This article illustrates the role played by teachers of language minority students in mediating the apparent conflict between the language of the school and that of the students. The goal is not to argue for or against bilingual education but to demonstrate that bilingual programs require pedagogically sound, socially responsive, and culturally relevant approaches, in addition to personnel fluent in the students' native language. To frame the discussion, three different but complementary theoretical perspectives are reviewed: Bourdieu's conceptualization of language and power; the literature on home-school discontinuities; and an overview of sociolinguistic and ethnographic perspectives. Selected examples of teachers and students' interactions in a first grade English-Spanish bilingual classroom are presented and analyzed to illustrate how certain social and discursive practices provide or deny access to learning.

In the United States there are a variety of program models subsumed under the umbrella term bilingual education. At a broad level, the label bilingual education is used to refer to any program model in which two languages are used for instruction (although often classrooms are referred as bilingual because they have students who speak two languages even though their monolingual teachers only use English for instruction). Within this general frame, there are a variety of program models (e.g., transitional bilingual, immersion, maintenance) and formats (e.g., one teacher using two languages for instruction; two teachers, one for each language). In spite of this diversity, second language programs can be divided into two major categories: additive and subtractive. Additive bilingual approaches are those which foster acquisition of a second language while maintaining and continuing to develop the first language. Needless to say, the benefits of additive bilingualism are many. Lambert's seminal work (Lambert, 1984; Lambert & Tucker, 1972;
Peal & Lambert, 1962) suggested that when both languages and cultures are valued and perceived as complementary, bilingualism contributes positively to the cognitive, linguistic, and psychological development of children. Other benefits of additive bilingualism include knowledge of two languages, enhanced self-esteem which often correlates with academic success, enhanced metalinguistic development, strong family and community relations, communication between generations, among several others (for a discussion on the benefits of additive bilingualism see Crawford, 1989; Cummins, 1979; Hakuta, 1986; Lambert, 1975).

In subtractive approaches, mastery of the second language is achieved at the expense of proficiency in the first. The acquisition of a second language, usually the majority language is given greater prestige while the native language is perceived as having little value (Merino, Trueba, & Samaniego, 1993). In some cases, the issue of bilingualism is further compounded when different language varieties are used within one school or community. For instance, Guthrie’s (1985) study of a Chinatown school in California illustrates how the coexistence of Mandarin, Cantonese, and Yue dialects within the community complicated the decisions of selecting a language for instruction for their bilingual program. In the case of English-Spanish bilingualism in the United States, the use of different standard and non-standard varieties of Spanish that are part of the complex sociolinguistic Spanish-speaking context (Merino et al., 1993; Sánchez, 1993) place additional challenges in designing programs for Spanish-speaking students.

As a result of the increasing numbers of language minority students, districts and states have suddenly found themselves unprepared, and in some instances, unwilling to address the educational, linguistic, and social needs of their diverse students. Some school districts, in their efforts to increase the number of bilingual teachers needed to serve their growing population of linguistically and culturally diverse students, are hiring teachers who speak two languages but who may not always have the necessary cultural knowledge about their students.

However, being fluent in the language of the students and “knowing about” their culture might not be enough to insure the success of language minority students in schools. As suggested by Gutierrez, “current language practices in schools, despite attempts to incorporate bilingual instruction, provide the most effective means of denying access to both knowledge and practice” (Gutierrez & McLaren, 1995, p. 136). It is clear that major changes are needed in the design and implementation of programs for second language learners. For all those involved in the education of language minority students, it is imperative that they be able to help students integrate what they already know with what the school offers (Ernst, 1993). Linking those two worlds and bridging those two cultures is the challenge of teachers in bilingual and multicultural settings.

This article extends this discussion in two main contexts. First, it asserts that bilingual programs must recognize, accept, and validate the home language and culture of the students. This implies not only hiring personnel who speak the
languages of the students but who can re-imagine and recreate instructional contexts wherein the linguistic and sociocultural experiences of language minority students are incorporated into, and legitimated by, the teaching and learning process. The second goal is a methodological one: to unpack the construction of interactional and discursive instructional practices that can enhance or hinder the educational experiences of language minority students. The analysis of conversational segments and vignettes illustrates how some current practices in a bilingual first grade classroom can provide an effective means for denying access to both the instructional discourse and the content to be learned, despite the use of Spanish as the language for instruction.

THEORETICAL ANCHORS FOR THIS STUDY

Language Use, Power, and Authorized Language
For Bourdieu (1977, 1991), all speech acts are the outcome of two causal forces. First, the linguistic habitus encompasses the cultural propensity to say particular things in linguistically and socially appropriate ways. Second, the linguistic market takes the form of sanctions and censorship, suggesting what can be said and what cannot. Bourdieu further details the language habitus and linguistic market by casting the discussion in the relationship of power. In his own words,

This tension between the linguistic habitus and the linguistic market guides speakers in regard to what to say and how to say it. In other words, it is the speaker’s anticipation of the reception that her discourse will receive (i.e., its “price”) which contributes to what is said and how it is said. Within this linguistic market, the dominant language becomes a distinct capital which, in discourse, produces a sense of the speaker’s distinction, along with legitimate correctness (Bourdieu, 1991).

