Fránquiz and de la Luz Reyes draw on examples of exemplary practice to take up the question: “If I am not fluent in the languages my students speak, how can I effectively teach English language arts to a linguistically diverse class?”

It was reading time. The first grade teacher was asking her students to think of words that began with the letter “c.” She added that she would be calling on each one to give her a different word. After calling on most of the children, she turned to Hermán, a Spanish-speaking child in her class.

“Chancla,” Hermán offered proudly.

“What?” the teacher inquired.

“Chancla,” he answered more softly.

“How do you spell it? . . . Do you know how to spell it?”

Being a first grader Hermán didn’t know how to spell it.

The class giggled.

“Chank-la,” the teacher repeated. “Do you have one, Hermán?”

“No ma’am, but my mother has two.”

“What are they?” she probed impatiently.

“Chanclas,” he responded again.

“Well, what do they do?”

“Nothing.” The class snickered.

“You said your mother has two?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“What does she do with them?” she pushed on . . .

“She wears them on her feet in the morning.”

“You mean ‘slippers’?”

“No ma’am, ‘chanclas.’” He had never heard of slippers.

Frustrated, the teacher proclaimed, “There is no such word, Hermán. Give me another word!”

Except, perhaps, for segregated schools in the South and Southwest, and up until the late 1970s, few teachers encountered large numbers of linguistically diverse students within their classrooms. When they did, they responded much like Hermán’s teacher did in the vignette above: they made the use of English language a prerequisite for learning (Moll, 1988; Reyes, 1991). In doing so, they limited students’ opportunities to use their store of cultural and linguistic knowledge and experiences as resources for learning, and, thus, minimized opportunities for participation. Requiring the exclusive use of English, the official language of the school, and strict adherence to an established curriculum designed for mainstream English-speaking students (Donato, 1997; San Miguel, 1987) can lead to self-doubt on the part of linguistically and culturally diverse learners. The practice of excluding children’s cultural and linguistic resources is
often justified on at least two counts: 1) languages other than English are inappropriate and even inferior forms of communicating (Deutch, 1967), and 2) language “borrowing” interferes with academic learning (Ginsburg, 1972). Although the basis for viewing language differences as deficits has long been challenged (Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1972; Flores, Teft-Cousin, & Díaz, 1991; Sánchez, 1983), more subtle forms of invalidation continue to make situations like Hermán’s an all-too-common experience for students learning English. Many teachers, then and now, fail to recognize the fundamental role of language and culture in the development of literacy.

In contrast to the practice of excluding non-mainstream resources in academic settings, teachers in many regions of the country are being challenged to find more effective ways of teaching literacy to an increasingly diverse student population. The reality is that Latinos are the fastest growing population of new enrollments in public schools in the United States (Hayes-Bautista, Schink, & Chapa, 1988). The urgency to understand successful literacy practices in multicultural classroom settings is also motivated by other national statistics that reveal that the racial/ethnic composition of teachers is becoming more homogenous, while the student population is becoming more racially or ethnically diverse (Hinchey, 1994; Larke, 1990). The lack of diversity among teachers, the continued academic failure of many students of color, as well as the persistent misinformation about second-language acquisition among both educators and the general public warrants an examination of literacy practices that effectively addresses the broad range of educational needs of linguistically and culturally diverse student bodies.

Our role as researchers and teachers of English language arts brings us in constant contact with largely European American, monolingual preservice and classroom teachers who face the enormous challenges of teaching the language arts to linguistically and culturally diverse student populations. In their attempt to develop more effective teaching contexts, these teachers often ask what we consider to be a burning question: “If I am not fluent in the languages my students speak, how can I effectively teach English language arts to a linguistically diverse class?” The elaborated version of this question goes something like this: “If a mismatch between the home and instructional language is a main obstacle to academic learning for linguistically different students, how can I provide effective literacy instruction for these students if I am not bilingual?” The question illustrates a very real and legitimate dilemma faced by many teachers already employed in schools or in teacher preparation programs. In this article, we use this question as a springboard for framing a discussion on more recent pedagogical views of language and language arts instruction. We will use examples from our research in classrooms where monolingual and bilingual teachers are working to become theoretically informed about the role of language and culture in learning, and are sensitively and effectively creating inclusive learning environments for all students.

