
Language Socialization Practices and Cultural Identity: Case Studies of Mexican-Descent Families in California and Texas

SANDRA R. SCHECTER

York University

ROBERT BAYLEY

University of Texas at San Antonio

This article explores the relationship between language and cultural identity as manifested in the language socialization practices of four Mexican-descent families: two in northern California and two in south Texas. The analysis considers both the patterns of meaning suggested by the use of Spanish and English in the speech and literacy performances of four focal children as well as family and dominant societal ideologies concerning the symbolic importance of the two languages, the way language learning occurs, and the role of schooling—all frameworks in which the children's linguistic behaviors were embedded. All four focal children defined themselves in terms of allegiance to their Mexican or Mexican American cultural heritage. However, the families were oriented differently to the Spanish language as a vehicle for affirmation of this commonly articulated group identity. The differences are emblematic of stances taken in a larger cultural and political debate over the terms of Latino participation in U.S. society. Parents in all of the families endorsed Spanish maintenance and spoke of the language as an important aspect of their sense of cultural identity. Only two of the families, however, pursued aggressive home maintenance strategies. Of the other two families, one used a protocol combining some Spanish use in the home with instruction from Spanish-speaking relatives, whereas the family that had moved most fully into the middle class was the least successful in the intergenerational transmission of Spanish, despite a commitment to cultural maintenance.

Recent discussions of identity construction have represented the process as complex, multifaceted, and dialogic. Identities are seen as symbolic performances generated by individual choices of practices in fluid societal and situational contexts (Butler, 1990; Faigley, 1994;

Foucault, 1977; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993; Schecter, Sharken-Taboada, & Bayley, in press). In the case of minority groups, the multifaceted character of ethnic identity is defined by an interaction involving three aspects: the way individuals locate themselves within a particular social and cultural framework, the orientation of representatives of dominant groups to individuals and groups who display expected lifestyle differences, and official characterizations, such as those contained in census documents (Garza & Herringer, 1987; Phinney, 1990; Verkuyten, 1995). However, linguistic minority populations—especially those for whom minority language transmission is a factor—grapple with an additional identity-related issue: In their daily negotiations between dominant and minority cultures they confront questions of the discreteness and synthesis of linguistic code at many junctures and levels of self- and other-defining decision making.

Our analysis attends closely to the orientations of participants to these questions. We find evidence for these orientations in attitudinal data contained in self-reports of home language use and rationales offered by family members for their decisions and stances with regard to Spanish maintenance. However, because we view language use as a form of social action (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1975) with social consequences (see, e.g., Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Gumperz, 1982a, 1982b; Heller, 1988; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Woolard, 1985), our preferred strategy is to configure the way language choice, mixing, and alternation shape individual and family ideologies about the role of language in defining cultural identity. Further, because an integrated view of the role of language in identity construction acknowledges the relevance of ideological and power relations (Fairclough, 1995; Luke, 1995), when relevant we also attend to how representatives of the dominant culture orient themselves to such discursive practices, in addition to or in comparison with other salient identity descriptors.

METHODS

This article is based on a larger study of the relationship between home language socialization practices and the development of bilingual and biliterate abilities by Mexican-descent children. The larger inquiry focused on 40 families (20 in California and 20 in Texas) with at least one parent or primary caretaker of Mexican origin and at least one fourth-, fifth-, or sixth-grade child, who served as the focal child for the study. Of these 40 families, 4 at each site were selected for intensive case study. Selection was based on the representativeness of the emerging family language use profiles distilled from interviews and preliminary observations of the 40 families. Case study observations were audiotaped, and

approximately one third were videotaped as well. The primary focus was on patterns of communication in the home and on the relationships among language choice and dimensions of language use such as topic, register, mode, and the speaker's age.

In this article, we examine the home language practices of four of the eight families selected for intensive case study. Data sources for each family include approximately 25 hours of audiotaped observations, approximately 8 of which were also videotaped; two interviews with the caregivers (in some cases, only the mother); two interviews with the focal child; and samples of the focal child's writing in English and, if the child had achieved some degree of biliteracy, in Spanish as well. In addition, because we wished to obtain data that would allow cross-linguistic comparisons of children's narrative competence, we collected English and Spanish narratives based on two wordless picture books.

To capture a range of family interactions, including those focusing on school and literacy activities, we conducted at least 12 home observations at four different times in 3 separate weeks during periods when school was in session.¹ Observation periods included at least three afternoons beginning shortly after the children returned from school, three early morning periods from the time the children awoke until they left for school, three weekend mornings, and three Sunday evenings from the time the family returned from their weekend activities until the children's bedtime. In addition, because the interviews and early observations indicated that interactions with Spanish-dominant relatives comprised both a means of and an incentive for Spanish maintenance, a number of weekend observations were scheduled at times when relatives were visiting, and their interactions with the focal children were recorded.

To prepare the data, we transcribed audio recordings of interviews with family members; selected portions of the home observation containing informal interactions between focal children and siblings, parents, and other relatives; and conversations concerning schoolwork and other aspects of literacy. Standard procedures for analyzing qualitative data were employed (e.g., Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Spindler & Spindler, 1987). All data relating to the same family were grouped to yield case studies of different families' experiences with bilingualism. Behaviors and responses of individual family members were compared, and a second comparison was made across families.

¹ During home observations, focal children wore belts designed for joggers to carry small personal tape recorders. The children were recorded with Sony D-3 professional tape recorders and Sony D-55 lapel microphones. Although the recorders were occasionally turned off accidentally when children engaged in vigorous physical activity, the combination generally worked well and enabled us to access a great deal of relatively unmonitored speech. Microphones picked up all utterances of the focal children, including *sotto voce* self-regulatory remarks, as well as nearly all the speech of others in the immediate vicinity.

For the purposes of this article, we have attended closely to the constructions provided by the four focal children and their parents in response to the following interview protocol:

We'd be interested to know how you see yourself. Let's say someone asked you about your cultural identity. What would you call yourself?²

However, by the preceding we would not wish to convey that our analyses privilege interpretations based on information provided in response to elicitation protocols that specifically address the issue of identity. First, the respondents volunteered information pertaining to ethnic and cultural identification throughout the interview conversations, whether such information was explicitly requested or not.³ Second, ethnographic records on the language socialization practices of families selected for intensive case study reveal a willingness on the part of participants to engage the topic of individual and group identification and difference (Ruskin & Varenne, 1983). Third, and most important, within our conceptual framework for researching the relation between language and cultural identity, we do not consider the oral and written texts produced by family members as they are socialized to and by language to be entities separate from—to be related to—identity constructions. Rather, we view these language practices in themselves as embodying *acts of identity* (LePage & Tabouret-Keller, 1985), the meanings of which are determined not by objective criteria but rather by those criteria that the various actors consider emblematic (Barth, 1970).

FINDINGS

The Villegas Family: From Mexican Elite to U.S. Minority

If someone asked me I would say I'm Mexican, I'm from Mexico, I come from a ci- I come from Guadalajara um I'd tell them about my ancestors maybe . . . what they ate or what they wore . . . or tell them about my grandpa, how . . . he fought in World War II I don't know, it's kind of hard.⁴

Diana Villegas (age 11)⁵

² Focal children and their parents were interviewed separately. Neither the children nor the parents were in hearing range of one another when the interviews took place.

³ Respondents were especially forthcoming in the coda, or the recapitulation and summative portion of the interview, which often took the form of a narrative of the respondents' experiences with bilingualism. In narrative analysis, the coda is the section in which the speaker communicates the interpretation that he or she would have the listener give to the preceding series of articulations (McCabe & Peterson, 1991).