This type of linguistic market is clearly reproduced in schools and classrooms where, for the most part, teachers have the power to reward or sanction what students say, when they say it, and how they say it. Even though students and teachers might speak the same language (e.g., Spanish), the dominant language (e.g., a “standard” variety) might be different from that spoken by the students (e.g., a rural variety of Spanish). Taking this perspective into account as we consider bilingual education, we might say that a bilingual program embraces an additive perspective if teachers respect, value, and do not sanction students’ language
varieties in the linguistic classroom market. If, on the other hand, teachers do not accept and overtly correct students' dialect variants, then a subtractive approach to bilingualism is in practice.

For Bourdieu (1991), the relationship between dominant and dominated languages (e.g., English vs. Spanish; standard vs. rural variety) mirrors the unequal distribution of linguistic capital as mediated by formal education. Furthermore, for minority students, the utterances voiced by teachers are not only "signs to be understood and deciphered; they are also signs of wealth intended to be evaluated and appreciated and signs of authority, intended to be believed and obeyed" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 66). Thus the discourse used by teachers in schools becomes a form of authorized language. This type of language uses:

a rhetoric which characterizes all discourses of institution....The stylistic features which characterize the language of priests, teachers, and, more generally, all institutions, like routinization, stereotyping and neutralization, all stem from the position occupied in a competitive field by these persons entrusted with delegated authority. (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 109)

For lay members of the institution (i.e., school, church, community), their language, if not similar to the authorized language, becomes of limited value. The issue then is not about whether non-native English speakers can benefit in bilingual programs, but whether the language variety spoken by the student is accepted (or authorized) by both teachers and students as a viable and legitimate language variety within the dynamic classroom exchange.

Home/School Discontinuities
Recent studies have explored home/school discontinuities that result in the academic failure of many minority students (see, for example, Erickson & Mohatt, 1981; Heath, 1983; Philips, 1983). Their findings suggest that the differences between the school culture in terms of objectives, values, and practices results in a "cultural clash" which produces school failure. Therefore, it becomes necessary to consider the differing experiences, values, skills, expectations, and life-styles with which children enter school and how these differences affect student achievement.

Given this reality, cultural differences begin to function as a risk factor. This general strand of research is known by a number of different names including "cultural compatibility-incompatibility," cultural differences," "cultural continuity-discontinuity," and "cultural congruency-incongruency." These studies have focused on a variety of ethnic and linguistic groups including Native American children (Erickson & Mohatt, 1981; Philips, 1983), African-American children (Heath, 1983); Hawaiian children (Au, 1980; Boggs, 1985), and Mexican-Americans (Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Moll & Diaz, 1987; Trueba, 1988).

Of interest in the study of home/school discontinuities is the identification of differences between home and school cultures. However, what is more important
is the analysis of those differences so often seen as "deficits," and the exploration of how those discontinuities are tied to inequities in social structures. How are educational programs dealing with the particular needs of this sector of the student population? What do teachers need to know about the communicative styles of their students so they can successfully participate in school activities? Research is needed to identify the actions and interactions in school settings that may contribute to both the successes and failures of minority students.

The present study, like those mentioned above, has been influenced by the work of scholars in the fields of anthropology, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and the ethnography of communication. An important implication of this body of research is that language and culture, two interlocked symbol systems, are key to the acquisition of new knowledge. Thus, a central goal of this study was to produce a comprehensive and systematic description of teachers' and students' interactional and discursive practices that facilitate or hinder the acquisition of new knowledge.

**A Sociolinguistic/Ethnographic Perspective**

In the last decade educational researchers have recognized ethnographic research methods as first steps in the journey towards understanding the sociocultural processes in language learning and the moment-to-moment interactions in the classroom (Hornberger, 1996; Trueba, 1988; Watson-Gegeo, 1988). Unlike quantitative methodology and technique, ethnographic methods extol the virtues of an emic and holistic perspective on research allowing ethnographers to see through the eyes of the participants and to systematically document and analyze interactions in rich, contextualized detail with the aim of developing grounded theory (Agar, 1985; Hornberger, 1996; Pike, 1967).

