruth's field notes:



FIG. 3.—Aarón's song "La Tortuga"

Aarón then shows me the song he has written in the back. "Se trata de una Tortuga" ["It's about a Turtle"], he tells me. I ask him to sing it to me. He again asks me to sing with him, only this time I don't know the song. It is an original creation of his. I tell him that I don't know this song. He says: "Pero es de español. ¿La quieres hacer?" ["But it's in Spanish. Do you want to do it?"] I ask him to teach it to me, and again he insists: "Es de español," as he points to the text inside the turtle drawing. Aarón believes that if he has written a song I should be able to read it (as I read *La Cucaracha*), especially if he wrote it in Spanish. After a few attempts I convinced him to teach me the song. He accepted to do so, but before singing he insisted: "Esa no es en inglés." ["That one is not in English."] He then began to sing: "La Tortuga se comió una pescado rico." ["The turtle ate a delicious fish."] He then paused as he looked closely at the text and said to himself: "Yo canté ... Ah! Se me pasó la otra." ["I sang ... Ah! I skipped that one."] He walked back to his seat, grabbed a crayon, and added a line of letters (A L A) to the text. He came back

and began to sing again, as he pointed to the text:

“La Tortuga se comió una pescado rico,
 [The turtle ate a delicious fish]
 tan, tan, tan, tan.
 [so, so, so so]
 Estaba tan rico,
 [It was so delicious]
 tan, tan, tan, tan.”

Note that Aarón is using the same letters but in different combinations to represent the Spanish text (inside the turtle) and the English text (outside the turtle). In contrast to Krystal’s example, in which the text was identical in either language, Aarón uses the same letters combined differently to represent Spanish and English and signals a different representation by changing the position of the letters (one language inside and the other outside the turtle).

The following are some summarizing comments:

1. Both children, from the beginning, attempt to give meaning to writing; their writing, in other words, is semantically driven, as the children incorporate their experiences, emotions, and ideas into the text. And, through the process of creating their texts, they also create their meaning.

2. Both children also know that the marks (letters) correspond to entities that can be spoken, and vice versa, that anything they say in either language can be represented by those marks. The children are not only making meaning through text but attempting to understand how the meaning is represented by the text. Consider Aarón’s editing of his original song, *La Tortuga*, as an attempt to mimic how the marks, the script, represent his story in one way or another, and his knowledge that changes in the marks change the song or story.

3. The children’s writing is a socially mediated accomplishment; they are active individuals interacting with others—with the teachers, with Ruth, with the text, with their experiences, in short, with the resources available to them in their environment.

4. Both children demonstrate the importance of letting students explore different genres and functions of writing for many purposes. We have examples of Aarón writing and reading, in addition to the songs featured in this article, birthday cards, notes, signs or advertisements, narratives, comic strips complete with stories, and books. The songs and the comic strips are particularly important because they are examples of writing, producing different texts, and reading for pleasure, that is, literate activities done not to satisfy an adult but for personal enjoyment.

5. Given our observations in other classrooms and at other grade levels, it seems evident that with continued encouragement, support, and instruction in both languages, these two children will soon control the writing system of both Spanish and English. In other words, we predict that if they are placed in classrooms where their bilingualism and literacy are encouraged, both children will write conventionally and read in Spanish and English in first grade (see Moll & Dworin, 1996).

6. Learning how to read and write is not unilinear; there is diversity in how the children progress and develop. This diversity is particularly evident among bilinguals, for many factors can influence how they learn, how the languages interact, especially if both are fostered equally or if one language is privileged over the other.

Instructed Biliteracy

In our third-grade example we present a girl, Lupita, who already is able to engage with texts to obtain information and transform it for her own intellectual purposes. Furthermore, she can do this in two languages, using her biliteracy consciously as an academic resource. But, as with the previous examples, this biliteracy is not solely an individual accomplishment; it is mediated and distributed in important ways through the opportunities and assistance she receives in doing her work, including her participation in literacy routines in her

MARCH 2001

classroom. We first present a summary of biliteracy practices that we have presented in detail elsewhere and that reveal the productive interplay between languages in this classroom (see Moll & Dworin, 1996; Moll & González, 1994; Moll & Whitmore, 1993; see also Whitmore & Crowell, 1994). We then turn to an example of collaborative bilingual writing, a text created by two girls in the class.