⁴ We have kept transcription conventions to a minimum for the sake of readability. The following conventions have been retained: All uppercase letters indicate strong emphasis; a colon following a vowel (e.g., *e:*) indicates an elongated vowel; an equal sign (=) indicates an overlap; XXX indicates inaudible text; translations and comments are in brackets.

⁵ Diana Villegas and all other subject names used in this article are pseudonyms.

Mother: *¿Diana, el viernes vas a llevar uniforme?* [Diana, are you going to wear your uniform on Friday?]
 Diana: *¿El viernes? ¿Este viernes?* [Friday? This Friday?]
 Mother: Yeah.
 Diana: Uh. No.
 Mother: *¿No?*
 Diana: No.
 Mother: It's free dress?

Because in this household a high value was placed on academic achievement, Mariana made an exception to her Spanish-only policy for the purpose of assisting her daughter with academic subject matter. She reasoned that content understanding was primary and that, because her daughter's stronger language in the school domain was English, she would be undermining her own purpose by introducing a new lexis in Spanish.

In addition to using English at home for schoolwork, Diana used a considerable amount of English with her brother, a reflection of a parental double standard with regard to their expectations for the two children's language use. These different expectations were not gratuitous. Early in our field work, the couple had been informed that Luis would not be accepted as a student at the private school that their daughter attended. Mariana recounted, "De la escuela de Diana nos mandaron a decir que el niño falló el examen de kinder, su puntaje fue SUMAMENTE bajo, no fue bajo, fue ANORMAL" [They told me at Diana's school that the child had failed his entrance exam for kindergarten, his performance was SO low, no it wasn't low, it was ABNORMAL]. Mariana and Enrique's initial response to this devastating news was a composite of anguish and guilt. They wondered whether the language socialization strategy that they were using to foster their children's sense of Mexican identity was interfering with their young son's cognitive development.

Minority Status

As it turned out, the school's pronouncement had a radicalizing effect on the parents. In the 6 months following the decision the Villegases' frightened, guilt-ridden disposition converted into anger at an elite who sought to consolidate its position of privilege by defining their son as marginal: "Yo nunca me imaginé que un niño para kinder tenía que saber escribir su nombre" [I never imagined that a child going into kindergarten would be expected to know how to write his name]. And, as they underwent transformation, they also came to understand the manner in which they were a minority, given a dominant culture in

which overt descriptors such as race and language were stronger indicators than less visible ones such as class.

When it came time for a decision, the Villegases enrolled their son in one of the neighborhood schools after Schecter had met with the new principal and had reported that she was impressed with his background and professionalism. The family and school got off to a rocky start: Initially Luis was placed in a bilingual education class even though the parents had specified on the registration form that they wished him to be enrolled in the monolingual English strand. Mariana intervened, insisting that the staff respect the parents' judgment with regard to their son's interests, and the child was transferred.

At the beginning of the school year, Mariana volunteered as a teacher's aide so she could track her son's academic progress. In short order the principal enlisted her assistance in editing the school newsletter. Ironically, in seeking to persuade other community members to become involved with the newsletter, Mariana now found herself an advocate for the very public educational system the she and her husband had not long before so vehemently decried. In a final ironic twist, in the summer of 1996 Mariana accepted a position as teacher's aide at a local elementary school, providing instruction in Spanish to Mexican-origin children in the K-4 classrooms she had scrutinized as a parent 4 years earlier.

The Hernández Family: Traditional Linguistic and Cultural Values as Defense

I'm Mexican . . . 'cause I'm from um because my parents are from Mexico and I want to talk like from where I am, um where my parents came from.

Eduardo Hernández (age 10)

Family Background

Raul and María Hernández owned a colonial blue bungalow in the East Bay community of San Ignacio, California. Although the economy of San Ignacio, populated largely by working-class and economically marginalized families, had received a boost as a result of the two recently opened casinos, this good fortune did not appear to have mitigated the notoriety associated with the town's name. San Ignacio's streets were still considered unsafe—indeed, a series of gunshots disrupted an interview we were conducting with another of the families participating in the study—and the city had made a number of unfortunate choices with

act as a broker between her and the outside world. An instance of the latter occurred one intemperate Monday morning after the family had passed the weekend without electricity, as a result of a particularly brutal rainstorm that wreaked havoc in the area. María asked her son to phone his school in order to find out if there would be classes that day.

Eduardo: [looking for the telephone number to phone school] *¿Mom, esto es un six o un zero?* [Is this a six or a zero?]

Mother: *U:n six.*

Eduardo: Yes, erm are we gonna- are we gonna go- have school today? OK. Thank you. Bye. [to Mother] *Dijo que sí.* [She/he said yes.]

Eduardo's father speaks English fluently, and he was comfortable with the boys using a fair amount of English with him when they were horsing around; however, Raul was firm that "as soon as they finish playing, having their fun, it's back to, to the serious, uh to Spanish." He added that sometimes the boys needed to be reminded to speak Spanish: "Y muchas veces se les puede olvidar, pero lo más tarde que uno les diga no: 'hijo háblame en español, tu- tu idioma es español, me gustaría que supieras el idioma de origen tuyo'" [And many times they can forget, but then later I tell them "no: son speak to me in Spanish, your- your language is Spanish, I'd like for you to know the language of your origin"]. Eduardo understood this rather complex protocol for communication with his father, as evidenced by his account to the latter of the unhappy events he was party to earlier with regard to his friend Jacobo's rabbit. Although Eduardo code switches in the first turn, his speech thereafter, in line with his father's stern *consejos*, is all in Spanish.

Eduardo: *Papi, la la coneja de Jacobo* [Dad, Jacob's rabbit] *se le c- erm co- erm* she broke a leg.

Father: *¿Por qué?* [Why?]

Eduardo: *No lo sé.* [I don't know.]

Father: *¿Porque la estaban correteando ustedes?* [Because you (pl.) were chasing it?]

Eduardo: *No, no es ésa, la que estaba afuera. Estaba- estaba al- adentro y luego fuimos a verla y ya tenía el deste (=eso) cortado y había sangre . . .* [No, that's not the one, it was out (of the cage). It was- it was in- inside and they we went to look at it and it already had this cut and there was blood.]

Both Raul and María emphasized their view that parents have a responsibility to "educate" their children for success in school and, eventually, life by raising them to be respectful and hardworking, with serious values. An important part of this responsibility, they believed, entailed the communication of a set of values through one's actions and

interactions in the home, an arena over which parents exercised considerable control. For the Hernándezes, these values were inextricably tied to their identity as Mexicans, and their identity as Mexicans was inextricably linked to the Spanish language. Because Spanish occupied such a central role in both the family legacy and the future trajectories envisioned for their children, the Hernándezes believed that its preservation should not be left to chance but rather should be a goal pursued through an aggressive Spanish maintenance strategy.

Away from his mother and father, Eduardo spoke Spanish with some interlocutors (his grandmother, who came to visit from Mexico, a "new" boy on the block, from Peru); English with others (his aunt, several cousins); Spanish, with some code switching to English, with others (his younger brother, Tomás, who preferred Spanish); and English, with some code switching into Spanish, with still others (his middle brother, Francisco, who preferred English).⁹ His language choices illustrate the principle of accommodation. Asked how he made decisions about which language to use with whom, and when, Eduardo responded, "Hablo el inglés cuando cuando no- alguien no sabe hablar en español y en español cuando alguien no sabe hablar en inglés" [I speak English when when no- someone doesn't know Spanish and Spanish when someone doesn't know English] (see Valdés, 1982).

Schooling

All three boys attended the same neighborhood elementary school, and all three were enrolled in English-only classes. When the time came for Eduardo to start kindergarten, his parents were advised that their son would be placed in a bilingual program. Despite his strong belief in Spanish maintenance, Raul was not happy. From his observations of the school experiences of friends and their children in the area, he was convinced that if his son were placed in the bilingual strand, he would not learn English. He went to speak with the school principal.