This is precisely what this study attempted to do. In order to examine and document the types of communicative patterns used by first-grade Mexican and Mexican-American children and their teachers, two distinct, but complementary, data collection procedures were used. The first phase of this ethnographic study included a study of the theoretically salient aspects of the settings (i.e., classrooms, playground, art room), participants (i.e., students, teachers, educational aides), and events (i.e., calendar and weather, journal writing, reading aloud). 2

In the second phase, findings from this first stage were used to identify, videotape, and analyze specific classroom events. More specifically, two different instructional units were selected in consultation with classroom teachers: one on Halloween in October and one on farm and pond animals in March. These instructional units, which lasted 9 and 14 days respectively, were selected to provide a way of examining how teachers organize discursive and instructional approaches within a specific cycle of activity (Tuyay, Floriani, Yeager, Dixon, & Green, 1995), that is, within a set of events related to one specific topic (e.g., farm animals). Specific data for this article included forty hours of videotapes of these cycles of
activity in addition to interviews, fieldnotes and artifacts collected throughout the school year.3

Microanalysis of these data was guided by an interactive sociolinguistic perspective (e.g., Bloome, 1987; Cazden, 1986; Ernst, 1994a, 1994b; Green & Wallat, 1981; Gumperz, 1982; Hymes, 1981; Kantor, Green, Bradley, & Lin, 1992; Philips, 1983; Weade & Green, 1989). This detailed analysis of participants' interactions in naturally occurring events provided a principled approach for freezing, reconstructing, and analyzing recurrent events and generated the means for extracting patterns of sociocultural behavior in classrooms and school and over time. Patterns were analyzed in order to understand how teachers' actions and interactions can be supportive (or not) of the learning experiences of their students. In sum, by using these two lenses, that is the macro and microethnographic perspectives, detailed interactions can be situated and analyzed in light of broader frameworks.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

The District

Los Frutales4, located in a central valley area in the northwest, is a semi-urban community with a population of approximately 35,000 citizens. During the past decade, minority student enrollment has increased from 28% in 1980 to an all-time high of 53% in 1993 of the total district enrollment. This increase presently moves Los Frutales over the projected national average of 40% for the year 2010. In addition, a significant number of these students are migratory, entering Los Frutales schools following the agricultural seasons throughout the region, and leaving the area when main harvesting periods end.

Although Los Frutales school district offers varying degrees of bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) programs for students, only 13 teachers held a Bilingual or ESL state endorsement. According to the district, the projected need for 1997–98 is approximately 45–55 bilingual teachers, and an additional 20–25 bilingual/ESL teachers will be needed for each of the next three years just to keep up with the projected student enrollment.

In order to better serve the increasing number of Spanish-speaking children, mostly Mexican or of Mexican descent, the school district is hiring teachers who have knowledge of Spanish—whether they are certified in either Bilingual or ESL education or not. Although these new teachers are proficient in Spanish, well-intentioned, and care about their students, they do not always have the necessary sociocultural knowledge to facilitate their daily interactions with their Mexican and Mexican-American students. In the last two years, new hirings for bilingual classrooms have included teachers from Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Panama, Puerto Rico, and other nationalities who are fluent in Spanish but who may not always be aware of the communicative styles and cultural ways of students of Mexican descent.
The School
Abraham Lincoln Elementary School located in Los Frutales school district, comprises grades K–5. During the 1993–94 school year, this school had an enrollment of 580 students, of which approximately 45% were Mexican or of Mexican descent. During the 1993–1994 school year, the school implemented a new all-day Spanish instruction program for kindergarten and first grade children whose first language was Spanish. This action was the result of a new policy in the district supporting literacy instruction in the students’ native language, as part of the services offered by the transitional bilingual program. The idea was to slowly move children from all-day Spanish instruction in kindergarten and first grade to all-day English instruction by the fourth grade.

The school principal, an African American female, was supportive of the program but maintained that her “expertise is not in the area of Spanish or bilingual education; that’s why we have an assistant principal who is certified in that area.” The assistant principal, a young European American female, referred to the new Bilingual Program as her “baby.” She was delighted to have been assigned to this school this year since she had:

been pushing the district to implement something like this. We have been telling people that these kids can’t make it unless they have support in their first language. How are they going to learn to read if they don’t know what “open the book” means? And even if they do, English words don’t mean much to them.

Other faculty in the school were mostly European American and female. Two teachers were Mexican American (a kindergarten teacher—in his first year of teaching, and a resource teacher), one teacher from South America and one from Central America. In addition, there were four Mexican American full-time instructional assistants.

The All-Spanish First Grade Classroom

The Staff. The staff in this classroom consists of two bilingual teachers and one instructional assistant—all native speakers of Spanish. While Ms. Miller, the morning teacher, teaches from 8:40 to 11:30 a.m., Ms. Owens takes over at 11:30 until 3:00 p.m. Ms. Pérez, the instructional assistant assigned to this classroom, spends an average of thirty minutes per day in this classroom. When Ms. Miller and Ms. Owens are not working with the first graders, they are working with other students in a recently developed Reading Recovery Program.

The national origin of the staff is diverse. While Ms. Miller immigrated from South America as a child, Ms. Owens came to the U.S. from Central America when she was twenty years old. Both teachers came from large cities. Ms. Pérez, the instructional assistant, came as a child from a rural area in Mexico. In terms of teaching experience, both teachers have taught in upper elementary classrooms for
over five years. For both teachers, however, this was their first time teaching in a first grade classroom and also their first time teaching in Spanish (or in a bilingual program).