**THE BURNING QUESTION**

In addressing the burning question, we rely upon multiple theoretical perspectives (sociolinguistic theory, critical theory, second-language acquisition theory, bilingual education theory, and Chicana feminist theory) to understand better the complexity of literacy learning experiences for linguistically and culturally diverse students. Informed by these perspectives, we position ourselves within particular theoretical orientations: 1) we view language as an integral part of the sociocultural context of the local community; 2) we view the lived experiences of students as important resources for academic success, and 3) we view access to both native and non-native language(s) as a critical resource in students’ opportunities to learn. Through our work, we seek to understand the ways in which teachers and students use these principles to construct inclusive learning communities in diverse classrooms.

**Sociocultural and linguistic differences between teachers and students, to be sure, can make teaching more challenging.**

Sociocultural and linguistic differences between teachers and students, to be sure, can make teaching more challenging. However, best practice does not necessarily have to hinge on proficiency in the language of the students. We have found that teacher proficiency in the students’ language, although ideal, like “best method,” is neither sufficient, nor the single most important element for student success or failure. A teacher does not have to be fluent in a language to recognize its value to the learner, permit its use in the classroom, and respect, affirm, and legitimize its role in students’ learning and students’ self-esteem. In our research, we have found that students’ use of their own languages and, thus, their own cultural knowledge as resources for learning, can be more important than a teacher’s use of the students’ languages. Again, this is not to say that teacher fluency in a given student’s language should not be an important educational goal, but equally as important are other support strategies such as those exploring ways to affirm diversity (Nieto, 1993) and integrate students’ cultural and linguistic resources in the construction of reciprocal learning environments (Cummins, 1986). In a community
where learning is reciprocal, the teacher becomes a learner along with the students and the inclusion of both mainstream and non-mainstream language and knowledge is used as the basis for developing literacy.

**ACTS OF INCLUSION**

In the following three examples, we illustrate how students participate more fully in literacy learning events in classrooms where teachers are guided by sociocultural understandings of the ways children use language(s). When teachers understand the social nature of language learning, inclusion of children’s talk becomes part of regular classroom practice and, thus, a pattern of interaction. Through such acts of inclusion, teachers utilize all linguistic and cultural resources in the course of literacy learning, including a range of language registers and codes (e.g., from standard to more colloquial forms of speech and from monolingual to more mixed language uses). Of significance here is the fact that by including language from these linguistic sources, a unique “in-between space” is created in which individual and collective literacy development is possible. This social view of language in literacy development in both the first and second language is described in the following examples of classroom language arts instruction. In each example, different teachers demonstrate their growing understanding of the consequences of inclusionary language acts. The first of these three examples involves a non-bilingual first-grade teacher; the second example is from a fourth-grade bilingual classroom; and the third example is situated in a bilingual kindergarten program during “Spanish day.” (In this bilingual model, instruction is conducted in Spanish one day and in English the alternate day.\(^3\))

**Canicas**

In one first-grade classroom, the teacher is teaching one of the five senses, the sense of sound, to a heterogeneous group of students with Spanish, English, and bilingual proficiency. More specifically, the lesson—conducted in English—focuses on whether the object(s) produce hard or soft acoustic sounds. The teacher hands a student the “mystery bag” containing the object(s). The chosen student feels inside the bag, shakes it, and then provides verbal clues to help classmates figure out which objects are in the bag.

Margarita, a student enrolled in a first-grade bilingual homeroom, is grouped in this English science lesson with a monolingual English teacher. When it’s Margarita’s turn, she puts her hand in the mystery bag and shakes it. A classmate shouts, “It’s money!” Margarita says nothing, but pours out the pennies from the bag, confirming that the student’s prediction is correct. As the lesson continues, it appears that Margarita is reluctant to participate. Although she appears to be following the lesson, she remains silent throughout the elicitation and confirmation of the predictions. Another student shakes a new mystery bag. No one has guessed the object in the bag. Suddenly a smile appears on Margarita’s face, but she does not speak. She continues smiling, as if she knows the answer, but continues to say nothing. Then, the teacher looks at her and the following brief exchange takes place:

**TEACHER:** You can say it in Spanish.

**MARGARITA:** Canicas [in a low soft voice].

**TEACHER:** Canicas? (Teacher intuits this is the Spanish word for marbles.)

[Turning to the class] Canicas.