Lupita's classroom consists of 27 students, 12 boys and 15 girls, who come from either the neighborhood or working-class "barrio" surrounding the school (16 children) or who travel from other neighborhoods in the city (11 children, mostly Anglo) as part of a magnet desegregation program. As is common in bilingual classrooms, there is considerable diversity in the children's language and literacy abilities. Fifteen students are monolingual English speakers and readers, and of these, two girls are learning rapidly to speak, read, and write Spanish. Nine children are bilingual, reading and writing with varying proficiency in both languages.

The classroom is organized into center activities and theme research projects, where the children work in various ways to accomplish their individual and group academic goals (see Whitmore & Crowell, 1994). Although teacher-directed lessons are not the norm in this classroom, there is definitely teacher guidance of the children's work. However, that guidance is not controlling but mediating, indirect, and strategic, and the students may work alone but rarely in isolation from other students and adults in the classroom (Moll & Whitmore, 1993).

Within the theme studies or literature groups, the teacher encourages children to stretch their abilities by taking risks with new experiences, materials, and academic work. Simultaneously, the organization of instruction and the participation of the teacher support the children, especially those working in their second language. The children are expected to be active par-

ticipants in their own learning and are encouraged to be responsible for their own academic development and classroom behavior. In brief, the classroom is socially and culturally organized to support and advance students' academic work with literacy (for details, see Whitmore & Crowell, 1994).

We start by summarizing Lupita's participation within a theme study cycle about Native Americans, highlighting her opportunities to read and write in two languages as part of her research (for further details, see Moll & Whitmore, 1993). The theme study usually begins with some sort of "web," where the students state what they already know about a topic, and then they generate a list of questions that help guide their study and organize their activities. For example, in the Native American or American Indian theme study, Lupita's web (written in Spanish) identified topics she was interested in studying about the Sioux (e.g., food, art, names of chiefs), and then she wrote a list of specific questions (also in Spanish) to explore those topics.

Guided by the students' interests and questions, and by her own interests, the teacher assembled for the classroom a wide and varied group of literacy materials in English and Spanish as resources, including about 100 trade books, pieces of art, posters, and artifacts borrowed from the library, support staff, parents, and other adults. These materials formed part of the study centers, small-group activities, and individual research of the students, all creating a highly literate classroom environment.

Lupita wrote her research questions (in Spanish) on index cards, and then (with the teacher's help) searched for books or other sources to obtain the information necessary to answer her questions. She identified a number of books that seemed helpful (all in English), recorded information (in English) about the title, author, and library call number on a reference sheet, and indicated which of these books she used as part of her research. These reference sheets became

part of every student's bibliography as students wrote reports on their findings. For example, Lupita, who was researching the Sioux, read a trade book (in English) about the lifestyles of different Indian groups, concentrating on a section of the book called "Games and Pastimes." She was interested in finding out about basket weaving and discovered from her readings (all in English) that the Sioux did not make baskets, information that she recorded (by translating into Spanish) on her index cards. After identifying, locating, selecting, and recording information from the texts (in English) and writing (in Spanish) the information in her index cards to answer her specific questions, she started preparing a report (in Spanish) to summarize her findings. It is through such routines or practices that the children learned to use their bilingualism deliberately, consciously, to access and manipulate resources for intellectual and academic purposes.

We now examine an unusual example, one of collaborative, bilingual writing with a peer. Lupita and a close friend, Racheal (an Anglo), have written a story about a new girl in the neighborhood that captures both cross-cultural attitudes and conflict as well a harmonious resolution. We include below, for clarity, a typed representation of the original that retains the girls' punctuation and spelling:

The new Girl in the Neighborhood

By Lupita and Racheal

One day a new girl moved in my neighborhood. She was poor. I did not like her. She also was a Mexican girl. I went to her house and asked her name. "Mi nombre es Raquel," she replied. "I know a little bit of Spanish," I told her. "I know a little of 'ingles,'" Raquel told me. "Mi nombre es Michelle I don't like you." I yelled and then I yelled "Your not supposed to be holy today your supposed to be holy Sunday." She started to cry, then ran inside.

The next day my teacher said, "we have a new girl!", "her name is Raquel." I screamed "What's the matter the

teacher asked. "nothing I though I saw a spider"

After school I went to Raquel's house and asked "What were you doing in MY classroom"? "Para aprender a escribir y leer en ingles." She answered. "If YOU SHOW UP TOMorrow at my school Ill hurt you. And then she said. "No te entiendo." I got so mad that I screamed and ran away. The next day I went to her house and we talked and I found out that we had lots in common. And we were friend for ever.