**The Students.** During the 1993–94 school year, an average of 24 students were enrolled in this first grade classroom. Like many other students in the district, these first graders are Mexican born or of Mexican descent. Their families, for the most part, come from decidedly rural environments. Five of the students did not attend kindergarten before entering the first grade; all others had one year of all-English kindergarten. All children are on the federal free lunch program. All children used the title “Maestra” (teacher) when referring to both of their teachers and “Señora Pérez” when referring to the instructional assistant.

**The Classroom.** The first grade children who enter this room each day meet children and adults who, for the most part, will speak Spanish all day. The classroom is filled with inviting bulletin boards, reading materials, and environmental print. A visitor entering this classroom for the first time may not notice that most of the signs, labels, and printed materials, unlike other classrooms, are in Spanish. Most of the posters, signs, and pictures are similar to those available in many educational catalogues (except that they are in Spanish). Displays of students’ work decorate the walls and reflect the changing seasons of the year (e.g., Martin Luther King in January, green hats and leprechauns for Saint Patrick’s day, turkeys and pilgrims for Thanksgiving Day). In sum, in terms of physical arrangement and bulletin board decorations this classroom mirrors other classrooms in the school. However, the words and print surrounding students in this classroom are mostly in Spanish.

A typical daily schedule in this all-day Spanish classroom is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:40–8:45</td>
<td>Attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calendar and Weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45–9:00</td>
<td>Phonics Lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worksheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00–10:00</td>
<td>Reading groups (4 groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basal reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worksheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(On Thursdays: 9:30-10:15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suns &gt;&gt;&gt; Art or Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stars &gt;&gt;&gt; P.F.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00–10:15</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated above, the majority of instruction is provided in Spanish (an hour of ESL instruction is included every afternoon). Except for Art, Music, and P.E. where students in the all-day Spanish first grade are mixed with the all-day English first grade, all other instruction is provided in their homeroom classroom. According to Ms. Owens, this arrangement was the result of 1) not having art, music, and physical education teachers who are bilingual or prepared in ESL, and 2) an attempt to integrate Spanish-speaking children with other children in the school (i.e., native English speakers).

**TRENCHANT EXAMPLES**

What follows are selected “trenchant” examples in which different teachers’ actions and interactions with first grade Mexican and Mexican-American children, either supported or did not support the children’s language and culture, and were either relevant or irrelevant to their everyday life. The selection of such examples can be extremely useful in the presentation of ethnographic work because they are bold and clear illustrations selected in an arbitrary manner to represent recurrent patterns. The usefulness of these segments and vignettes reside in their representational value. That is, they make visible those events and circumstances that otherwise would only be visible to those carrying out continual, extended, and systematic observations and ongoing analyses. A discussion of these examples is presented following the fifth and last example.
Example 1: Football or Soccer?

During Art, Music, and P.E., students in the all-day Spanish first grade classroom are mixed with the all-day English first grade students. Thus, while half of the class has Music on Thursday mornings, the other half has Physical Education.

One morning during P.E., a substitute teacher was demonstrating how to kick a football, as she swiftly "sang" the instructions: "I kick the football, I catch the football; I kick the football, I catch the football." After repeating directions four times, she gave each child a football. She then lined up the children behind a white line and, while pointing to a tree, said: "Kick the football, all the way up to the tree" (about 100 feet away). As soon as she blew her whistle, the native English speaking children proceeded to kick the ball, catch the ball, and kick it again until they reached the tree. The Spanish speaking children, on the other hand, kicked the football along the ground (as in soccer) instead of a football punt. Once the children were done with their kicking, the teacher explained and demonstrated, again, how they should have done it. Then she said, "It's okay for now, let's work on passing the ball now." Although all the children laughed throughout the activity, in reality, one group of children accomplished the task as expected; the other group did not.

For the next activity (i.e., passing the ball) the teacher again sang the instructions as she helped the children form rows of six or seven. Only one row was formed with both European American and Mexican American children. When she gave the order to start passing, the Spanish-speaking children did not move. It was only after they saw their English-speaking peers pass the ball that they were able to follow suit. In the end, most rows finished at the same time.

Example 2: Chocolate Cookies or Tortillas?

Ms. Hodnett, the art teacher, who does not speak Spanish nor has received specific ESL preparation, seemed to have no problem in communicating with the Spanish-speaking children. In her class, the Spanish-speaking children were able to move at the same pace as their English-speaking counterparts and were generally able to complete their projects within the assigned time. She often modeled every step of the activity and repeated instructions very slowly. Furthermore, at the beginning of each activity, she showed the children samples of how their projects might look once they were completed, named and displayed all the tools and materials to be used, and explained the steps to follow (e.g., "first we get a red circle, second, you need to get a green marker, third..."). In addition, she used plenty of body language as she gave directions or feedback to students. This teacher often asked children for the Spanish words for materials and tools and often incorporated those words in her explanations.