Les dije que no, que si le iban a poner en el salón bilingüe yo lo sacaba de la escuela y lo ponía en otra escuela, porque el español estoy yo pa' enseñárselos . . . yo los mando a la escuela a enseñárlas el inglés, no el español, si yo quisiera que supieran el español me los llevo a México, verdad.

[I told them no, that if they were going to put him in the bilingual classroom that I would take him out of school and put him in another school, because

⁹ The issue of what the base language is in any conversation involving extensive code switching is admittedly complex. For the purposes of this study, we adopt Myers-Scotton's (1993) matrix language frame model. According to this model, in a mixed-language conversation, the language that supplies the system morphemes is the base language. The base language can (and does) change as new interlocutors enter into a conversation or as the topic shifts.

I'm the one who teaches them Spanish . . . I send them to school to learn English, not Spanish, if I wanted them to know Spanish I'd take them to Mexico, right?]

Raul and María were satisfied with the quality of their son's public school education, although they gave much of the credit for his success to Eduardo himself. From an early age, they informed us, their son was studious, "un muy buen muchacho" [a very good boy]. Although neither Eduardo nor his parents remembered their reading to him when he was younger, according to Raul and María the child always showed a strong interest in learning and, before entering school, taught himself to read in both Spanish and English. From their favorable comments, Eduardo's parents knew that his teachers appreciated their son's efforts in school. Notwithstanding the rapport that Eduardo enjoyed with school personnel, in the course of the observation period the child started to have difficulty with school math and was frequently stumped when attempting to complete his math homework. María was concerned and expressed the view to her husband that they should get her son some outside assistance. Raul, however, made the decision to tutor the boy himself, although later he modified this initial strategy to one that combined tutoring with material incentive. ("I told him if he pulled up his grades, I would take him to Disneyland.") However, because school learning was a serious topic, he conducted these tutoring sessions in Spanish.

After Eduardo completes middle school, his parents plan for him to attend high school in Mexico, where he will reside with his maternal grandmother. Eduardo was looking forward to living with his grandmother; he spoke warmly about the stories she told about her childhood and appreciated the books in Spanish that she sent from Mexico. He had been to Mexico twice already and resonated with the people and culture. However, unlike his parents, who planned to return to Mexico eventually in their retirement, Eduardo intended to remain in the U.S.

The Torres Family: Language Revival at Home

Soy Hispanic . . . *porque mi abuela es* born in- in Mexico. *Pero mi y mi mama-* were born here. [I'm Hispanic . . . because my grandmother was born in Mexico. But me and my mom- were born here.]

Marta Torres (age 11)

Family Background

José and Elena Torres and their three daughters, Liliana (age 12), Marta, and Alicia (age 10), lived in a well-kept bungalow in an

overwhelmingly Latino neighborhood in San Antonio, near the city limits. Both parents worked, José in a facility that rebuilds aircraft parts, and Elena in the cafeteria of the local community college, a position that allowed her to be home when the children return from school.

José and Elena Torres acquired Spanish at home from their parents, who had immigrated from northern Mexico as young adults, and both continued to use Spanish with their mothers. Although both were literate in English, neither learned to read or write in Spanish. José and Elena spoke both Spanish and English with one another. As is the case with many Texas-born Latinos, their speech with one another and with other bilinguals was characterized by frequent code switching (see Bayley & Zapata, 1994). Outside the home, they accommodated to the language preferences of their interlocutors or to the demands of the situation.

Reversing Spanish Attrition

In their daughters' formative years, José and Elena spoke only English in the home in order to ease the girls' transition to formal schooling. Elena commented, "Yo quería enseñarles en inglés porque no les sería difícil cuando ellas fueron a la escuela que aprender en inglés" [I wanted to teach them in English so that it wouldn't be difficult for them when they went to school to learn English]. Education has always played an important role in the Torreses' aspirations for their daughters' futures—both parents were determined that their girls would go to college—and at the time José especially was concerned that if the girls spoke Spanish at home, "they weren't going to do good" in school. In recent years, however, José and Elena had become increasingly concerned about their three children's lack of Spanish proficiency, noting a direct link between a trend of mother tongue attrition and loss of cultural identity. "I think we're losing it already," began Elena. "I think it [loss of culture] is already in process and I think that my mother's generation knew lots of Spanish—her kids did not get to learn how—or I did not get to learn to read and write it and I think that's a shame. Because now I can't teach my children that." She continued in Spanish, "A crecer siendo mexicanas y no saber español- no está bien eso . . . Yo cuando miro una mexicana pues yo pienso que ella sabe español. Y muchas no saben" [To grow up being Mexican and not know Spanish- that's not good . . . When I see a Mexican well I think that she speaks Spanish. But many don't know it]. Their concern, shared by many *tejano* parents, arises not only from cultural considerations but from instrumental ones as well. According to Mrs. Torres, "En el trabajo vas a necesitar que saben español, y si estas niñas no saben español van a tener un problema" [At work you're going

"*porque yo play with the remote*"; however, she was not tempted by it "*porque hablan muy fast . . . y poquito entiendo*" [because they speak very fast . . . and I don't understand much]. Although Marta did have *latina* friends who spoke some Spanish, as in the case with Diana Villegas and her friends who attended school together in English, the girls were more comfortable communicating in English. However, the family did attend an evangelical church with Spanish-language services, and their involvement in this congregation was a source of strength and renewal. But support from the children's schools, which the Torreses viewed as key to effective language maintenance, was noteworthy for its absence.¹⁰ Once again, Elena:

I would think that a class, even just 30 minutes a day, where they can go in and speak only Spanish and the correct Spanish. And learn spelling and and writing it and reading it. I think that would be a great impact on the children. I think as long as it's consistent that it would be wonderful.

Elena Torres was involved with her children's education as an active member of the PTA, as a volunteer in accompanying the children on field trips, and as a manager who oversaw completion of homework assignments. In her view, she provided active support on a number of dimensions for the school system's agenda for her children. Thus, she had difficulty accepting that the schools her children attended did not provide any support for her considerable efforts to transmit her language, especially because the family lived in an almost entirely Latino neighborhood in a city with a majority Mexican-descent population:¹¹

I think that the attitude that the city has that they feel that this is the United States an . . . this is an English-speaking country. But I feel that it is wrong. I feel that they shouldn't just because they were born here does not mean that only English is the language that should be used. I believe that we have to hold to something and that something is my parents come from Mexico. And if I don't have something to hold on to- if we don't have something to hold on to then what is our culture- what do we teach our children? There is nothing there, if we have to give that up.

¹⁰ Several Texas-born parents in the larger study discussed their attempts to enroll their children in bilingual programs. The children, who were all proficient in English, were denied admission on the grounds that the bilingual programs were intended solely to provide assistance for limited English proficient students rather than to assist children with some Spanish in developing their abilities in the minority language.

¹¹ According to 1990 Census Bureau figures, Latinos constitute 56.3 percent of the population of San Antonio.

The Baez Family: Cultural Maintenance Combined With Minority Language Awareness

[I'm] Tex-Mex. *Po'que mi background [is from] México, pero YO 'sta de Tejas.*

Alysa Baez (age 10)

Family Background

We turn now to the Baez family, whose middle and youngest daughters evidenced the least proficiency in Spanish among the families reported on here. Roberto and Luisa Baez and their daughters, Linda (age 12), Alysa, and Liliana (age 6), lived in a new middle-class subdivision on the predominantly Anglo north side of San Antonio. A college graduate, Roberto was an engineer with a local firm; Luisa, who had completed 2 years of college, worked as a customer service representative.