I have learned a new word in Spanish, *canicas.*

The teacher invites the entire class to repeat the new word, *canicas.* The students are heard savoring the new word repeatedly, *canicas, canicas.* Margarita smiles as her Spanish response is affirmed over and over.

Like Hermán in the opening vignette, Margarita is initially tentative and reluctant to participate in an arena where English language skills are required. But unlike Hermán’s teacher, who does not accept chancas as a valid response to words beginning with the letter “c,” Margarita’s teacher invites her to use the full range of her linguistic repertoire for engaging in the literacy event. Rather than seeing Margarita as unable to participate fully in an English language lesson, the teacher uses her student’s native language to enrich language learning for all members of the class. Instead of making English language skills prerequisites for learning and/or focusing on her own lack of proficiency in Spanish, the teacher reads Margarita’s facial expressions and assumes she has something important to contribute to the lesson. Her good instincts as a teacher pay off.

**By being accepted as the more knowledgeable other, Margarita is also more likely to participate in subsequent lessons.**

The teacher’s explicit invitation for Margarita to use her own linguistic resources not only legitimized Spanish as an appropriate vehicle for learning, but provided an opportunity for a linguistically diverse learner to be a competent member and more “expert other” (Vygotsky, 1978) within an English lesson. By being accepted as the more knowledgeable other, Margarita is also more likely to participate in subsequent lessons. Such acts of inclusion can have a very
powerful and cumulative effect on learning, if they become part of an on-going pattern of classroom life.

Raising Language Status

The second example of an act of inclusion illustrates how one fourth-grade bilingual classroom teacher creates a context for language choice by promoting a classroom philosophy in which multiple languages are valued. In this classroom, the language appreciation process was initiated by a daily activity in which children had many opportunities to hear and learn words in a variety of languages. The teacher and the class begin greeting each other in Spanish and in English on the very first day of school, then experiment with different ways of greeting each other. Daily attendance is used as an opportunity to learn to say “hello” and “good morning” in various languages. Throughout the year, students collect these various greetings from within the school community and from the surrounding community. For example, one student learns how Koreans greet each other from the Korean owner of a gas station; another student learns how Vietnamese greet one another from a parent of a neighborhood friend.

As each new greeting is recorded daily on a class chart, a classroom community practice is established and serves as a language resource for linking to the various linguistic communities residing within the school attendance area. This practice also becomes an important literacy event providing the teacher and students with an opportunity to practice speaking and writing different ways of greeting each other. By the end of the year, 22 languages are represented on the class chart. By collecting, recording, and using greetings in different languages, the importance of knowing other languages was affirmed. Fishman (1991) has argued that the visible presence of languages in print is not merely symbolic, it raises the status of biliteracy as well. Given this perspective, the classroom teacher and students illustrated each day that learning about languages is accomplished through bilingual (speaking) and biliterate (writing) actions.

Flexible Language Boundaries

In the next example, a bilingual kindergarten teacher solicits members for the “100 club.” Following the bilingual program’s goal to help students become bilingual and biliterate, instruction in this classroom is provided in English and Spanish on alternating days. This event is an established morning practice and occurs on a Spanish language day in February of the school year. During this event, individual students volunteer to count in front of the class from one to one hundred. The first volunteer counts from one to forty-nine in Spanish. The teacher records the student’s initials and the number twenty-nine also are recorded. The teacher’s statement to the next student reveals her respect for the student’s language choice and reinforces this by complimenting his effort in English. The teacher explains to the class that the student who counted in English reached the same number as the second student. The initials and the number twenty-nine also are recorded. Then, the fourth volunteer counts from one to one hundred in English. The teacher responds with: “Let’s give her a hand. She did it! ¡Qué le vamos a dar? ¡Una estrella y un certificado! [Translation: What are we going to give her? A star and a certificate!] By complimenting the student in Spanish, the teacher validates the language the student chose for displaying what she knew.

The teacher’s statement to the next student reveals her view of language learning, that is, students should use all available linguistic resources to demonstrate conceptual learning. The teacher says, ¿Quieres contar en español o en inglés? Somos bilingües, puedes elegir. [Translation: Do you want to count in Spanish or in English? We are bilingual, we can choose.] In this case, the students are explicitly invited to choose their language preference. During the subsequent tries to become members of the “100 club,” some students choose to count in English, while others choose Spanish. Each one is complimented for his or her effort regardless of the choice of language. This practice not only gives students explicit permission to use all linguistic resources available to reach 100, but they are thanked for making individual choices. Permitting the use of English on a Spanish day allowed one child to become a member of the “100 club” and illustrated the importance of using one’s linguistic resources to learn in this classroom.