The following example illustrates how this teacher incorporates the information provided by the Spanish-speaking children into her discourse. One morning in early February, students were preparing hearts made of clay for Valentine's Day. When
students were flattening the clay, the teacher modeled how the clay should look before tracing their hearts.

85 T: YOU NEED TO WORK ON YOUR CLAY UNTIL IT'S FLAT
     {shows clay}
86 IT HAS TO BE LARGE LARGE ENOUGH FOR YOUR HEART
     {shows cardboard heart}
87 T: YOU NEED TO MAKE IT EVEN
88 Marina: como tortillas
89 like tortillas
90 T: YES YES LIKE MAKING COOKIES OR TORTILLAS
91 Juana: si si como tortillas
     yes yes like tortillas

As illustrated in the above segment, students' contribution to the explanation (line 89) is not only accepted but is immediately validated by the teacher (line 90). Furthermore, in this instance, Marina provides an example of a similar item (i.e., tortilla) which is familiar to all the Spanish-speaking students. Marina is functioning as a broker between two languages and cultures. Ms. Hodnett, on the other hand, becomes a learner when she acknowledges and incorporates Marina's contribution to her explanation. This was not an unusual behavior for Ms. Hodnett, as she often asked the students to teach her Spanish words which she promptly used to explain the task at hand.

Example 3: Five Little Pigs?

During the third week of March, students were studying Los Animales Domésticos (farm animals). Throughout the week teachers and students talked about farm animals, viewed pictures of animals, and read stories about different animals. The children also wrote short sentences and drew pictures of animals.

On the second day, Ms. Owens, the afternoon teacher, gave students a worksheet with sixteen domestic animals as she announced that they were going to review the names of these animals before they wrote their names below the corresponding picture. As she pointed at each picture, she asked children to name the animal. Once a child mentioned the appropriate name, she moved on to the next picture. What follows is the exchange that took place while the teacher pointed at the pig, the fifth animal in the ditto sheet.

100 T Y ESTE
101 Y ESTE COMO SE LLAMA
102 IGNACIO
103 Ignacio un marrano
104 T NO {snickers}
105 ANA
Ana un cochino

si si es un cochino

chiiiiino

marrano marrano si

si si como un como un chancho

un cochino te digo

BUENO SI ESTE

ESTE ES EHH UN PUERC0

SI UN PUERC0

pueeerco

SI YA A VER YAAA

SI SI ESTA BIEN TODOS

TODOS SON PUERCOS O

TAMBIEN TODOS SON TODOS SON CERDOS

SI AQUI

a marrano

NO

a cochino

AND THIS ONE

AND THIS ONE WHAT IS IT CALLED

IGNACIO

a marrano

YES YES IT'S A COCHINO

YES YES LIKE A CHANCHO

a cochino I tell you

WELL YES THIS

THIS IS AHH A PUERC0

YES A PUERC0

pueeerco

YES OKAY LET'S SEEEE

YES YES ALRIGHT ALL

English Translation
As evidenced in the above segment, when students were asked to name the animal in the picture, Ignacio said *marrano* (line 103) and got a “no” from the teacher (line 104). Ana tries a different term, that is, *cochino* (line 106) and gets only a snicker from the teacher. After several trials, and after several children have repeated *marrano* and *cochino* more than once, Ramona adds a third term, *chancho*, as she explains that a “*marrano* is like a *chancho*” (lines 111–112). After several student attempts at providing the “right” name for the animal depicted in the picture, Ms. Owens provided yet another term, that is, *puerco* (line 114). When Raúl hears this term he repeats it as other students laugh. At this point, the teacher interjects to say that all are *puercos and cerdos* as on the chalkboard (line 121) and on the book (line 122) then swiftly moves to the next animal on the sheet.

This segment clearly illustrates the tensions in a linguistic market wherein the teacher has the power to reward or sanction what students say and how they say it. In this case, the students mentioned three linguistically valid terms for pig; yet these terms were not accepted by the teacher because they were not part of the “authorized” language; that is, the language legitimized by the curricular materials and the teacher. Important to mention is the fact that during an interview—two days after this event, the teacher recognized the meaning of the words used by the students.

### Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line #</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Terms for Pig</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Authorized Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Ignacio</td>
<td><em>marrano</em></td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Ana</td>
<td><em>cochino</em></td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Lizeth</td>
<td><em>cochino</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>Javier</td>
<td><em>cochino</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Ramona</td>
<td><em>marrano</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>chancho</em></td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>Ana</td>
<td><em>cochino</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>T</td>
<td><em>puerco</em></td>
<td>TEACHER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Raúl</td>
<td><em>puercos</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119–20</td>
<td>T</td>
<td><em>PUERCOS = CERDOS</em></td>
<td>CHALKBOARD</td>
<td>PUERCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>CERDO</em></td>
<td>BOOK</td>
<td>CERDO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
but considered them inappropriate. Furthermore, she explained that too many synonyms “might cause confusion.” Linguistically, all five terms for pig are appropriate, yet, in the context of this classroom, the terms voiced by the students had no value.