Cultural Awareness

Luisa spoke, read, and wrote Spanish fluently; Roberto, although not as fluent as his wife, was also proficient in Spanish. Because they feared punishment if overheard using Spanish on school premises, each reverted to the use of English in their youth and then continued this pattern with their offspring. "What we tried to do was," Luisa hesitated, the subject clearly painful, "we tried to act Anglo." In the Baez family, English had always been the language of parent-child interactions, with Spanish reserved for endearments (*mijita* [my daughter]), formulaic phrases (*¿Tú crees?* [You think so?]), and isolated vocabulary items denoting objects that hold special significance for the children (*caballito* [little horse]). The girls attended the local public schools, and, as might be expected in a majority-Anglo neighborhood, English was the L1 of nearly all their friends. However, they did have occasion to use Spanish in weekly visits with their maternal grandparents, who lived in San Antonio, and Roberto and Luisa attempted to motivate their daughters to learn Spanish. They saw Spanish as playing an important role in an overall strategy aimed at cultural awareness. Said Luisa,

Yo pienso que todos que vivimos aquí venimos aquí de otros países y . . . cuando vinieron los ALEMANES hicieron colonias, ellos siguieron enseñando a sus niños las costumbres de su país. Cuando hay aquí gente polaca también hicieron lo mismo. Y nosotros mucho dejamos esas costumbres y yo pienso que 'hora ya reconocimos que importante es. Y yo quiero seguir las costumbres, quiero seguir las leyendas que me dijeron mis abuelos yo quiero seguir todo eso. Aunque sea que hacemos tamales una vez por año. Son costumbres que nosotros queremos que vivan.

[I think that all of us who live here came here from other countries and . . . when the Germans built colonies, they continued to teach their children the customs of their country. When the Poles were here they also continued to do the same. And we're abandoning these customs, and I think that now we have recognized how important it is. And I want to follow the customs, I want to pass on the stories that my grandparents told me, I want to follow all this. If nothing else we make tamales once a year. They are customs that we want to keep alive.]

For Luisa especially, it was important that the children be aware of their Hispanic heritage and be able to appreciate the significance of events and artifacts that in her view had played an important role in the evolution of the Mexican people, at least in the U.S. She reviewed carefully with Alysya, our focal child, the ingredients that go into the *caldo*, the soup that she and her own mother prepared lovingly for their families. She explained the difference between Mexican music, for which she displayed a special fondness (judging from her station selection on the van radio), and Tejano. She found books in the library, written in English, that addressed Hispanic cultural themes and read these to her daughters as they were growing up. Alysya still remembered and cited with fondness a children's story entitled "Too Many Tamales."

Alysya was a member of a volleyball team composed primarily of Mexican-origin girls and a church congregation composed primarily of Mexican-origin families. She was also an *aficionada* of Tejano music. Like the overwhelming number of girls in the Texas study, Selena was her favorite performer, and memorabilia commemorating the late singer's accomplishments dominated the decor of her bedroom. The Baezes approved of their daughters' musical preferences and were happy to support their related habit. This was a good way, they felt, for the girls "to learn more words in Spanish."

Intergenerational Communication

Luisa Baez described her children's Spanish proficiency as resembling a "staircase," a result of the differing lengths of time they spent when they were young with their nearly Spanish-monolingual maternal grandmother, Mrs. Vela. Linda, the oldest, essentially grew up in her grandparents' home while Luisa and Roberto worked. Through third grade, she attended a private school nearby and would be picked up and taken or bused to Mrs. Vela's home after school. As a result of regular, constant exposure, she was able to acquire much Spanish in her early childhood years. Alysya, however, although she stayed with the Velas during her infant years, was thereafter cared for by her paternal grandparents when her *abuela* became ill. Although following Mrs. Vela's recovery Alysya

returned periodically to her grandmother's home for day care, Mrs. Vela believed that the paternal grandparents' derogatory attitude toward the heritage language discouraged the child from using Spanish. Although Alysa reported speaking Spanish "como when yo 'sta a mi, mi 'buelo's house," Mrs. Vela documented a pattern of regression with her middle granddaughter, claiming that the youngster had been a stronger Spanish speaker as a young child. Liliana, the youngest daughter, spent even less time with her maternal grandparents than the two older siblings. By then the family had moved to their current home in suburban, northwest San Antonio, across town from the Velas, and it was more convenient either to leave the child with her paternal grandparents nearby or to place her in a day care facility attached to the neighborhood elementary school. Of the three girls, Liliana was the least proficient in Spanish and, unlike her sisters, evidenced no receptive ability. We noted the near-monolingual Mrs. Vela scrambling to accommodate the child when the latter was thrown off by her grandmother's atypical but situationally appropriate greeting: "Fuiste al paseo?" After several seconds of blank look and silence, Mrs. Vela followed up, "Did you went to see the parade?"

That intergenerational communication was impeded by the fact that she and her granddaughters do not share a common language was a source of much sorrow for Mrs. Vela. It was not the lack of linguistic proficiency in English and Spanish on either her part or her granddaughters' parts that Mrs. Vela regretted, nor was she especially concerned with issues of cultural continuity, as were Alysa's parents. Rather,

Sería muy bonito que . . . mis nietas me entendieran bien lo que yo les quería decir porque era una forma de, acercarme más a ellas pa' conocerlas, o que ellas me conocieran a mí . . . Porque yo podía expresarles mis sentimientos, mis sueños con ellas, aconsejarlas, y ellas me entendían. . . . Y se me hace que en español es más DULCE . . . emotiva más: la conversación de una abuelita con su . . . nieta. Y en inglés pos no podría . . . hablarles con el corazón . . . en español yo podía hablarles . . . decirles mis sueños que puedo tener yo con ellas. Pero pos ellas no me entienden en, en español pos ¿cómo se los voy a decir?

[It would be beautiful for . . . my granddaughters to truly understand what I wanted to say because it was a way of, getting closer to them and knowing them, or for them to know me . . . because I could express my feelings, my dreams with them, to advise them, and they could understand me . . . And it seems to me that it's sweeter in Spanish, more emotional: the conversation of a grandmother with her granddaughter. And in English well I couldn't . . . speak to them from the heart . . . in Spanish I could speak to them . . . tell them the dreams that I have for them. But, well, they don't understand me in, in Spanish, well, how am I going to say these things?]

Clearly, Alysa was comfortable in the presence of Spanish, as the following interaction across three generations in her grandmother's

home reveals. “It’s just that,” as Alysa explained her own communication strategy while in the presence of monolingual Spanish speakers, “sometimes I don’t know the words so I get confused and I use English words and try to go back to Spanish when I know the words.”

- Alysa: *O. Es bueno* [eating her caldo]. [It’s good.]
 Grandmother: *¿Está sabroso? ¿Um:?* [chuckles] [It’s tasty?]
 Mother: *Dile a que horas te levantaste para hacerlo . . .* [Tell her what time you got up to make it]
 Grandmother: *A las, a las five, forty. Um? The morning. ¿Oyiste?* [Did you hear?] I wake up at five, f- fo- forty minutes.
 Alysa: *¿Po’qué?=-* [Why?]
 Grandmother: =Five in the morning.
 Alysa: *¿Porqué?* [Why?]
 Grandmother: *Para que estuviera temprano, pronto, pa’ cuando viniera porque ya se que ustedes, quieren comer luego* [laughs] [So that it could be ready sooner, for when you’d come, because I know that you like to eat as soon as you arrive]
 Alysa: *Ah yo woke up a como a la eight.*

Alysa attended Spanish classes in the summer “College for Kids” offered by the local community college district. Although our proficiency measures—along with the examples given above—showed that she lacked sufficient proficiency to converse with Spanish monolinguals outside the family, Alysa, like Marta Torres, exhibited considerably more receptive than productive ability (see Bayley, Schecter, & Torres-Ayala, 1996, for a discussion of Alysa’s Spanish proficiency). Luisa’s instructions to her daughter regarding food preparations were full of Spanish vocabulary, for example, *pimienta* [pepper], *un poquito* [a little], all of which Alysa interpreted appropriately. Another example of Alysa’s receptive ability was provided en route to a hairdresser’s appointment across town, when Luisa, without a pointing gesture, made an appreciative reference to the passing scenery: “Mira. Teresitas” [Look. Impatiens]. Responded Alysa, “I like the pink ones the best.” Alysa, in fact, developed an extensive receptive repertoire in Spanish related to the theme of gardening. Not surprisingly, we discovered that she regularly assisted her maternal grandfather with related chores.

