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Student and teacher oral language use in a two-way Spanish/English immersion school

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Abstract
This study examines the Spanish use of students and teachers at a US two-way immersion school. Students and teachers from Grades 1, 3, and 8 (5–6-year-olds, 7–8-years-olds, and 12–13-year-olds, respectively) were observed and interviewed, and students completed questionnaires to determine what factors influenced their language of choice and their divergence from Spanish when it was the language of instruction. Although students showed an overall preference for English, particularly in interactions with peers, findings indicate that students' language background, culturally relevant teaching activities, teacher language use, and students' sensitivity to others' need for language accommodation influenced their use of Spanish with peers.

Keywords
two-way immersion, language use, reciprocal learning

1 Introduction

Two-way immersion programs in the USA combine a similar number of language minority (usually Spanish first language [L1]) and language majority (English L1) students in the same classroom and provide language and content instruction in both languages. The amount of time spent instructing students in English and in the minority language is either divided evenly (the 50:50 model), or a preference is initially given to instruction in the minority language (80–90% Spanish: 10–20% English, depending on the program). Ideally, 50% of the students in the program come from minority-language homes and the other 50% come from English-speaking homes (Cazabon et al., 1998).

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The primary goals of these programs are to help both groups of students to achieve high levels of academic and bilingual proficiency, to develop their self-esteem, and to promote positive cross cultural attitudes (Christian, 1994; Howard & Christian, 2002), and a number of studies have found that these goals are achieved in many two-way programs (Christian et al., 1997; Lindholm Leary, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2003). Another unstated goal that is nevertheless embedded in the practice of having students from different language backgrounds learn together is the idea that – through interactions with peers who are native speakers of their second language (L2) – students will learn from and teach one another. Since they are simultaneously learning each other's first, or dominant, language, two-way immersion students have the potential to learn their L2 from and teach their L1 to their classmates.

This is the program's theoretical advantage over one-way immersion, where students have traditionally come from the same language background. For years, however, the question has been raised as to whether and how much both one-way and two-way immersion students actually speak the non-English language, particularly in interactions with their peers. Most notably, Tarone and Swain (1995), in finding that one-way immersion students seem to resist speaking their L2 with other students, called for systematic research on student–student language use practices in various immersion contexts. The following section will address language use studies in one-way and two-way immersion that responded to this call.

II Research on student language use in immersion

1 One-way immersion contexts

Heitzman (1994) and Parker et al. (1995) found that Grade 5 and 6 children in a US Spanish immersion program spoke Spanish 70%–88% of the time during teacher fronted activities. However, in small group activities, they spoke Spanish only 22%–27% of the time. In addition, the researchers found that Spanish was used exclusively for task related purposes and never for social purposes in peer communications. In an observational study of language use in Grades K–5 at another Spanish immersion school, Blanco Iglesias et al. (1995) found that kindergarten students spoke mainly English with teachers and peers, Grade 1 and 3 students used Spanish with their teachers and peers most of the time, and that the Grade 4 and 5 students spoke Spanish and occasionally some English in teacher-fronted or task-oriented activities, with English being the primary language used for peer social communication. In other words, they found that students' Spanish use peaked during the middle years of immersion.

Broner (2000) quantified and described the language use of three children from a Grade 5 class. She found that when speaking to an adult, these students used Spanish 95%–100% of the time, but when speaking to peers, they used Spanish only 58% of the time. Fortune (2001) examined language use in a Grade 5 Spanish immersion classroom that included some Spanish L1 students. She found that students used Spanish during their lessons 33% of the overall time. Although she found that Spanish L1 students did not produce more Spanish than English L1 students, she did find that their presence was associated with greater Spanish production from other students.