The acts of inclusion we have described show various ways in which languages and speakers of those languages are affirmed during classroom literacy events. These affirmations reject exclusive use of monologic standard forms and legitimize what Bakhtin (1981) calls “heteroglossia,” that is, the multiple ways language may be used “for conceptualizing the world in words” (p. 292). From this perspective, languages serve as resources for learning, and for the co-construction of a heteroglossic or many-voiced community. To create these kinds of classroom communities, teacher and students take risks in using languages for making meaning, and for communicating developing knowledge.

The bilingual and monolingual teachers with whom we work in California and Colorado co-construct learning communities with primarily Mexican-origin students. “Language as resource” is the guiding philosophy for their instruction.
Similar to the Puerto Rican teachers Walsh (1981) studied, these teachers believe bilingualism is often a necessary circumstance of life for the students in their classes. They also agree that language learning in school becomes accessible to more learners when teachers take into account the critical role of the speech communities outside of school in the literacy learning process.

In the next two sections, we will provide other examples from classrooms with a significant number of Mexican-origin students where language learning is viewed as an extension of ethnically distinct speech community practices. Specifically, we will take a closer look at what sociolinguists have identified as a speech community marker among Mexican/Chicanos in the Southwest. This “marker” is the alternation of two languages, or codeswitching, for deliberate purposes (Myers Scotton, 1983, 1991) and is found in settings where people of diverse linguistic backgrounds regularly interact. It is a community practice belonging not only to the Southwest but to many communities around the world. The social and linguistic strategy of codeswitching is informed by a shift from seeing language as a deficit to seeing language as a resource. This view of codeswitching as a resource is important for teachers to understand because, in a heteroglossic community where two or more language registers are in daily contact, meanings are mediated within and between languages and language varieties.

**Codeswitching as a Resource**

Codeswitching has been defined as the use of two languages simultaneously or interchangeably (Valdés-Fallis, 1977). This definition has been modified to include the alternation of two linguistic codes such as Spanish and English in a fully grammatical way within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent (Poplack, 1980, 1988). Thus, codeswitching implies some degree of competence in the two languages used by the speaker, even if bilingualism is not yet stable (Durán, 1994).

Views on codeswitching are informed by sociolinguistic studies which indicate that its use directly reflects “significant information about such matters as group membership, values, relative prestige, power relationships, etc.” (Gumperz & Hernández-Chávez, 1971, p. 314). Communicating through two linguistic codes has been further identified as a community practice among many Chicanos of the Southwest (Hernández-Chávez, 1975; Peñalosa, 1980) and among Puerto Ricans of East Harlem (Poplack, 1980). Bilingual education models continue to separate languages across content area learning and, thus, contribute to and perpetuate standard monologic forms (e.g., standard Spanish and standard English) to the exclusion of a multivoiced community. The teachers in our studies, however, value the multiple cultural and linguistic resources brought into the learning community and promote their use.

When Hermán, featured in the opening vignette, was a student in the 1940s, codeswitching in everyday interactions among Spanish/English speakers was considered linguistic “interference.” While these deficit theories placed the burden of failure on Hermán and his ethnic speech community, newer theoretical explanations view codeswitching as a complex, rule-governed, communication strategy (Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1992; Fránquiz, 1995; Lipski, 1978; Poplack, 1988; Vásquez, Pease-Alvarez, & Shannon, 1994). Instead of attributing the deficiency to ethnically distinct families, current explanations of literacy development focus on the relationship between what is learned and classroom instructional practices. This latter perspective encourages teachers to experiment with new ways to get students, like Margarita in the canicas example, to use a variety of linguistic resources, including codeswitching in classroom literacy events. By eliciting and subsequently using the Spanish noun canicas for the English word marbles, Margarita’s teacher provided her with an opportunity to share her knowledge. As this example illustrates, the teacher can encourage codeswitching from students, and may actually model codeswitching to ensure access to literacy events for all students.

In the following example, a bilingual teacher uses codeswitching to make new vocabulary available to her students:

**TEACHER:** this word [points to word data on chalkboard]
I've heard Matt say some things and David ha preguntado unas cosas (“David has asked some things”)
que tienen (“that have to do with”) que son sobre (“that are about”) esta palabra (“this word” as she points to the word on chalkboard) and that word is data or data and datos anybody know what data is?