Alysa was popular with her peers and displayed a well-rounded character, playing the clarinet and participating on a number of sports teams, and the Baezes exuded a sense of confidence about their daughter’s future. Although they believed that knowing a second language was good for personal development and could be advantageous in the workplace, they at no point expressed the view that their daughter’s well-being was tied to her recovery of Spanish, and they were never observed to insist on its use. On later observations, however, the cause of

cultural maintenance in the Baez family received a boost from an unlikely source. Alysia herself reported liking to speak Spanish more frequently, especially with her grandmother, and she had plans to take more Spanish language courses in school. Her main motivation was to be able to communicate more easily with her maternal grandparents and help them translate important documents from English. But there was something else. Making the link between minority language maintenance and cultural continuity more explicit than her parents perceived it, she stated categorically, "*Yo quiero talk more en español po'que ese es mi background y that's it.*"

DISCUSSION

Self-Definition

All four focal children, as well as their parents, defined themselves in terms of allegiance to their Mexican heritage, although the terms they used varied according to the depth of their ties to the U.S. (with the terms *Mexican* or *Mexican American* used by more recent immigrants). All four families viewed bilingualism as a positive attribute, and all accorded an important role to Spanish in the formation of cultural identity.

However, the families were differently oriented to the use of the Spanish language as a vehicle for affirmation of this commonly articulated identity. The California parents viewed Spanish as a necessary social resource in maintaining cultural tradition and ethnic identity, and they usually insisted on the use of Spanish in parent-child interactions. In one of the California families, siblings conversed largely in Spanish, although code alternation, constrained by topic junctures, was not uncommon. In the second California family, sibling interaction was characterized by frequent intrasentential code switches and longer stretches of both Spanish and English. Both California focal children exhibited similar patterns of language use with peers. With classmates and neighborhood friends, they normally used English (although Eduardo Hernández frequently code switched with bilingual peers); with relatives, they accommodated their interlocutors' language preferences.

Language Use

The patterns of language use in the Texas families differed markedly from those in the California families and from one another's. Members of the more affluent Texas family, who resided in an ethnically mixed neighborhood, used English almost exclusively in parent-child and

sibling interactions. Spanish was reserved for occasional directives and for endearments. In this family, strategies aimed at cultural maintenance for the most part did not involve the use of Spanish: The focal child and her sisters participated in enrichment activities or church groups consisting of Mexican-descent children, addressing themes related to Mexican culture and meeting in predominantly Latino parts of the city. All of these activities, however, were carried out in English. The parents in the other Texas family, who lived in an overwhelmingly Latino neighborhood, were more active with regard to Spanish maintenance. Although siblings in this family usually interacted with one another in English, the mother frequently addressed the children in Spanish or a mixture of Spanish and English, and the parents set aside 1 day each week during which Spanish was to be used for parent-child interactions. Moreover, the children in the second Texas family spent a set time each week with their grandmother, who always interacted with them in Spanish.

Although not one among the four families relied on the schools to assist with the maintenance or revival of the minority language, the California and Texas families differed in how they saw the idealized role of the school in relation to Spanish language maintenance and cultural identity. The Texas families reported on here believed that the public schools had an obligation to assist them in maintaining their linguistic and cultural identity, whereas the California families concurred with the view that school was a place to acquire academic competence in the dominant societal language and that responsibility for Spanish maintenance essentially rested with the family.

Differing Sociocultural Ecologies

To some extent, the differences between the California and Texas participants may be attributed to the differences in the sociocultural ecologies of the two communities that the families represent. As is the case with the overall Mexican origin population in the two states (Solé, 1995), the California and Texas families differed with respect to the depth of their ties to the U.S. All four California parents were immigrants, having moved to the U.S. after the age of primary language acquisition. In contrast, both sets of Texas parents were born in Texas, and all spoke fluent English.

Moreover, unlike the California families, the Texas families had their important relations close at hand. After-school and weekend visits by focal children to the homes of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, as well as the large Mexican-origin population of San Antonio, created a perception of strength through numbers as well as the possibility for at least some Spanish interaction beyond the home. In contrast, the

California parents frequently used diaspora metaphors in representing their social condition: Removed from a natural community of Spanish speakers, living in a metropolitan area in which Mexican culture was devalued, and perceiving the constraints on sustaining their sense of roots to be numerous and oppressive, they felt they could not "let up," as one parent put it. The home being the arena over which they exercised significant control, cultural identification was best achieved, they believed, through an aggressive Spanish maintenance strategy (see Fishman, 1991).¹²

IMPLICATIONS

Recently, Zentella (1996) decried what she termed the *chiquitafication* of U.S. Latinos, the tendency of the popular media and, unfortunately, of much of the educational community as well to gloss over the highly diverse perspectives and backgrounds represented by the increasing numbers of U.S. residents who trace their roots to Mexico, Central America, and the Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean and South America. She challenged researchers to explore the diversity of Latino communities ranging from newly arrived Dominicans in New York to the *mexicanos* whose southwestern settlements predate English colonization of the eastern U.S. The research reported here may be viewed as one response to that challenge. Although the families whose language socialization practices we have reported on all share a single national origin, they present anything but a monochromatic picture. The parents and children whose stories we have compared shared a sense of belonging to a larger Mexican or Mexican American culture, and they all were aware that Spanish maintenance is tied to participation in that identity. However, the ways in which the families chose to pursue their goal of intergenerational transmission of Spanish varied widely. Moreover, as we have seen, even the meaning of Spanish maintenance is somewhat problematic. Enrique and Mariana Villegas, from an upper-middle-class background in Guadalajara, equated Spanish maintenance with preservation of the cultivated Spanish of the educated Mexican elite, a social dialect that was never spoken by the adults in the other

¹² Despite differences between the two states, however, the differences in the families' opinions on the role of the schools in minority language maintenance appear to depend largely on the circumstances of each family. We have reported elsewhere on an immigrant family, the Gómezes, living on a south Texas ranch (Bayley et al., 1996). Sr. and Sra. Gómez insisted that their children use Spanish exclusively in the home and expected their children to acquire English at school. Like the Villegas and Hernández families in California, the Gómezes viewed intergenerational transmission of Spanish as a task best accomplished by the family.

families studied. Further, the associations among language, culture, and identity are dynamic, as illustrated by the case of Mariana Villegas, who changed during the course of our field work from an opponent of bilingual education who was horrified by the quality of the Spanish she observed in the public schools to an aide in a bilingual classroom and, more importantly for the purposes of this article, a self-described minority. A similar dynamism may be seen in the desire of Alysia Baez, aged 11 at the end of the study, to instantiate her identification with "*mi* background" by speaking more Spanish, a desire encouraged but by no means required by her parents, who had achieved status in U.S. mainstream society.