Table 1 charts the different instances in which different terms for pig were used, by whom, and the source (i.e., book, chalkboard) during the aforementioned interaction. Although the teacher does indeed mention that the previous terms for pig (i.e., *marrano, cochino, chancho*) are equivalent to *puerco* as well as the terms on the chalkboard and in the book i.e., *cerdo* (lines 119–120), she did not accept those terms as valid when mentioned by the children.7

Example 4: Serpientes, Viboras, Alicantes, and Snakes8
There were other occasions in which teachers did not dismiss the children’s contributions (in this case, students’ terms), although they did not incorporate them either into the discussion at hand. In the following example, Ms. Miller and the children are studying *Los Animales del Estanque* (roughly translated, *Pond Animals*). After the children had finished coloring a ditto sheet with animals entitled “At Home in Water,” Ms. Miller asks the children to prepare to write the names of the animals in their sheets.

After several exchanges in which children named different animals and the teacher wrote those on the chalkboard, the teacher calls on Maria:
The activity continued with children giving names of animals and the teacher writing those on the chalkboard. As is evident in the above segment, the students are mentioning the animals included in the coloring sheet. When Maria says alicantes (line 351) (used to refer to a kind of poisonous snakes), the teacher asks her to repeat her answer (line 354) and acknowledges not knowing what alicantes means (line 356). After Maria points at a snake in the picture (line 363), the teacher writes alicante on the chalkboard next to vibora and serpiente (line 364), previously mentioned by the students. Although common words in Spanish for snake are vibora and serpiente, alicante is equally valid.

Unlike the previous example of the “Five Little Pigs” where the teacher does not validate the terms provided by the students, the teacher in this example demonstrates acceptance of the term brought up by Maria by adding it to the list on the chalkboard. However, here too, the teacher does not incorporate the terms provided by the children in the verbal text, but only in the written text.
This segment mirrors the unequal distribution of linguistic capital, not unusual in schools and classrooms. Students’ contributions (i.e., alicantes) to the discussion are finally acknowledged after three turns (lines 352, 353, 355), and although the term suggested by the children is incorporated into the written text (line 367), it was not used again by the teacher.

Example 5: Escribines, Hormiguitas, and Ants

On several occasions, the children themselves were helping others (including their teachers) understand the meanings of their words, that is, linking the terms provided by the textbook, materials, or their teachers with those used at home. In the following example, also from the lesson on Los Animales del Estanque mentioned above, the teacher encourages children to think about very small animals who might also live near the water (not depicted in their coloring sheets).

381 T  HAY HAY ANIMALITOS CHIQUITOS TAMBIEN
382 NO SON TODOS GRANDES
383 student  escribines
384  sapo
385 T  IGNACIO
386 Ignacio  escribines
387 T  ESCRIBINES QUE SON ESCRIBINES
388 Luisa  hormiguitas
389 Ignacio  si escribines
390 T  OKAY HORMIGUITAS  {writes “hormiguitas” on chalkboard}
391 RAMONA

English Translation

THERE THERE ARE VERY SMALL ANIMALS TOO
THEY ARE NOT ALL BIG
383 student  escribines
384  frog
385 T  IGNACIO
386 Ignacio  escribines
387 T  ESCRIBINES WHAT ARE ESCRIBINES
388 Luisa  small ants
389 Ignacio  yes escribines
390 T  OKAY SMALL ANTS  {writes “hormiguitas” on chalkboard}
391 RAMONA

In this segment, the word escribines was mentioned by several children (lines 383, 386, 389). When the teacher acknowledges not knowing the meaning of this word (line 387), Luisa uses a synonym to clarify the meaning of the term (line 388). Ignacio, who had mentioned escribines earlier and did not get his word on the
chalkboard (as in the previous exchanges), validates Luisa’s clarification (line 389) by saying “si escribes.” The teacher ends this exchange by writing the word hormiguitas on the chalkboard, which is the term she is familiar with and not the term mentioned by three of her students.

DISCUSSION

These five trenchant examples involving four different teachers (a substitute P.E. teacher, art teacher, and two first grade bilingual teachers) illustrate the differences between the language manipulated by the children and that used by the teacher (including textbooks and materials). These discrepancies in language use not only reflect constrasting cultures, experiences, and lifestyles, but they also mirror the unequal distribution of linguistic capital that is often characteristic of schools and classrooms. The question is not whether there are differences between the language and culture of the children and those of the school—that is certainly clear—but to highlight the differential value placed by participants and others on the language used by the teachers and students.