This brief excerpt is taken from a transcribed event which occurred after the teacher distributed whole watermelons to groups of fifth-grade students and then had them formulate and record estimates of weights and costs of watermelons. She then introduced the concept of data before estimates were verified for accuracy and after the students had spent time listening, thinking, discussing, and estimating. First, the teacher began in Spanish: “*David ha preguntado unas cosas que tienen, que son sobre, esta palabra.*” [Translation: “David has asked some things that have to do, that pertain to, this word.”] As she continued, the teacher pointed to a word on the chalkboard and pronounced the word in three different ways: 1) data (with a long a sound on the first vowel), 2) data (with a short a on the first vowel; schwa in the second); and, 3) datos (in Spanish). In this way, the teacher, using Spanish, utilized David’s questions as a springboard for discussing the process (collecting data) that will be necessary for verifying
students’ estimates. As the vocabulary word, “data,” was introduced, the teacher also generated information about language varieties reflected in the different pronunciations of the term “data” in English and its counterpart in Spanish. In other words, codeswitching became a strategy to illustrate English language variation and Spanish/English correspondence.

In the following examples, we illustrate how the practice of codeswitching can be used for fostering students’ metalinguistic awareness or analyzing their own language use. This awareness is important because acquiring a language requires learning the appropriate sociocultural context for its use. Here, we show that when students have regular opportunities to choose their reading material and language for responding to the literature they read, such practices become routine or everyday activities where metalinguistic awareness may grow.

**LANGUAGE CHOICE AND METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS**

Dear Book Club

I picked *Charlotte’s Web* because it’s an exciting book. Because it is cool when Charlotte dies and when she lays her eggs and my favorite part of the book was when Fern’s brother tries to get Charlotte and Wilbur makes him fall down. *A mi me gusta leer en self select time. A mi me gusta leer libros espantosos porque sueño en la noche. A mi me gusta leer en los dos idiomas porque no se me olvide a leer en los dos idiomas.*

[Translation]

I picked *Charlotte’s Web* because it’s an exciting book. Because it is cool when Charlotte dies and when she lays her eggs and my favorite part of the book was when Fern’s brother tries to get Charlotte and Wilbur makes him fall down. I like to read in self select time. I like to read scary books because I have dreams at night. I like reading in the two languages because [in this way] I will not forget how to read in two languages.

In Daniel’s brief letter to his book club, he lets members of the book club know what he enjoyed about his recent self-selected reading book. He uses English to explain why he liked the story, and uses Spanish to communicate his growing awareness of how important it is to continue reading in two languages, to remain bilingual and biliterate.

Across the year, during self-select time, Daniel’s teacher provided a range of grade-appropriate literature resources in both English and Spanish. Guided by their own individual sense of timing for transition into the second language, their own views about transitioning from Spanish into English, and their own inquiry processes about language(s), students had an opportunity to experiment with a variety of ways to pursue language acquisition. Daniel’s letter to his book club demonstrates the deliberate use of two languages, or codeswitching. Note that his letter is fully grammatical and reveals both his bilingual fluency and his metalinguistic awareness of what he must do (i.e., continue to read in Spanish) to prevent native language loss. Although Daniel received bilingual instruction from kindergarten to fourth grade in a transitional bilingual model that emphasizes shifting the child from native language to English, he recognizes that the potential for language loss is high unless he takes personal responsibility for “not forgetting how to read in two languages.”

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**The process of acquiring a second language can be described as an in-between state, an uncertain terrain one crosses as one becomes bilingual.**

Steve, another student in this same fourth-grade bilingual class, entered one month late in the school year. Initially, Steve had difficulty adjusting to two languages in one community. In December, the class was composing books about their individual family traditions. Steve chose to write about Hanukkah. His first entry in his “traditions” book was a sacred prayer recited during the holy days; he wrote the prayer in his second language, Hebrew. Steve was extremely proud to use his bilingual resources (English and Hebrew) to plan the “traditions” book and to share his family’s sacred book with the members of the bilingual class (Spanish and English). Steve was an avid reader and writer and, during the following months, he was observed experimenting and inquiring about different languages. He chose Spanish words for spelling lists and asked Spanish-speaking bilingual peers to help translate his poems into Spanish. In this example, a predominantly English-speaking student was afforded the opportunity to share a sacred prayer with his class and to continue practicing his second language (Hebrew); such practices and support from teacher and peers motivated him to learn some elements of a third language. At times, he saw himself as an expert and, at other times, he saw himself needing the help of others to complete literacy assignments. It is this self-awareness and self-directed evaluation of one’s language usage in relation to the language(s) used by other class members that contributes to metalinguistic awareness.