From an applied perspective, the voices we have presented here have important implications for the goals and practices of multicultural education in schools. First, the diversity of meanings ascribed by the participants to the ideas of Mexican and Mexican American identity reinforces critiques of essentialist descriptions, based on reductionist categories, as aids to understanding the backgrounds and aspirations minority children bring with them to classrooms (see Erickson, 1990; Giroux, 1993; McCarthy, 1994). Second, discourse about ethnic identity is "a constituent part of [the North American] social environment" (Ruskin & Varenne, 1983, p. 553), and, as Cummins (1996) has pointed out, "the process of identity negotiation is interwoven into all educator-student interactions" (p. 12). The provision of opportunities to engage in such negotiations, then, may well prove more fundamental to the success of culturally diverse students than the implementation of any multicultural curriculum taking the form of group descriptions, no matter how sensitively the latter are drawn. Finally, if, in the interest of such empowering action, the use of ethnographic and case study material such as that contained in this article can help promote awareness among educators, schoolchildren, and caregivers of ways in which self- and self-other relationships can be understood and stimulate discussion about the interaction of externally and internally constructed identities in acculturation processes, we are only too grateful.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was supported by U.S. Department of Education Field-Initiated Studies Program Grant R117E40326-94 and by Spencer Foundation Grant 13811. Adriana Boogerman, Joanna Meighan, Elvia Ornelas-García, Rose Mary Reyna, Diane Sharken-Taboada, and Buenaventura Torres-Ayala assisted with observations, interviews, and transcriptions. We also wish to express our appreciation to the families who allowed us to share a portion of their lives and trusted us to tell their stories.

THE AUTHORS

Sandra Schecter is a member of the Faculty of Education, York University, where she teaches courses in language pedagogy and research methods. An ethnolinguist, she has published on language socialization, language education, and language planning.

Robert Bayley is a member of the Division of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio, where he teaches courses in sociolinguistics, research methods, and second language acquisition (SLA). He has published on SLA, code switching, and variation in English and Spanish.

REFERENCES

- Austin, J. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Barth, F. (Ed.). (1970). *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Bayley, R., Schecter, S. R., & Torres-Ayala, B. (1996). Strategies for bilingual maintenance: Case studies of Mexican-origin families in Texas. *Linguistics and Education, 8*, 389-408.
- Bayley, R., & Zapata, J. (1994). Alternancia de códigos y normas de lenguaje en el sur de Texas [Code switching and language norms in South Texas]. *Discurso: Teoría y Análisis, 16*, 51-71.
- Blom, J. P., & Gumperz, J. J. (1972). Social meaning in linguistic structures: Code-switching in Norway. In J. J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (Eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics: Ethnography of communication* (pp. 407-434). New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1992). *Qualitative research for education*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Cummins, J. (1996). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society*. Ontario: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Erickson, F. (1990). Culture, politics, and educational practice. *Educational Foundations, 4*, 21-45.
- Faigley, L. (1994). *Fragments of rationality: Postmodernity and the subject of composition*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis*. New York: Longman.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Language, counter-memory, practice: Selected essays and interviews* (D. F. Bouchard & S. Simon, Trans.; D. F. Bouchard, Ed.). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Garza, R., & Herringer, L. (1987). Social identity: A multidimensional approach. *Journal of Social Psychology, 127*, 299-308.
- Giroux, H. A. (1993). *Living dangerously: Multiculturalism and the politics of difference*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982a). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gumperz, J. J. (Ed.). (1982b). *Language and social identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heath, S. B. (1982). What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and school. *Language in Society, 11*, 49-76.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Heller, M. (1988). Strategic ambiguity: Codeswitching in the management of conversation. In M. Heller (Ed.), *Codeswitching: Anthropological and sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 77–96). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Le Page, R., & Tabouret-Keller, A. (1985). *Acts of identity: Creole-based approaches to language and ethnicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Luke, A. (1995). Text and discourse in education: An introduction to critical discourse analysis. In M. Apple (Ed.), *Review of research in education* (Vol. 21, pp. 3–48). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- McCabe, A., & Peterson, C. (Eds.). (1991). *Developing narrative structure*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- McCarthy, C. (1994). Multicultural discourses and curriculum reform: A critical perspective. *Educational Theory*, 44, 81–88.
- McCarthy, C., & Crichtlow, W. (Eds.). (1993). *Race, identity and representation in education*. New York: Routledge.
- Michaels, S., & Collins, J. (1984). Oral discourse styles: Classroom interaction and the acquisition of literacy. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Coherence in spoken and written discourse* (pp. 219–244). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Duelling languages: Grammatical structure in codeswitching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. *Psychology Bulletin*, 108, 499–514.
- Ruskin, F., & Varenne, H. (1983). The production of ethnic discourse: American and Puerto Rican patterns. In B. Bain (Ed.), *The sociogenesis of language and human conduct* (pp. 553–568). New York: Plenum Press.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organisation of turn taking for conversation. *Language*, 50, 696–735.
- Schechter, S., Sharken-Taboada, D., & Bayley, R. (in press). Bilingual by choice: Latino parents' rationales and strategies for raising children with two languages. *Bilingual Research Journal*.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics 3: Speech acts* (pp. 59–82). New York: Academic Press.
- Solé, Y. R. (1995). Language, nationalism, and ethnicity in the Americas. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 116, 111–138.
- Spindler, G., & Spindler, L. (Eds.). (1987). *Interpretive ethnology of education: At home and abroad*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Valdés, G. (1982). Social interaction and code-switching patterns: A case study of Spanish/English alternation. In J. Amastae & L. Elías-Olivares (Eds.), *Spanish in the United States: Sociolinguistic aspects* (pp. 209–229). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Valdés, G. (1996). *Con respeto: Bridging the distances between culturally diverse families and schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Verkuyten, M. (1995). Self-esteem, self-concept stability, and aspects of ethnic identity among minority and majority youth in the Netherlands. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 24, 155–175.
- Woolard, K. (1985). Language variation and cultural hegemony: Toward an integration of sociolinguistic and social theory. *American Ethnologist*, 12, 738–748.
- Zentella, A. C. (1996, March). The "chiquitification" of U.S. Latinos and their language, or why we need a politically applied Applied Linguistics. Plenary address to the American Association for Applied Linguistics Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.

Family Background

Mariana and Enrique Villegas and their daughter, Diana, and son, Luis (age 4),⁶ rented a small, detached house in Lincoln City,⁷ a town located approximately 20 miles south of San Francisco, California. The Villegas residence, on the fringe of a middle-class neighborhood and within short walking distance from commercial activity, was located about one-half mile west of the barrio that contains Lincoln City's majority Mexican-origin population. Both Mariana and Enrique were from Guadalajara, Mexico's second largest city. Their families, most of whom had remained in Guadalajara, belonged to the small, well-educated, Mexican *profesionista* (professional) stratum.⁸ Mariana's father, for example, was a medical doctor; Enrique's brother, an engineer. The couple moved to northern California when Diana was 2 so that Enrique could pursue a degree in business. Mariana, a Spanish-English bilingual who learned to speak, read, and write both languages at the American School in Guadalajara and by interacting with foreign medical students at the local university, planned to profit from her U.S. stay by taking courses to qualify as a medical assistant.

The couple's early years in the U.S. were full of financial hardship. In addition to attending classes, both parents worked full time to support their family. During the day, preschooler Diana was placed in professional day care. Mariana and Enrique selected an "all-English" facility because they wished to take advantage of their limited time in the U.S. for their daughter to acquire a good base in the language. Around the time Diana was ready to start primary school, the couple made the important decision to remain permanently in the U.S., where Enrique planned to start his own business after completing his studies.

Choosing a School

The decision to immigrate changed the Villegases' orientation toward decisions about schooling for their daughter. The selection of a primary and middle school now had long-term consequences for Diana's future,

⁶ For all families, children's ages are given as of the beginning of the observations. In most cases, the observations—including follow-up interviews—continued for more than a year.

⁷ To preserve the anonymity of the San Francisco-area families, we have used pseudonyms for the towns in which they reside. Differences in population structure and distribution made such precautions unnecessary in San Antonio.