2 Two-way immersion contexts

In two-way immersion, where students are surrounded by native speakers of the non-English language and where they therefore may be more motivated to speak that language (Tarone & Swain, 1995), both qualitative and quantitative studies of language use have found that, regardless of their language background, students show an overall preference for English when interacting with their peers. Carranza (1995) observed that at three two-way schools, most utterances in whole class discussions were in Spanish, while most task-management and off-task utterances were in English. Christian et al. (1997) observed that students at three two-way schools showed an overall preference for English regardless of their L1. Freeman (1996) noted that the majority of unofficial talk at one two-way school was in English regardless of L1. Finally, Potowski (2004, 2007) quantified and described the Spanish use of four Grade 5 students and found that these students used Spanish with their teacher 82% of the time and with their peers only 32% of the time. She also determined that students' L1 was not linked to their Spanish use.

While revealing diglossic language behavior among both English L1 and Spanish L1 students in two-way immersion, these and other descriptive studies have also suggested that language proficiency and language status interact to influence language accommodation in classrooms consisting of both L1 and L2 speakers of the target languages. For instance, Carranza (1995) found that highly proficient Spanish L1 speakers did use more Spanish with their peers, and Potowski (2004, 2007) found that one of her students seemed to speak more Spanish with other Spanish-dominant speakers. In an observational study of an Irish immersion preschool, Hickey (2001) found that Irish L1 speakers spoke Irish to each other only when L1 speakers of the societal majority language (English) were not nearby.

Finally, although two-way immersion students may not interact extensively in the non-English language with their peers, some studies indicate that they do benefit from the presence of minority language speakers. For example, in Panfil's (1995) qualitative study of two-way students' collaboration, English speakers reported learning new vocabulary and accurate pronunciation through listening to Spanish speakers interact with their teacher. Moreover, Panfil observed English speakers scaffolding their own answers off the Spanish speakers' responses to the teacher, and she noted that Spanish speakers often added interest to classroom discussions because they were able to give more elaborate responses. Angelova et al. (2006) observed interactions between Spanish- and English-speaking Grade 1 students in two-way immersion and found instances of Spanish speakers using scaffolding to help English speakers grasp Spanish constructions.

Previous research thus reveals many convergent patterns across two-way immersion contexts but also some discrepancies, owing arguably to the range of instructional settings under investigation, which include variable program designs and different geographic contexts. Because context is known to affect instructional variables and related student behavior (e.g. Sheen, 2004; Lyster & Mori, 2006), the present study aims to shed further light on Spanish–English two-way immersion classrooms through a cross sectional analysis of student and teacher language use in the context of Grades 1, 3, and 8 in a two-way immersion school on the east coast of the USA. The goal is not only to reinforce the picture we already have of language use in two-way immersion but also to raise

questions about how – in light of previous findings and those yielded by the present study – researchers and two-way educators can seek methods of promoting reciprocal learning in two-way immersion and in other content and language learning contexts. The research questions for this study were:

1. What is the language of choice among two-way immersion students with their teachers and peers?
2. Is language choice related to students' first language, grade level, and the content or context of their interactions?
3. How do two-way immersion teachers encourage their students to communicate in the non-English language?

III Current study

1 School context

This study was conducted at 'La Comunidad', an urban, public, dual immersion, K–8 elementary school on the East Coast of the USA that follows the 50:50 two-way model. La Comunidad began as a kindergarten only program in 1986. In 1997, the program was moved to its present location within a non-immersion elementary school. In 2001, La Comunidad became independent and acquired its own principal and administration. However, it continued to share its building, playground, and playing fields, as well as its gym, music, woodshop, and art teachers with the non-immersion school.

Within the La Comunidad school walls, where students were supposed to receive 50% of their input in English and 50% in Spanish, they were still immersed in a predominantly English environment. As one of the Grade 1 teachers who participated in this study put it:

> I think with the Spanish, we're kind of on the short end of it because children go to gym … It's in English. They go to chorus … in English. In the first grade, they go to music. It's in English. They go to the lunchroom. It's in English. They get off the bus, they get on the bus. It's in English. So, basically, the one type of model that they have is within the classroom walls.