The End

Notice the themes found in this brief text: bilingual exchanges, religious differences, irrational dislikes, literacy learning, hostility to others who are different, and similarities leading to friendship. Any one of these themes could be elaborated more fully in the text or through discussions in class or study groups. Also notice the use of quotation marks to indicate the dialogue, the capitalization for emphasis, and the use of one language, Spanish, to establish the differences between the girls. The text is an example of bringing life into the writing and of using writing and its conventions to examine issues of life. But it also represents the extent to which languages can interconnect and interact with each other as part of children's writing.

Below we provide some summarizing comments:

1. A major characteristic of this classroom is that Spanish, along with English, is an unmarked language; students could use either one or both to do their academic work and to obtain support to develop their biliteracy.

2. As with the kindergarten example, the children are able to engage with texts in a variety of ways and develop expertise in a variety of written genres in either or both languages. The transfer of literate competencies from one language to the other may occur most readily within genre, we speculate, because a genre defines, for the reader or writer, the context as similar across languages. The children also are developing a

MARCH 2001

repertoire of literacies (Wallace, 1992), some that match those used commonly within their communities, and some that extend what is found there. As well, they are learning a repertoire of academic literacy that may become useful later in their school careers, in both languages.

3. The students deal with both academic and social content as subject matter for their reading and writing (see Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, 1993). In the example, Lupita and her friend produce a short story that reflects the attitudes, hate, and conflict that are found within society. These are third graders, and ethnic conflict is already such a common topic in society that they write about it in class. It is unlikely, we speculate, that this content would be found in a story written by a third grader in an Anglo, middle-class school, simply because these topics do not necessarily touch the lives of these children or their teachers, for that matter.

4. The students, as part of their classroom routines, are learning how to use literacy in either language, or in both languages, deliberately as a tool for thinking. Lupita can do library research in English to write an essay in Spanish; she can reflect on social experiences that occurred in Spanish to write a narrative or story in English; or she can reflect on social situations, with an English monolingual classmate, and use her bilingualism to represent conflict and resolutions in her text. The key point here is that Lupita is learning to use both her social and cultural experiences and literature in two languages as resources for her academic work.

Special Challenges

Most bilingual instruction in the United States occurs in working-class and economically poor neighborhoods. Schools in these neighborhoods have been shown to differ systematically from schools in wealthier areas. Particularly important for present purposes is that instruction in these classrooms is usually rote-like and characterized by a

low intellectual emphasis on the so-called basic skills. This emphasis usually denotes limited uses of literacy and a "dogmatic" view of knowledge as something given to the students and teachers by others, especially through a mandated text or curriculum.

It is also important to consider that most bilingual education programs in the United States have as their overall goal the development of "English proficiency" for students. In these programs, literacy development in the native or first language of "language-minority" students may not be a priority. In fact, Spanish may retain its status as a "marked" language within these programs, influencing the schools' commitment to developing their students' Spanish literacy (see Shannon, 1995). We should also mention the emotional context in many of these schools. It is the unfortunate case that some children internalize the negative societal attitudes toward Spanish, toward bilingualism, and toward their ethnic groups, regardless of teachers' efforts. There is, in fact, a long tradition in this country of degrading in schools anything that is not Anglo-Saxon, what Spring (1994) calls the "deculturalization" process of schooling. The first violence done to Latino children, we could say, is denigrating their language and culture. This is a pressure unknown to middle-class Anglo children in monolingual schools but something that adversely influences the emotional significance of learning literacy in one language or the other for working-class Latino children.⁴

These attitudinal and emotional issues, or "impact beliefs," to borrow a term from De Houwer (1999), are not addressed well in the research literature, but teachers report to us their importance and prevalence (see, e.g., Griego-Jones, 1994; Moll, 1999). For example, most teachers we have worked with have told us about (and we have observed) students who are ashamed or refuse to speak Spanish or are ridiculed by their peers for their accented English. Teachers have also reported discovering

children in their classes who know how to read and write in Spanish but have concealed it, or those who want to shed the language in response to prevailing ideologies or peer influences (Moll, 1999). The point is that these attitudes, a reflection of broader societal attitudes, help create the context for the learning of literacy in classrooms and shape the motivation of students and teachers to develop literacy in one language or the other.