**LEARNING IN THE TRANSFORMATIONAL SPACE**

The process of acquiring a second language can be described as an in-between state, an uncertain terrain one crosses as one becomes bilingual. For teachers, achieving this space could mean moving from a traditional mainstream pedagogy in which language learners are passive individuals who accept their “lessons” unquestioningly, to a dialogic pedagogy in
which diverse and even competing meanings and forms of knowledge exist (Moraes, 1996). Chicana/o scholars refer to this “in-between-space” (Mora, 1993) as *nepantla*, a Náhuatl (Aztec) word which means “in the middle.” This state of being in the middle has been understood in at least two ways: 1) geographically, the Aztecs understood *nepantla* to mean the land in the middle of two volcanoes, or the land between the mountains and valley (De la Maza, 1995) and 2) culturally, to be in the middle of two cultures and two languages (Mora, 1993). This middle ground is considered a privileged position from which one can assume multiple stances. *Nepantla* is the point of possible confluence and transformation.

Gloria Anzaldúa (1993) describes *nepantla* as a space that individuals may enter willingly or under duress. In the case of second-language learners, acquiring English often becomes a point of entry into this in-between place. When the pace of transitioning is accelerated, the learner can become disoriented, or as Anzaldúa contends, experience bouts of disassociation. In the case of second-language learners, disorientation or disassociation may also influence the learners’ identities as language users. To elaborate on Anzaldúa, the learners’ world is in a constant *nepantla* state. It is our responsibility as adults and teachers to prepare future generations for being creative and resourceful in this place of transition.

If teachers and students consider the in-between-space as a resource for growth and transformation, then some important questions need to be addressed. What understandings of what counts as learning are available in this space? Who decides how long an individual can be in the space for exploration? Who models *nepantla* as a source of transformation? Who guides persons forced to enter (e.g., the non-native English-speaking immigrant child) or persons choosing to enter (e.g., the English dominant Chicana/o child) the state of *nepantla*? Such considerations are critical for both teachers and second-language learners moving in and through *nepantla*. For example, while the goals for acquiring English or Spanish literacy for Mexican immigrant and Chicana/o students may appear to be the same, the students’ sociocultural and linguistic experiences will influence the direction from which they will enter the transformational space. An English-speaking Chicana/o child may resist learning or reading in Spanish because this language does not have as much prestige as English does in the U.S. On the other hand, an immigrant peer may choose reading in English before s/he is fluent precisely because of the prestige attached to English. Both students, however, may have a strong need for maintaining a bicultural identity that is not solely dependent on knowing Spanish or English or both. In other words, all students are motivated to move through *nepantla* differently but may experience many common points of confluence.

Figure 1 is a conceptualization of language learners from one population, in this case, Mexican-origin students, who experience different positionings within *nepantla*, depending on whether they are seeking or are encouraged to become bilingual, bicultural, and/or biliterate. In many southwestern states, Mexican immigrant children have access to bilingual instruction but Chicana/o children with proficiency in English do not have this option. Understanding language learning, not only as a linguistic transitional process but also as an identity-formation process, will assist teachers and students in co-constructing an inclusive community that values bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy for all members of the classroom.

In *nepantla* where there is a confluence of linguistic and sociocultural influences, language choice and movement between languages becomes not only a possibility, but a likely probability. Like Daniel’s book club community, in which multiple language uses and forms were utilized, classroom learning communities should be open to the linguistic differences students bring into classrooms. Such practices should encourage a re-theorizing of how the multiple language and knowledge systems available in the world outside the classroom can be integrated into the “reading [and writing] of the world” in the classroom (Freire & Macedo, 1987). The pedagogical perspective illustrated in this example makes learning about racial, religious, ethnic, as well as linguistic differences acceptable classroom practices (Harmon & Edelsky, 1989). The perspective also provides teachers and students with multiple opportunities for developing their individual and collective metalinguistic awareness, that is, thinking and reflecting about language choices, language growth, language loss, and language maintenance. This is important, given that schooling ordinarily legitimizes a “one-size-fits-all” model (Reyes, 1992) of language and learning and leads teachers to become pedagogically constrained by their lack of knowledge of or fluency in their students’ home languages.