While examining teachers' and students' language use at the school, it is therefore important to consider the impact of the overall language environment, not only within US society, but also within the school itself.

At the time of the data collection, La Comunidad included 300 students who came from diverse ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds that generally reflected the population of the district that they lived in. Students at the school also came from a range of home language use situations. Some spoke only English or Spanish at home, but many of the students' homes functioned bilingually, with students interacting in their two languages to varying degrees with different family members. Finally, some students also spoke a third or fourth language at home or with other relatives. While all of the students in this study were Spanish–English bilingual to a certain degree, this article relies on the students' home language situation to refer to their L1. Students coming from Spanish-only homes are referred to as Spanish L1, those from homes where both Spanish and

English were spoken are referred to as bilingual, and those from English-only homes are referred to as English L1.

2 *Participating classes*

a Grade 1: The Grade 1 class was taught by Ms Castaneda and Ms Tate. Ms Castaneda was fully bilingual and had moved to the USA from Argentina as a young child. She had been teaching at La Comunidad for five years. Ms Tate was a bilingual, English L1 speaker, who was born in the USA, but who had learned Spanish while working in Honduras as a Peace Corps volunteer. She had taught at La Comunidad for 15 years.

According to Howard and Christian (2002), two-way immersion languages should be clearly separated with two teachers and two classrooms. Until the previous year, the Grade 1 classes had followed this model. However, in the year that they were observed, the Grade 1 teachers at La Comunidad had decided to experiment by staying with the same group of students year round and changing the language of instruction on a weekly basis. The teachers believed that their students' emotional and academic needs would be better met if they had the time to get to know a smaller number of children. Both teachers stated that their enhanced knowledge of the students' academic abilities and emotional needs outweighed any change in students' language use that this might have caused.

b Grade 3: The Grade 3 classes at La Comunidad were taught by Ms Cox and Ms Ramirez. Ms Cox, the English teacher, was born in the USA and was English L1, although she was also bilingual. She had been teaching at La Comunidad for seven years. Ms Ramirez, the Spanish teacher, had immigrated to the USA from the Dominican Republic as an adult. She was also bilingual and had been teaching at La Comunidad for eight years.

The Grade 3 classrooms most closely reflected a 'model' two-way immersion classroom. In other words, the two languages of instruction were completely separated, the teachers were native speakers of the language that they used for instruction, and there was a clear 50:50 balance of time divided between the two teachers, which alternated on a weekly basis (Cazabon et al., 1998; Lindholm Leary, 2001; Howard & Christian, 2002).

c Grade 8: Three Grade 8 teachers were observed: Jorge, Nancy, and Jessica.[1] However, only observations of Jorge's and Nancy's classes are reported on, since these were the only teachers using Spanish with the students. The Spanish language arts teacher, Jorge, had moved to the USA from Honduras 12 years earlier and had been teaching at La Comunidad for about six years. The math teacher, Nancy, was a bilingual English L1 speaker who had been born in the USA. She had also been teaching at La Comunidad for six years.

In Grade 8, the language that teachers used in their classrooms changed according to the subject being taught. The Spanish language arts class was the only class in which students received instruction exclusively in Spanish. The math teacher officially taught in Spanish 75% of the time and in English 25% of the time. Thus, the Grade 8 students received far less than 50% of their instruction in Spanish.

3 Method

This four-week study took place from mid January to mid February and included four different data collection procedures:

- classroom observations;
- student questionnaires;
- teacher interviews; and
- student focus group interviews.

During the classroom observations, the researcher primarily acted as a non-participant observer, sitting in the back of the classroom to record notes. When students worked at activity centers or in groups, the researcher circulated among them to observe their language use. After initially establishing that Spanish use during English instruction was a rarity at all grade levels, the focus of the observations was shifted to students' language use during Spanish time. The Grade 1 Spanish classes were observed for 22 hours, the Grade 3 Spanish classes for 14 hours, and the Grade 8 Spanish classes for nine hours.