Special Resources

Bilingual classrooms, however, are diverse settings. In our classroom observations, for example, we found considerable variety in the literacy activities that make up classroom life (see also Edelsky, 1989). Many, if not most, of the classrooms use basal readers, sometimes in two languages, and rely primarily on worksheets and similar "artificial" exercises for writing, and abbreviated stories for readings, regardless of language. Still, as described in this article, we have also observed classrooms that emphasize student inquiry, where students actively use reading and writing in studying a broad number of topics, although most of the activities may be in English. In short, being in a bilingual classroom does not guarantee certain types of experiences or engagement with print, and biliteracy is not necessarily fostered, especially as part of a systematic program that lasts several years, but that does not mean biliteracy does not occur (Moll & Dworin, 1996).

A central issue, therefore, is whether it is possible to create routinely the types of "additive" bilingual conditions that would make Spanish an unmarked language, even if only within the school or classroom, and that would lead to the uses of literacy in both languages for academic purposes. Landry and Allard (1991), for example, have questioned whether additive bilingualism is even possible in schools with language-minority students. Among the factors they identify as necessary to create additive conditions are the group's ethno-

linguistic vitality; the networks of linguistic contact in the minority or nondominant language through media, schools, family, and friends; and the communities' demographic, political, economic, and cultural resources or "capital." They conclude that "additive bilingualism for a minority group's members is *only* possible when the frequency of opportunities for linguistic contact in L1 can compensate for the dominance of L2 (1991, p. 205, emphasis added). Although the school is a main contributor to additive bilingualism, as we have emphasized in our case examples, it may not be able to compensate for low levels of non-English-language vitality in the community or infrequent linguistic use in the family or other social environments.

Even so, we know that some communities have been able to create additive conditions for Spanish development, complementing the efforts of schools with selective ethnolinguistic vitality in the surrounding neighborhoods;⁵ schools for Cuban children in Miami's Dade County may be one such example (García & Otheguy, 1985; see also Freeman, 1998; Howard & Christian, 1997; Shannon, 1995). We have recently initiated a longitudinal study of biliteracy development with children attending a dual-language immersion program. Although it is much too early in the study to offer any findings, what does seem clear are the extraordinary efforts of the school, especially the teachers, to establish additive conditions for learning in Spanish, and their attempts at capitalizing on existing community resources and practices in support of the program, including developing the biliteracy potential of all of its students (see Smith, 2000). Such schools, and such educators, not only inform us but inspire us that an additive pedagogy is possible despite broader ideological constraints.

Conclusion

How children become literate in two languages has been a topic mostly ignored in the literature. In this article we have iden-

MARCH 2001

tified, using case study examples gathered in primary school classrooms, some of the dynamics of early or incipient biliteracy, especially the children's "dispositions" toward bilingualism and literacy, and how biliteracy, through classroom instruction, may become a powerful intellectual asset for students. We also addressed both constraints and resources that influence the children's schooling and thus the opportunities for biliteracy to occur and develop in classrooms.

Educators must consider the fluidity of becoming biliterate under varying social conditions, and that bilingual children, unlike their monolingual counterparts, may become literate in a language they do not speak fluently, or that their literate ability may exceed their oral fluency in one language but not the other. Therefore, literacy, whether bilingual or otherwise, must be conceptualized as intricately related, not only to the children's histories, but to the dynamics of social, cultural, and institutional contexts that help define its nature. Becoming literate in two languages, then, implies not only the acquisition and development of a set of skills or abilities but how children become competent in a range of practices or uses of literacy that constitute the experience of living and going to school in a bilingual community.

Notes

1. It could be, as Barton (1994, pp. 73–74) suggests, that research on bilingualism has grown up with its own tradition, distinct and independent from literacy research; thus biliteracy has not been a prominent topic of study.

2. Given that the examples were not gathered from a single study or for the same purposes, we are not able to provide comparable information or details about the classrooms in which we collected the data. However, we have recently initiated a much more systematic attempt, a longitudinal study of biliteracy development and language ideologies. My colleague, Norma González, an anthropologist, is the coprincipal in-

vestigator of this study. As part of the design, we are following, starting with kindergartners, a cohort of 80 students enrolled in a dual-language (Spanish/English) immersion school (see Moll, 2000; Smith, 2000). The study has been funded by the Spencer Foundation; we appreciate their support.

3. For examples of such research in non-school contexts, see Farr (1994) and Gregory (1997); for recent research on writing with incipient bilinguals at the secondary level, see García (1999) and Valdés (1999).