⁸ It is difficult to estimate the percentage of the Mexican population that belongs to this stratum, particularly in the period following the collapse of the peso in December 1994. However, Nolasco and Acevedo (1985, cited in Valdés, 1996, pp. 175–176), who studied social stratification in Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana, estimated that 8% of the population belonged to this stratum, which also included middle-level executives and business people.

consequences that could be predicted given the cultural capital the couple brought from Mexico, that is, their knowledge of how the educational system in free-market countries worked. Mariana and Enrique were concerned primarily with identifying a school with high academic standards, where Diana could receive the best possible preparation for a professional vocation. After researching the schools within close driving distance, they decided that the wisest choice would be St. Mary's Academy (a pseudonym), a Catholic school located in the adjacent, affluent town of Oak Grove, where the language of instruction was English.

In her first meeting with Diana's kindergarten teacher, the teacher firmly counseled Mariana against teaching Spanish literacy to her daughter and advised the parents to speak English whenever possible in the home in order not to "create a conflict" that would cause the child to experience problems in school. The Villegases saw no reason to question this counsel: "Queremos . . . que la niña se adapte lo más pronto posible al sistema" [We wanted . . . our child to adapt as quickly as possible to the system]. Although initially Enrique, whose English proficiency was not as strong as his wife's, valued the opportunity provided by these unnatural discourse practices to improve his English, eventually all family members came to view these interactions as disorienting: "Y perdemos el uso de idioma español en la casa. Y con eso perdemos también un poco la cultura y- y al final están como en un limbo, no están en ningún lado" [And we're losing the use of the Spanish language at home. And with this we're also losing some of the culture and in the end it's like they're in limbo, they aren't anywhere].

"Un Español Muy Pobre"

This theme of a connection between language and cultural identity was strongly reinforced a year or two later at the time of a visit from Diana's paternal grandparents. Mrs. Villegas was alarmed at the degree of Spanish language loss her granddaughter exhibited. Ensuing discussions provoked a major change in attitude on the part of Diana's parents regarding the relation of mother tongue maintenance to cultural continuity. The Villegases briefly considered transferring their daughter to a bilingual program in a local public school, and Mariana went to look for a Spanish immersion program of the kind she had heard were common in Canada. However, appalled by the what they regarded as the poor quality of the Spanish they observed in the neighborhood schools, they were disabused quickly of the idea of transferring their daughter to a public school. Mariana reported, "Los niños eran de tercer grado y: leyeron un cuento . . . y tenían que escribir una pequeña composición de

Efforts to Stop Spanish Attrition

Given their profound concerns about their daughter's mother tongue attrition and its implications for the maintenance of Mexican cultural identity as well as their reservations concerning bilingual programs in the California public schools, the only option open to the Villegases was to require the exclusive use of the mother tongue in the home. From the time Diana entered third grade, a Spanish-only policy prevailed in the household: Diana's parents initiated interaction with their daughter in Spanish and required the use of Spanish in return. In addition, Mariana began a formal program of teaching her daughter to read and write in Spanish.

Although Diana did not consistently use Spanish in her interactions with her parents, she knew that its use was expected, especially by her mother. Sometimes, when her daughter began an interaction in English, Mariana commanded explicitly, "¡Habla español!" More often, however, like the mainstream, Anglo parents and teachers described by Heath (1982, 1983) and Michaels and Collins (1984), the mother's admonishments took the form of indirect requests, as illustrated in the following example:

- Diana: What do you want that for?
Mother: Huh?
Diana: *¿Para qué quieres eso?* [Why do you want that?]

Despite the official Spanish-only policy that governed the Villegas household, Diana used a fair amount of English, although not normally with her parents or her cousin Leticia, who arrived from Mexico midway through the observation period. With her school friends, however, she spoke exclusively English, even though her two closest friends were also Latinas who spoke fluent Spanish. Diana agreed with her mother's explanation that, given the monolingual context of St. Mary's, the girls found communication in their native language awkward, even outside the school environment.

Diana also listened to and watched a lot of English-language media. The family schedule, in fact, often was organized around a televised sports event—the Villegases were avid basketball and soccer fans—despite Mariana's earlier-expressed disdain for Spanish sports programming. The parents and daughter also used some English in discussions of school-related topics. In these instances, however, the English phrases tended to be of the formulaic variety normally associated with the protocols of schooling, which, given the school's monolingual character, would have been issued in English.

lo que habían entendido . . . y no había coherencia . . . usaban cosas en español . . . 'voy pa' 'trás, te llamo pa' 'trás . . .'" [The children were third graders and they read a story . . . and they had to write a little composition about what they had understood . . . and there was no coherence . . . they used things in Spanish . . . "voy pa' 'trás, te llamo pa' 'trás"].

But the Villegases encountered what they regarded as *un español muy pobre* [an impoverished Spanish] not only in the public schools but all around them—in the community and in the media as well. For example, for the Villegases, mother tongue input from Spanish-language media was problematic because they viewed the Spanish spoken on the local television and radio stations as full of errors. Commented Mariana, "La tele no nos ayuda, porque encontramos barbaridades como la palabra *gang, ganga* [laughs], eso no existe en español, es *pandilla*" [The TV doesn't help us, because we find barbarisms like the word *gang, ganga* . . . this doesn't exist in Spanish, it's *pandilla*]. The couple also expressed their dissatisfaction with decisions regarding programming for the Spanish media. Mariana continued, "No hay muchos programas educativos en español . . ." [There aren't many educational programs in Spanish . . .].

However, their reservations about the cultural resources to which they had access extended beyond issues of language, for the Villegases saw a direct link between Spanish-language usage in the U.S. and lower class Mexican values and mores. According to Enrique, "La comunidad mexicana son de las personas que vienen de una clase baja . . . y muchos de ellos no tienen ni escuela" [The Mexican community is composed of people who come from the lower class . . . and most of them don't have any schooling]. The Villegases were also careful to distance themselves from specific cultural identities associated with segments of the Mexican community, identities that they found either alienating or disdainful: "Yo soy mexicano, pero el movimiento chicano para mí es desconocido . . . no lo puedo entender" [I'm Mexican, but to me the Chicano movement is unfamiliar . . . I can't understand it].

For the Villegases, the main drawback of living in the U.S. was, in fact, the absence of the kind of cultural activity they associated with their life in Mexico—museum exhibits, musical concerts that informed about "the roots of our dances," and media resources from which one could depend on "un buen español, un español estándar" [a good Spanish, a standard Spanish]. They regretted that Mexican-descent children in the U.S. demonstrated little or no familiarity with the works of Mexican poets and novelists. They wanted their children, in the words of Mariana, "tener conciencia de lo que es TOda la cultura . . . que sea más rica la experiencia" [to be aware of what the WHOLE culture is about . . . so that their experience will be richer].

regard to senior school board personnel, resulting in the insolvency of its schools.

Although the parents' schedules were irregular, the household was orderly. All family members had chores that they were expected to complete before proceeding to recreation: On one Saturday morning visit, Schecter arrived to find Francisco (age 9) spraying and cleaning the living room furniture, Eduardo grooming the dog, and Tomás (age 6) wiping the interior of the van while his mother washed the exterior. Raul, an irrigationist by trade, was at the computer in the parents' bedroom, preparing the family tax statement. As the children completed their assigned tasks, they each found their way to the paved court out back and began to shoot baskets.

Language Use

Much of the time the three brothers were joined in their outdoor activity by their next-door neighbor, Jacobo, age 13. Most of their activity took place in the street in front of the Hernández home. The boys played baseball or football, used their in-line skates, or simply horsed around, while their music (Selena, Boyz II Men) blasted from the boom box strategically positioned on the front stoop. The following is an excerpt from a conversation between Eduardo and Jacobo as twilight brought closure to their football practice. The conversation, which contains several typical examples of the type of code mixing common among the youth of the neighborhood, concerns their schedule for the following day, which was Halloween. Jacobo informs his friend that his plans have been curtailed because he has to serve a detention for arriving late to school.