Rather than audio recordings, the observations were supported by detailed field notes. The field notes included a description of the topic and nature of each activity and whether it was a teacher led, group, or individual activity. They also included a description of the teachers' and students' language use. For students, it was noted who had spoken, their L1, and to whom they had addressed their comments. Efforts that teachers made to encourage students' non-English language use and their response to students' use of English during Spanish instruction were also recorded. Finally, the field notes included impressions of what other situational factors may have contributed to student and teacher language behavior.

Two focus groups of three students at each grade level were interviewed (for a total of 18 students). The student interviews investigated students' language use in the program from their first year to the present. Questions were asked that tapped into students' perceptions of why they spoke English or Spanish in different situations and how important they thought it was to speak the language of instruction with their teachers and with their peers. All seven participating teachers were interviewed over the course of the study regarding their language learning and professional backgrounds, their two-way experience, their opinions on language use in their classroom, and how they viewed their role in pushing students to speak the language of instruction.

The Grade 3 and Grade 8 students also completed a questionnaire.[2] The questionnaire was related to students' language history, their language experiences in the program, and their language use inside and outside of school. Grade 8 students were also asked for how long they had attended the dual immersion program.

The interviews and field notes from this study were analysed qualitatively and were coded for themes and topics. Field notes were used to establish actual language use practice in the classroom. The transcriptions of teacher and student focus group interviews lent support to these observations by offering a window into participants' perceptions of language use as well as the attitudes and perspectives behind their language behavior. The student questionnaires were analysed quantitatively to gain an overall view of the

students' home language use and their perceptions of their language use in the classroom. Finally, the questionnaire results were used as support in deciding which students would participate in the focus group interviews.

IV Results

Results will be reported for each grade level according to, first, the teachers' approach to language use and, second, students' language use.

1 Teachers' approach to language use

a Grade 1: When asked during an interview what methods she used to encourage students to speak in Spanish during Spanish week, Ms Castaneda replied:

> Well, I try with a lot of reminders, and I try to catch myself also in trying to stay in the mode of just speaking in Spanish except in opportunities when … children … if I find they are going to be frustrated, I'd rather that they're not because I will lose them, and I prefer that they feel a joy in learning a language and that they really, that they like it rather than, you know, have a resistancy to it, and not even attempt to do it.

Ms Castaneda was often observed speaking English to accommodate the needs of her students, to prevent them from becoming frustrated, to hold their attention, and to maintain order in the classroom. She often restated instructions in English, and she frequently spoke to English L1 children in English when assisting them individually. In general, when Ms Castaneda spoke English during Spanish week, her motives were clear. However, at other times, her motives for using English with the students were not as clear. For example, during their Spanish instruction week, as children were dropped off by their parents, Ms Castaneda often spoke more English than Spanish to all students, regardless of their language background. This generally continued until all students were ready to begin class, which was a process that lasted up to 45 minutes. In this case, it seemed that it would have been more practical for her to begin creating a Spanish-speaking environment from the moment that their students stepped into the class.

Ms Castaneda was never observed pushing the English L1 students to speak Spanish to her or to other students unless the class was completing a choral drill and was looking for a specific answer. Ms Castaneda did push bilingual and Spanish L1 children to speak in Spanish during whole class activities, but she did not require them to speak to each other in Spanish during unsupervised activities.

Ms Tate was also observed giving instructions in English when addressing English-dominant students individually. When she led her class in instructional activities, she sometimes used English to translate new vocabulary words, but she immediately reverted to Spanish as soon as all students understood. Unlike Ms Castaneda, she rarely used English as an attention-getting or classroom-management device. More frequently, she used songs, chants, and other methods to facilitate the students' full participation in the lesson.