We have used classroom examples to highlight teachers who were not paralyzed by their own monolingualism.
Instead, they took risks and drew upon all available linguistic and cultural resources as avenues to children’s literacy learning. Of particular significance is that their instructional decisions and responses to students’ contributions in literacy events were aligned with the new paradigms of language learning and language use. To better illustrate these different understandings, Table 1 summarizes the central tenets of the older “language as deficit” paradigm and the newer “language as resource” paradigm.

**We have used classroom examples to highlight teachers who were not paralyzed by their own monolingualism.**

The shifts in understanding language and literacy development summarized in Table 1 have occurred slowly over the past five decades. We believe these newer theoretical perspectives can be useful in informing teachers about ways of creating learning contexts that are more inclusive, creative, imaginative, flexible, open-ended, and sensitive to different modes of communication.

**CONCLUSION**

To address the recurring burning question raised by preservice teachers and classroom teachers, we have used the metaphor “from chanclas to canicas” to illustrate a shift from instructional practices based on old paradigms for teaching linguistically diverse groups of students to new, more inclusive and theoretically sound paradigms. Table 1 delineates the theoretical positions informing the practices employed by the teachers in the chanclas and canicas vignettes. The principles of each paradigm can be used to guide language arts instruction for second-language and bilingual learners; the social and learning consequences of each paradigm must be considered (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Turner, 1997). In this article, we have argued that teachers informed by the new paradigm practice acts of inclusion that focus on children’s learning rather than the teacher’s own linguistic and cultural background. These acts are productive initial steps for creating rich literacy learning communities for linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Moreover, such practices illustrate teachers’ continual search for new ways of understanding the role of language and culture in the learning process.

Shifting to the new paradigm may not be easy in that they require teachers to assume more complex roles and develop skills in meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. For monolingual English teachers, this role may mean not only finding ways of incorporating and utilizing the cultural and linguistic resources of their students but also using students as resources for their own learning. For bilingua
gual teachers, the newer perspective may mean providing all students in their classrooms with opportunities to: 1) choose bilingual instruction; 2) choose which language to use in literacy events across all content areas; and, 3) to promote the use of alternating linguistic codes as viable and legitimate alternatives for learning. In all cases, teachers will need to assume roles as both more expert other and learner. Instruction from this perspective, then, offers a wide range of opportunities for literacy learning, and gives teachers and students needing or willing to move through *nepantla* an important

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| **New Paradigm**                         |
| Acquisition of linguistic varieties expands individuals literate repertoire and increases cognitive flexibility. |
| Linguistic and cultural differences seen as “funds of knowledge” for building literacy in the classroom. |
| Literate ways of thinking develop by actively engaging in the practices of a community of learners where interpersonal processes transform into intrapersonal ones. |
| Investigators link ethno- graphic observations of language usage in a variety of contexts with linguistic analyses. |
| Language code “mixing” or alternation seen as a meaningful verbal strategy and as an indicator of bilingual development. |
| Speakers who codeswitch are sensitive to a relationship between language status & context. |
| Bilingualism/biliteracy as a living, desirable, functioning mode of communication in academic work and social contexts. |
| Codeswitching in educational context as an inclusionary, meaningful, and available strategy. |
advantage—the opportunity to participate in language decisions that arise from a personal, rather than mandated, language choice.

Notes

1. This story by Hermán Silla appeared in the San Diego Union (n.d.). The text has been slightly modified to conform to vignette format; otherwise the dialogue and the content are the same and are representative of the author’s experiences growing up in the 1940s.

2. The authors wish to express thanks to the students and teachers who have graciously opened their hearts and minds to us at McKinley School in Santa Barbara, California, and at the Western Hills School in Denver, Colorado. Particular thanks are extended to the members of the Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group and to Wendy Hollister, María Berzins, and Alice Laliberty for their ongoing contributions to our individual and collective work. The research represented in this article was funded by grants from AERA, MEXUS, SSRC, IMPART, and NCTE.

3. The names of teachers and students in the examples are pseudonyms.

References


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