4. In the elections of November 2000, the citizens of Arizona voted to ban bilingual education. This statewide ban will eliminate the bilingual classrooms discussed in this article and the possibilities for biliteracy that they represent. This ban is another example of the hostile and oppressive conditions that working-class Latino students and their families face in the state and in the country.

5. Ethnolinguistic vitality may certainly vary within communities, so that there may be areas of town characterized by the vitality of a particular language or languages, and areas where that vitality is lacking.

References

- Antón, M., & DiCamilla, F. (1998). Socio-cognitive functions of L1 collaborative interaction in the L2 classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 54(3), 314–342.
- Barrera, R. (1983). Bilingual reading in the primary grades: Some questions about questionable views and practices. In T. H. Escobedo (Ed.), *Early childhood bilingual education: A Hispanic perspective* (pp. 164–184). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Barton, D. (1994). *Literacy: An introduction to the ecology of written language*. London: Blackwell.
- Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local literacies: Reading and writing in one community*. London: Routledge.
- Bialystok, E. (1997). Effects of bilingualism and biliteracy on children's emerging concept of print. *Developmental Psychology*, 33(3), 429–440.
- Calero-Breckheimer, A., & Goetz, E. (1993). Reading strategies of biliterate children for English and Spanish texts. *Reading Psychology*, 14, 177–204.
- Cole, M., & Nicolopoulou, A. (1992). Literacy: Intellectual consequences. *International encyclopedia of linguistics* (pp. 343–346). New York: Oxford University Press.

- De Houwer, A. (1999). Environmental factors in early bilingual development. In G. Extra & L. Verhoeven (Eds.), *Bilingualism and migration* (pp. 75–95). Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Durgunoglu, A. Y., & Verhoeven, L. (1998). (Eds.) *Literacy development in a multilingual context: Cross-cultural perspectives*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Dworin, J. (1996). *Biliteracy development: The appropriation of English and Spanish literacy by second and third grade students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona, Tucson.
- Edelsky, C. (1986). *Writing in a bilingual program: Había una vez*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Edelsky, C. (1989). Bilingual children's writing: Fact and fiction. In D. M. Johnson & D. H. Roen (Eds.), *Richness in writing: Empowering ESL students* (pp. 165–176). New York: Longman.
- Farr, M. (1994). Biliteracy in the home: Practices among *mexicano* families in Chicago. In D. Spener (Ed.), *Adult biliteracy in the United States* (pp. 89–110). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Ferreiro, E. (1986). The interplay between information and assimilation in beginning literacy. In W. Teale & E. Sulzby (Eds.), *Emergent literacy* (pp. 15–49). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Ferreiro, E. (1990). Literacy development: Psychogenesis. In Y. Goodman (Ed.), *How children construct literacy: Piagetian perspectives* (pp. 12–25). Newark, DE: International Reading Assoc.
- Ferreiro, E. (1991). Psychological and epistemological problems on written representations of language. In M. Carretero, M. Pope, R. Simons, & J. Pozo (Eds.), *Learning and instruction: European research in an international context* (pp. 157–173). Oxford: Pergamon.
- Ferreiro, E. (1996). The acquisition of cultural objects: The case of written language. *Prospects*, 26(1), 131–140.
- Freeman, R. (1998). *Bilingual education and social change*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- García, O. (1999). Educating Latino high school students with little formal schooling. In C. Faltis & P. Wolfe (Eds.), *So much to say: Adolescents, bilingualism, and ESL in secondary school* (pp. 61–82). New York: Teachers College Press.
- García, O., & Otheguy, R. (1985). The masters of survival send their children to school: Bilingual education in the ethnic schools of Miami. *Bilingual Review/Revista Bilingüe*, 12(1 & 2), 3–19.
- Geva, E., Wade-Woolley, L., & Shany, M. (1997). Development of reading efficiency in first and second language. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 1(2), 119–144.
- Gregory, E. (Ed.). (1997). *One child, many worlds: Early learning in multicultural communities*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Griego-Jones, T. (1994). Assessing students' perceptions of biliteracy in a two-way bilingual classroom. *Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students*, 13, 79–93.
- Hornberger, N. (1992). Biliteracy contexts, continua, and contrasts: Policy and curriculum for Cambodian and Puerto Rican students in Philadelphia. *Education and Urban Society*, 24(2), 196–211.
- Hornberger, N., & Skilton-Sylvester, E. (1998, April). *Revisiting the continua of biliteracy: International and critical perspectives*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.
- Howard, E., & Christian, D. (1997, April). *The development of bilingualism and biliteracy in two-way immersion students*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.
- Jiménez, R., García, G., & Pearson, P. D. (1995). Three children, two languages, and strategic reading: Case studies in bilingual/monolingual reading. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(1), 67–97.
- Jiménez, R., García, G., & Pearson, P. D. (1996). The reading strategies of Latina/o students who are successful English readers: Opportunities and obstacles. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 31(1), 90–112.
- Landry, R., & Allard, R. (1991). Can schools promote additive bilingualism in minority group children? In M. Malavé & G. Duquette (Eds.), *Language, culture and cognition* (pp. 198–231). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Langer, J., Bartolomé, L., Vásquez, O., & Lucas, T. (1990). Meaning construction in school literacy tasks: A study of bilingual students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 27(3), 427–471.
- Maguire, M. H. (1994). Getting beyond instructional time and program type in second language teaching and learning. *Journal of the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 29–50.
- Martínez, J., Moore-O'Brien, J. A., (with Dale, G., & Juárez-Cruz, M.). (1993). Developing biliteracy in a two-way immersion program. In J. V. Tinajero & A. F. Ada (Eds.), *The power of two languages: Literacy and biliteracy for Spanish-speaking students* (pp. 276–293). New York: Macmillan/McGraw-Hill.
- Moll, L. C. (1999, April). *Captives of words: Chal-*