Ms Tate allowed English L1 children to ask questions in English, and she only pushed Spanish L1 or bilingual students to speak to her in Spanish. She was not observed pushing any of the children to speak Spanish to one another during activities that were not teacher fronted. During her interview, she explained the evolution of her classroom language use in the 16 years that she had worked in the program:

> You know, we struggled with so many things like how much [Spanish to use], I would go through days, weeks, a month, I'd swear off English. However, children quickly crumbled, and after … repeating yourself 15 times in Spanish, … I realized that a lot of the academia was being left behind … and … the strong English speakers with little Spanish were getting lost and their behaviors were getting terrible. So then … I would try using just a little bit more English or just English, just a few comments at different times, especially around … conceptual things that they were not getting …

Both Ms Tate and Ms Castaneda faced the two-way immersion reality that a portion of their students had not yet developed strong language skills in Spanish. Based on their experience, they believed that giving English support to their English-dominant students was useful in preventing them from 'tuning out' of the class and falling behind in their work. The difference between these teachers was the degree to which and the manner in which they used English with their students. Ms Tate seemed to consistently use English for a clear purpose, and she returned to speaking Spanish as soon as she had accomplished that purpose.

b Grade 3: Both Grade 3 teachers were observed using the language of instruction with their students at all times. Ms Cox stated that she sometimes attempted to speak Spanish with her Spanish-dominant students but that they almost always answered her in English, regardless of their English abilities. When asked how she responded to students who addressed her in Spanish, she stated that she simply answered in Spanish, explaining, 'Because it's no big deal for me. I'm the winner, right? English always rules here.'

Ms Ramirez always maintained Spanish with her students and consistently required both English L1 and Spanish L1 students to speak to her in Spanish. However, she rarely pushed the students to speak to each other in Spanish. When asked whether she thought it was important for them to speak to each other in Spanish, she replied:

> It's very important that they speak Spanish to one another, but it's a process … It's a difficult process … because from the point of view that the children are so saturated by English, that makes it difficult [for them to speak Spanish] … Teachers must … help [the student] to construct this other language without pressure so that they feel relaxed.

c Grade 8: Jorge was observed using Spanish consistently to teach his Spanish language arts class and, during his interview, he stated that this was always his practice. In the five Spanish classes observed, Jorge's lessons included in depth discussions and emphasized participation. Two classes were observed in which students engaged in a literature circle discussion of a book they were reading. These discussions required students to make lengthy statements about complicated issues. Nevertheless, the students readily participated in Spanish, only occasionally speaking English. Jorge was the only

teacher in this study who stated that he expected his students to speak Spanish to each other, and he was observed pushing his students to speak Spanish to each other during group work activities.

Officially, Nancy taught her math classes in English 75% of the time and in Spanish 25% of the time. Although math had originally been designated as a Spanish-medium subject, Nancy argued that, because of its subject specific terminology and abstract nature, it was academically too difficult to teach math in Spanish. Interestingly, this is very similar to the position taken by the Grade 8 math teacher in Potowski's (2007, p. 117) study, who also claimed to teach her class in Spanish 25% of the time and who argued that her students became frustrated and 'lost' when she asked them to use a Spanish text. Sometimes Nancy lectured in Spanish and translated certain phrases into English. At other times, she lectured in English and translated certain ideas into Spanish. She also fluctuated between the two languages when speaking to the whole class and when speaking directly to students, regardless of their language proficiency. Nancy stated that she did not set specific guidelines for when and how much her students should speak either English or Spanish.