Example 1 illustrates how the P.E. teacher’s lack of knowledge of the students’ native language and culture does not facilitate her students’ understanding of the task at hand. In example 2, the art teacher adds an analogy to her explanation provided by one of her students. By doing so, she not only helps the children understand the nature of their task, but also, and more fundamentally, validates the linguistic contributions of her students. All other examples represent instances where the students’ native language is not accepted, and in some instances rejected. The kind of social hierarchy and the asymmetrical relationships among participants in four of the five settings privileged the teacher’s discourse. As a result, the students’ words, which encompass their linguistic and sociocultural experiences, were often unheard and seldom incorporated into the classroom narrative.

These findings have several important implications. First, they suggest the paramount role of teachers in deciding what counts as authorized language; or more specifically, what counts as Spanish. In this case, neither the teachers nor the administrators were aware of or, perhaps, willing to accept the distinctive linguistic characteristics of the Mexican or rural Spanish variety spoken by the children. Furthermore, in comparison to the Castilian variety spoken by the teachers, the language of the children and, by extension, the language of their parents was seen as both “inappropriate” or “incorrect.” The educational consequences of this unawareness or unwillingness can be far-reaching. In her (1994) study of French Ontario schools, Heller found that the value placed on particular varieties of French was clearly evident among teachers of French who defined what counted in the classroom as “le bon français” (good French). In the words of Heller,

While teachers are obviously committed to encouraging the use of French, they are equally committed to the encouragement of certain forms of French, whether in
spoken or written language....[C]orrections are offered for any form which is different from the variety the teachers wish to uphold, whatever the source of that difference is (p. 146).

At least two explanations can be forwarded for this behavior on the part of the teachers. The first one, and perhaps the more benign, has to do with the inability of teachers to help students understand that all forms of a language (including their own) are linguistically valid (even though they do not all have the same social acceptance) and that we can all benefit from learning different varieties. The second one, and perhaps the more disturbing, reflects the extent to which the teachers perceived their role of “defining and defending specific norms” (Heller, 1994). These norms, which suggest a particular variety of Spanish as acceptable in the classroom, were further validated by the few materials written in an internationally intelligible variety of Spanish (e.g., the book printed in Spain used during the farm animals lesson in example 3). While the first explanation reflects a more idiosyncratic bias, the second one clearly represents the nature of our educational system, steeped in dominant attitudes, with teachers suggesting what counts as knowledge and students accepting what is given to them by their teachers.

Negative attitudes towards vernacular speech are not uncommon (see, for example, the work by Edwards on West Indians speech in Britain, 1978; the edited volume on speakers of Spanish in the United States by Merino et al., 1993; or the aforementioned study of French classrooms in Canada by Heller, 1994). Of course, another example is the widely-covered recent debate on Ebonics (i.e., Black English Vernacular), triggered by the resolution passed by the Oakland school district in California which suggested that the use of African American Vernacular English can help African American children learn standard English. In all these cases, in spite of the variety of geographical and national settings, one aspect remains constant; that is, the low status of the speakers of the vernacular variety is reflected in the low status of their speech. The issue becomes further compounded when speakers of the “lesser” language variety develop negative attitudes towards their own language. As one teacher in Los Frutales school district, who came from Mexico at the age of 7, painfully acknowledged:

My Spanish is from the fields. Our parents pobrecitos (poor them) taught us the only language they knew and we didn’t have any other place to learn, to make it better. Actually we were told to unlearn our [Spanish] and just learn English.... But I never lost it [my Spanish] even though it wasn’t de mucha calidad (of high quality).

This teacher’s comments are representative of others in the community, including some of the Mexican and Mexican-American parents in the community. As Hymes (1971) remarks, “Not the least of the crimes of colonization has been to persuade the colonized that they are in some way inferior, to convince the stigmatized that the stigma is deserved.” So these first graders, who are already witnessing how their
language can be of little value, will perhaps in the near future accept the fate of their language, and their lives, as deserved.

A second implication based on the data, is that the goal of this bilingual classroom fits a subtractive approach to bilingualism. That is, the tensions between the linguistic habitus of the children and the control of the linguistic market by the teachers puts use of the native language in jeopardy. Even though these children were encouraged to use their first language during most of the school day, their native language was still not accepted. Rather, they were encouraged to abandon specific terms used in their common lexicon in favor of the Spanish lexicon used by their teacher.

If we consider the importance of feedback for language learners (Wong Fillmore, 1985), four of the examples presented above illustrate the systematic manner in which teachers did not repeat, nor did they include the terms brought up by the children during the discussion. Although in example 4 the teacher partially incorporates students' contributions (i.e., by writing the word *alicante* on the chalkboard), there is no oral follow-up linking this term with the "authorized" synonyms mentioned by the teacher. Even if we acknowledge the fact that the terms brought up by the children may not be part of the teachers' repertoire (nor were included in the texts and materials), questions can be raised about teachers not consulting a dictionary (if they were not sure of their validity) or not using these instances to extend students' repertoires (and their own) by linking different labels for the same animals. For these children, their native language is being rejected twice; first for not being the dominant language of the school, i.e., English and second, for not being the right kind of Spanish.