- Jacobo: Yeah, *eso es que* if you go late . . . if you go late to school, if you get three
- Eduardo: Uh huh.
- Jacobo: You er . . .
- Eduardo: You get suspended.
- Jacobo: Mm mm.
- Tomás: Eduardo, *¡que vengas!* [Come on!]
- Jacobo: Wait a little bit, either you get a work detail and you get a hum er sweep the hall or sharpen pencils=
- Eduardo: =A:h hah=
- Jacobo: =Or clean the school for one hour *y si no* [and if not], if you don't go, you get suspended for 1 day . . . *Y yo tengo que- y te dan y luego yo tengo que ir en Halloween.* [And I have to- they give you work detail and then I have to go on Halloween.]

Inside their house, the brothers' conversations with one another were characterized by frequent code switching, a strategy that Eduardo referred to as *los dos* [both]. The boys' running commentaries during one evening of television watching (they watch mostly English language television, largely cartoons and hunting and fishing shows) yielded examples such as "*Mataron muchos ducks*" [They killed a lot of ducks] and "*¿Qué pasó?* [What happened?] It crashed?"

With his parents, Eduardo spoke primarily Spanish, a strategy dictated both by the pragmatic requirements of communication with his monolingual Spanish mother and his parents' ideological stance toward Spanish maintenance. Raul began in English to explain his and his wife's position—"I think that's the only way to keep a little bit of what we used to have," then switched to Spanish—"el único modo de mantener algo de la cultura que tenemos=" [the only way to maintain something of our culture]. The conclusion to his sentence was anticipated by his wife, as the two rejoined, "=hablando el idioma" [by speaking the language].

Both Raul and María were from the central Mexican city of Guanajuato. Although Raul spoke, read, and wrote Spanish fluently, he claimed English as his primary language. His parents immigrated to the U.S. when he was 5, and for 7 years he attended an all-English elementary school in San Francisco. Raul reported that during his formative years he came into contact with few Latinos, so that eventually he actually had to "learn" Spanish. His motive for such learning was decidedly affective: While on vacation in his birth town of Guanajuato he met and fell in love with then 17-year-old María, who confirmed that Raul was strongly English dominant when she met him: "Cuando yo lo conocí a él, bueno cuando ya nos casamos, no hablaba casi español" [when I first knew him, well, when we were already married, he hardly spoke Spanish]. After 10 years of residence in the U.S., María still spoke only Spanish: "Yo, nada más español" [I speak only Spanish].

In the following sequence, which took place in early morning, Eduardo's mother is querying her son about his breakfast activity. Their interaction takes place entirely in Spanish.

- Mother: *¿Y van a comer nada?* [Are you going to eat something?]
Eduardo: *Yo ya me he comido un pan con leche.* [I already ate bread and milk.]
Mother: *¿No te has comido un pan con leche?* [Haven't you eaten bread and milk?]
Eduardo: *Sí, ayer.* [Yes, yesterday.]
Mother: *¡No, ahora!* [No, now!]
Eduardo: *¡Ah, sí!* [Ah, yes!]

Because of María's limited receptive capability in English, Eduardo was often called on by his mother to translate important documents or

to have to know Spanish, and if these girls don't know Spanish they're going to have a problem].

To avert the loss of Spanish by their daughters, the Torreses adopted two main strategies. Mrs. Torres' mother provided weekly Spanish "lessons," which mainly involved retelling familiar Mexican stories and pointing out the names of various objects in the house as well as commentaries on the *telenovelas* the grandmother was so fond of. And in the home, José and Elena attempted to have their daughters speak Spanish 1 day a week, a practice they had maintained for a year prior to our home observations.

The language revival strategy involving Mrs. Torres's mother was not problematic. These interactions felt natural for Marta, our focal child. Her grandmother spoke Spanish with all her *nietos* (grandchildren) and had done so since they were little, notwithstanding the intervening generation's initial reservations about the use of the heritage language. Marta was fond of her *abuela* and did not, in fact, characterize her visits with her, which sometimes involved sleep-overs, as lessons. Asked what she did when she was over at her grandma's, the child responded, "*Hablamos . . . about escuela, y la past*" [We talk . . . about school, and the past].

With regard to the Torreses' strategy of speaking Spanish 1 day a week in the household, their goal was at least partially fulfilled: Marta did attempt to use Spanish when we recorded the family interactions on several "Spanish days," as illustrated in the following interaction with her mother.

- Marta: Mom, *ya hicimos* vacuum. [Mom, we finished vacuuming.]
Mother: *Está bien prontito. ¿Ya barrites cuarto?* [Come on now, quickly. Have you swept your room?]
Marta: Sí. [Yes.]
Mother: *¿Y todo lo barrites?* [And you swept it all?]
Marta: *Sí, bien . . .* [Yes, (I swept it) well . . .] *Yo tieno, no yo tienes.* [I have, no I have . . .] I don't know how you say *have*. Mom, how do you say *have*?
Mother: Half? What? *Medio*.
Marta: Have, like you have to close the door.
Mother: *Tienes que.* [You have to.]
Marta: Ok, what about I have homework?
Mother: *Tengo tarea.* [I have homework.]
Marta: *Tengo carea* [sic].

The above example shows that Marta's receptive ability outpaced her productive capacity and that her Spanish exhibited early interlanguage features (e.g., highly unstable verbal morphology as in *yo tieno/yo tienes*

above). Yet, despite her rudimentary command of oral Spanish, Marta's Spanish surpassed her mother's in one respect. Unlike her mother, Marta had acquired minimal Spanish literacy and sometimes was called upon to read Spanish-language leaflets and shopping coupons. Elena Torres commented on her daughter's ability, "A lot of times I get the [shopping] coupons in Spanish and it's like, 'OK Marta, *ven a decirme qué dice aquí*'" [OK Marta, come and tell me what it says here].

The above encouraging sign notwithstanding, it was difficult for José and Elena to reverse the process of intergenerational language attrition. Although she loved to read and was an avid consumer of children's literature in English, Marta would not read in Spanish other than for the purely pragmatic purpose of helping out her mother. And getting her to speak Spanish, even on Spanish days, was sometimes trying, as illustrated in the following excerpt from a mealtime conversation between Marta, her mother, and her younger sister.

- Mother: What's today if it's Tuesday Alicia?
Alicia: M:mh [for I don't know].
Mother: You don't know?
Marta: Why what is it?
Mother: No don't don't tell her if she don't know then she don't participate and she won't get all the extras . . . What's today?
Alicia: Spanish day.
Mother: Why? . . . Why is today Spanish day?
Marta: I don't know. 'Cause we have it every Tuesday.
Mother: OK, that's why 'cause it's Tuesday.

The School's Role in Language Maintenance

Marta's parents both appeared solidly committed to the goal of Spanish-language revival, yet they found depleting the degree of conscious effort involved in reversing the household "habit," as Elena described it, of speaking English. In Elena's words, "It is draining for me that I have to repeat or that I have to make myself clear in what I said because they are so used to me speaking to them in English." What the Torresses found most disheartening, however, is that the burden for Spanish-language input rested almost exclusively on their (and, of course, Elena's mother's) shoulders. Like Enrique and Mariana Villegas, José and Elena found the selection on the local Spanish-language television and radio channels to be wanting—in fact, they claimed there was no children's programming on Spanish TV—and outside of the occasional Spanish-language movie, the family chose to bypass these resources. Marta was aware of the Spanish-language television channel,