2 *Student language use*

This section examines students' language use according to their language background, their grade level, and whether they were speaking to teachers or peers. Two other factors that seemed to influence students' Spanish language use will also be addressed: language accommodation and the school's linguistic and cultural promotion of Spanish.

a Grade 1 English L1 students[3]: The Grade 1 English L1 students were never observed speaking spontaneously in Spanish to their teachers. The only time they were observed using Spanish was during whole class activities in which they were answering questions in unison with the rest of the class, singing songs, or participating in group chants that they had memorized. Only two brief instances were observed in which an English L1 child spoke to a classmate in Spanish. Overall, the English L1 children either seemed afraid to take risks with their budding Spanish skills, or they simply did not yet have enough skills in Spanish to fully participate. In addition, the English L1 students seemed quite aware that their teachers did not really require them to speak Spanish, as illustrated in the following focus group interview excerpt:

Researcher: When … you have to speak in Spanish, do you like to do that?
Jessica: Sometimes, if we have to.
Mia: Yeah!
Jessica: But usually we don't have to.

b Grade 3 English L1 students: In contrast with the Grade 1 students, the English L1 Grade 3 students almost always spoke to their Spanish-medium teacher in Spanish during observations. English L1 or bilingual children were observed speaking English to Ms Ramirez more often than the Spanish-dominant children. In addition, the English L1 students made fewer contributions to whole class discussions in their Spanish class than

they did in their English class. Still, there was a tremendous difference between the Grade 1 and Grade 3 English-dominant students' Spanish production, and most of them seemed to be much more comfortable using their L2 than the Grade 1 English L1 students had been.

c Grade 1 Spanish L1 and bilingual students: In both Grade 1 classes, there were several Spanish L1 students who often volunteered to lead classroom activities during Spanish week. However, even they had a tendency to begin their sentences in English and had to be reminded to continue in Spanish. Other Spanish L1 and bilingual children would also use Spanish with their teachers, but at times they refused to do so. Only rarely were they observed speaking Spanish with other students. A student focus group interview with two Spanish L1 and one bilingual student revealed that not only were the students ambivalent about the importance of speaking Spanish but also that they may have perceived their teacher as being somewhat ambivalent in her expectations of their Spanish use:

Researcher: But why is it important to speak in Spanish? Is it important?
Leo: Mm Mm [while shaking his head to say, 'no'].
Javier: Not too important …
Researcher: … This week, it's Spanish week, so [your teacher] is always saying, 'Speak in Spanish! Speak in Spanish!' But you don't. You keep speaking in English.
Javier: Because it's fun, speaking in English!
Leo: But every time she says speak in Spanish, but sometimes, she, she doesn't care, sometimes.

d Grade 3 Spanish L1 and bilingual students: Several Spanish L1 and bilingual children were very active during Spanish language instruction in Grade 3. Although these children also participated during English instruction, they participated even more during the observations in Ms Ramirez's class. In fact, not only did the Spanish L1 and bilingual Grade 3 students speak to Ms Ramirez in Spanish, they occasionally spoke to their classmates in Spanish during whole class discussions. When students were seated near one another and did not expect others to hear them, however, they almost always spoke to each other using English, irrespective of their language background.

Three students from bilingual homes were asked in an interview why they so often spoke to each other in English during Spanish instruction, and one simply replied, 'Because it's better.' In another student focus group interview, when Pilar, a Spanish-dominant student, was asked whether she ever spoke Spanish to her English L1 best friends, Emily and Rebecca, she reported the following:

Pilar: I speak in, in English because when I try to speak in Spanish … I just feel that they don't have a clue what I'm talking about, so I just speak English.
Researcher: Do you talk to other, who *do* you talk to in Spanish?
Pilar: Oh, nobody. Just Sra [Ramirez].
Researcher: Why is that? Does she want you to speak to your friends in Spanish?
Pilar: Well, yeah, she does, but I feel like nobody, like, I just feel like nobody understands me when I speak to them in Spanish …

e *Grade 8 Spanish L1 and bilingual students*: Out of the 21 Grade 8 students who completed questionnaires, 15 came from Spanish-speaking homes, and six came from homes where their parents spoke both Spanish and English. During one interview, a Grade 8 student described her and her classmates' language use like this: 'In Spanish, we speak English, and in English we speak Spanish,' meaning that students used both languages regardless of the language of instruction. Although observations revealed that English was still the overall dominant language at this grade level, the students switched fluidly between the two languages with their teachers and with one another.