- lenging the pedagogy of control. Invited address, American Educational Research Association Distinguished Lecture, Montréal, Canada.
- Moll, L. C. (2000, April). *Mediating matters: The importance of forms of life*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.
- Moll, L. C., & Dworin, J. (1996). Biliteracy in classrooms: Social dynamics and cultural possibilities. In D. Hicks (Ed.), *Child discourse and social learning* (pp. 221–246). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moll, L. C., & González, N. (1994). Lessons from research with language minority students. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 26(4), 439–461.
- Moll, L. C., Tapia, J., & Whitmore, K. (1993). Living knowledge: The social distribution of cultural resources for thinking. In G. Solomon (Ed.), *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations* (pp. 139–163). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moll, L. C., & Whitmore, K. (1993). Vygotsky in educational practice: Moving from individual transmission to social transaction. In E. Forman, N. Minick, & C. A. Stone (Eds.), *Contexts for learning: Sociocultural dynamics in children's development* (pp. 19–42). New York: Oxford.
- Olson, D. R. (1987). An introduction to understanding literacy. *Interchange*, 18(1/2), 1–8.
- Olson, D. R. (1994). *The world on paper*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Olson, D. R. (1995). Conceptualizing the written word: An intellectual autobiography. *Written Communication*, 12(3), 277–297.
- Reyes, M. L., & Costanzo, L. (1999, April). *On the threshold of biliteracy: A first grader's personal journey*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada.
- Scribner, S., & Cole, M. (1981). *The psychology of literacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Shannon, S. (1995). The hegemony of English: A case study of one bilingual classroom as a site of resistance. *Linguistics and Education*, 7, 175–200.
- Smith, P. (2000). *Community as a resource for minority language learning: A case study of Spanish-English dual language schooling*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona, Tucson.
- Spring, J. (1994). *Deculturalization and the struggle for equality* (2d ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Street, B. (1995). *Social literacies*. London: Longman.
- Tolchinsky, L., & Teberosky, A. (1998). The development of word segmentation and writing in two scripts. *Cognitive Development*, 13(1), 1–25.
- Valdés, G. (1999). Incipient bilingualism and the development of English writing abilities in the secondary school. In C. Faltis & P. Wolfe (Eds.), *So much to say: Adolescents, bilingualism, and ESL in secondary school* (pp. 138–175). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Villamil, O., & de Guerrero, M. (1996). Peer revision in the L2 classroom: Social cognitive activities, mediating strategies, and aspects of social behavior. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 5, 51–75.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wagner, D., Venezky, R. L., & Street, B. V. (1999). (Eds.). *Literacy: An international handbook*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Wallace, C. (1992). *Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wells, G. (1989). Language in the classroom: Literacy and collaborative talk. *Language and Education*, 3(1), 6–11.
- Whitmore, K., & Crowell, C. (1994). *Inventing a classroom*. York, ME: Stenhouse.
- Wolf, D. P. (1990). For literate lives: The possibilities for elementary schools. In C. Hedley, J. Houtz, & A. Baratta (Eds.), *Cognition, curriculum, and literacy* (pp. 121–136). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.