In addition to adhering to a subtractive approach to bilingualism, this classroom favors certain cultural practices. Even though the intention was to provide students with classroom materials and decorations in their native language, these materials were for the most part alien to students' everyday lives. Celebrating St. Patrick's day and Thanksgiving in Spanish might not be relevant for these students, in spite of the use of Spanish in the celebration. Once again, legitimacy is given to particular cultural and social experiences that are, for the most part, irrelevant to these students' lives. Clearly, discursive and instructional practices in this bilingual classroom support the thesis of Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) that schools and classrooms reflect the experiences of the dominant class. This classroom, like many others, privileges certain cultural practices, linguistic forms, and instructional content over others.

Third, it becomes clear that hiring teachers who speak the language of the children does not necessarily insure a smooth transition from the home to the school nor facilitates the learning process—especially when dialectical differences are involved. This has important implications for the role of teacher education programs and school districts who are desperately seeking to prepare or hire, depending on the case, teachers who share the same language background and ethnicity of the
increasing number of minority students. Based on this study, a linguistic connection (i.e., teachers and students spoke Spanish) and a similar cultural background (i.e., teachers and students shared a Latino background) did not provide the expected continuity between the home and the school nor translated into what Ladson-Billings (1994) calls “culturally relevant teaching.”

The role of teachers today is far more complex than what it used to be in the one-room schools portrayed by Winslow Homer. Teachers who used to succeed in all-white, middle class schools are not doing that well in schools with large numbers of low-income, ethnic, and language groups. As suggested by Trueba (1994): “The challenges are formidable and require a special type of teacher.... The sheer demands placed on teachers in urban schools has reached its limit. Educational reform must start by reforming teacher education, and first by redefining the roles of teachers and their process of socialization in academia” (pp. 378–379). As long as we continue to have teacher preparation programs that focus on teaching content and methods that follow monocultural and abstract models of instruction, all students, and especially those whose language and culture are different from the mainstream, will continue to be constrained and marginalized by a classroom culture that mirrors the relations of power of the larger society.

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**NOTES**

1. Throughout this article these children are referred to as language minority students or linguistic minority students. These terms, although problematic as they are, have been chosen because they lack the more serious drawbacks of alternatives such as limited English proficient (or LEP), which focus on apparent deficiencies.

2. The original study plan included a third phase. Due to funding and professional constraints, the third phase, which would have included more dialogues with teachers, interviews with parents and observations of selected children in their homes, was not carried out.

3. The fieldwork for this study was conducted between August of 1993 and May of 1994. During the first three months, a graduate student and I spent one full day every week in this first grade classroom. During this time, as participant observers, we were at times
observers, at others, actively involved in assisting the teachers, working with the students individually or in small groups, and, on occasions, assuming the role of teachers when there were substitute teachers who spoke no Spanish. After three months, the graduate student and I kept going to the school once a week, but seldom were we both in the school at the same time. By the fourth month, we began interviewing children and their parents in a random fashion.

4. The name Los Frutales is a pseudonym, as are the names of participants in this program.

5. Because a significant number of students in this classroom were migratory, there were times when the numbers decreased to 75%.

6. All the words used in example 3 appear in most Spanish dictionaries. “Marrano,” “cochino,” “chancho,” “puerco,” and “cerdo” all mean pig.

7. Important to mention is that vocabulary differences are only one aspect of language variation found in this classroom. Differences also occurred at the phonological and syntactic level. For example, the double “I” as in llama is pronounced by one of the teachers like “Il” in “million,” similar to the “s” in “vision” by the other teacher, and similar to “j” in jar by the children. All pronunciations are equally acceptable and are representative of a particular geographical area where each version is used by millions of Spanish speakers. At the grammatical level, differences between the language varieties spoken by the students and their teachers were also evident. A case in point is the addition of “-s” to the second person preterit form as in llamastes, dijistes, fuistes, etc. by the students. This common form used among Mexicans and Mexican Americans of rural origin, was perceived as erroneous by both teachers who often modeled the appropriate form (without the final “s”) or directly corrected students.

8. All words are used to refer to snakes.

9. In several dictionaries, this term appears as “escribanos” and is used to refer to small insects shaped like spiders. “Hormiguitas” mean small ants.

10. According to Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994), culturally relevant teaching serves to empower students to the point where they will be able to examine critically educational content and processes and question its role in creating a truly democratic and multicultural society. Culturally relevant teaching also uses students’ culture to help them create meaning and understand the world. Thus, academic success for students is not the sole objective from this perspective: social and cultural success are also emphasized by the culturally relevant teacher.

REFERENCES


Different Words, Different Worlds


APPENDIX

Transcriptions Conventions

The information presented in conversational segments includes, from left to right: line numbers, speaker’s name, message unit (see Green & Wallat, 1981).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plain font</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bold</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Italics</em></td>
<td><em>Translation of Spanish into English</em></td>
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<td>XXX</td>
<td>TEACHER’S TALK</td>
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<td>xxxx</td>
<td>students’ talk</td>
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