Generally, when students spoke English during discussions in Jorge's Spanish language arts class, it seemed that they did so because they could not remember or did not know the appropriate Spanish words or when they wanted to use English slang. In these cases, the students would interject an English word or phrase into their Spanish sentence and then continue in Spanish. Students also often slipped into speaking English when they got excited during the discussions or when their conversations began to veer off the lesson topic. However, in all but one instance, Jorge only needed to remind them to speak Spanish or to continue the conversation in Spanish and they would revert to Spanish.

One of the bilingual children reported that they spoke 'Spanglish', or a mixture of Spanish and English, to Nancy. When asked if it was easier to speak Spanish in Jorge's or Nancy's class, one child answered:

> Jorge's … because [in Nancy's class] most of the people are speaking in English. You just adapt to that, but in [Jorge's] class, we start off the class in Spanish, and everybody's speaking Spanish, so it's easier.

In this case, the teachers' expectations of student Spanish use seemed to have a certain influence on the students' language behavior.

In Nancy's class, both groups of Grade 8 students were observed giving individual presentations on prominent mathematicians and their work. Nancy asked one of the groups to present in Spanish, but most of these students were unable to maintain Spanish during their presentation, including several who had been observed speaking Spanish at length in Jorge's class. Occasionally, Nancy reminded her students to speak Spanish, but moments later, they would revert to English. During this activity, several of the Spanish-dominant newcomers also prompted their classmates to use Spanish and called out Spanish words to help the speakers when they stumbled.

3 Language accommodation and newcomers

a Grade 1: A factor that seemed to influence some students' language use was the language ability of the person with whom they were talking; the students were more likely to speak Spanish with Spanish-dominant speakers and English with English-dominant speakers. The only student–student Spanish interactions observed in Grade 1 occurred with a Spanish-dominant newcomer, Sofia. On two occasions, English L1 children were observed briefly speaking to her in Spanish, once when completing a block pattern task with her and once when asking her for a piece of paper. Sofia, on the other hand, refused to speak Spanish with them. Instead, she either mimed what she wanted to

say or used the English words that she knew, a behavior that may reflect her perception that it was socially obligatory to use English with other students in the program.

A second, related factor that seemed to influence bilingual and Spanish-dominant students' language choice was the proximity of other English-dominant students. On one occasion, Sofia was observed playing alone with a Spanish L1 child, Jaime, while the other English-dominant children were outside for recess. Normally, Sofia was so quiet in class that Ms Tate once conjectured that it might be related to dental problems that made it painful for her to speak. However, during this recess period, Sofia laughed and spoke loudly in Spanish to Jaime, who responded in Spanish. Likewise, on several occasions in Ms Castaneda's class, when the rest of the class was outside for recess, Spanish L1 and bilingual children who had returned to the class for various reasons were observed speaking fluently and without being prompted in Spanish to Ms Castaneda.

b Grade 3: All of the student–student Spanish use that occurred among the Grade 3 students involved the three Spanish L1 newcomers in this group: Gabi, Pilar, and Carmen. On the first day of observations, Pilar reported that she never spoke Spanish during English instruction week except occasionally to help Gabi 'because she doesn't always understand'. The only time that Gabi was observed using Spanish extensively with another student was with Carmen, the only Spanish-dominant newcomer who, according to teacher and student reports, was less proficient in English than Gabi. The two were in the hallway with no other students around and neither used any English during the conversation. Gabi also said on several occasions that she and Carmen always spoke Spanish to one another. In light of these observations, a goal of the interviews with the Grade 3 teachers and students was to determine how students accommodated newcomers to the program. Both teachers recounted stories of students readily translating for and assisting the newcomers.

In their interviews, Grade 3 students from all language background pointed out Gabi's and Carmen's need for extra help in their L2, so they did seem aware of other students' language needs. However, the picture of how the students accommodated newcomers' needs is not entirely clear. During her interview, Pilar noted her disappointment in her first days at the school when she discovered that most students were either unable or unwilling to speak to her in Spanish, a statement that is in conflict with the teachers' accounts of students assisting newcomers. It is also noteworthy that the Spanish-dominant newcomers seemed to resist this kind of assistance. When other students who were not also Spanish-dominant newcomers initiated a Spanish interaction with them, they were observed to give only very brief responses in Spanish or to respond in English. They clearly believed that English was the most appropriate language to use with the majority of their peers.

c Grade 8: Six children in Grade 8 had moved from a Spanish-speaking country not long before starting school at La Comunidad. There were several other students who had also spent part of their childhood in a Spanish-speaking country before moving to the USA and beginning school at La Comunidad. Although they had already become fluent speakers of English, much of their behavior indicated that they still preferred Spanish.

The presence of the Spanish-dominant newcomers had a clear effect on the Grade 8 students' language use. This was evident in observations of student groups that included newcomers. The non-newcomers were more frequently observed speaking Spanish when they were in groups with newcomers. Newcomers had an impact on how much Spanish was spoken in class because they were able to participate in discussions without having to revert to English. Finally, the newcomers sometimes pushed their classmates to speak Spanish during Spanish time as observed during the presentations in Nancy's class. Nancy even occasionally asked them for help when she could not remember a particular vocabulary word in Spanish. In this way, the newcomers were a help to their Spanish language teachers and an asset in the Spanish language classes.

4 Additional language and cultural support

A final theme that emerged during the interviews with the Grade 3 and Grade 8 teachers was the effect of the school's efforts to give additional Spanish language and cultural support. The Grade 3 teacher, Ms Ramirez stated that in the years of her teaching at La Comunidad, she had witnessed a positive shift in students' willingness to speak Spanish with their teachers if not with their peers. She attributed this shift to efforts made by the school to expose the students to Spanish outside of the school walls. These efforts included taking students on tours of local museums and having Spanish-speaking guides, encouraging parents to speak in Spanish at home, and having prominent Spanish-speaking community members visit classes at La Comunidad.

Jorge and Nancy both reported that the Grade 8 students, like the Grade 3 students, had become more willing to speak Spanish over the years, and they also attributed this to the school's efforts to reinforce Spanish language and culture. These teachers were observed actively supporting students' cultural backgrounds. A few weeks before the project began, Nancy's students had completed a family tree project, tracing the roots of their own culture. In Jorge's class, culture and language issues were always present in the discussions. For example, the students were reading a book about a Puerto Rican family who moved to the USA, and Jorge used the book's cultural references to get students to discuss their own experiences and backgrounds. He also asked his students to compare the traditions, customs, and Spanish vocabulary from their own countries with the Puerto Rican customs and language addressed in the book.

Finally, Jorge annually took the Grade 8 students on a trip to Puerto Rico, where they stayed at a university and met Puerto Rican students. He believed this was an important part of their Spanish language development, since many of them had never been to a place where people spoke only Spanish:

> It allows kids to meet kids from other schools which they cannot communicate in English. And [the Puerto Rican kids] start saying, 'Well, you're Latino, but you don't speak Spanish.' Well, [the kids from La Comunidad] get really pissed off … And like when we went to school, like on the third day of eight days, they were like, '… How dare you tell me that I'm not Latino!'

According to Jorge, after a few days in Puerto Rico, the students usually began speaking only Spanish.

V Discussion

1 Language background

The students at La Comunidad showed a general preference for English, regardless of their language background. This is in keeping with every other study that has examined language use in two-way immersion (Carranza, 1995; Panfil, 1995; Freeman, 1996; Christian et al., 1997; Potowski, 2004, 2007). However, in looking at how much Spanish students produced in the La Comunidad classrooms, it was found that students from Spanish L1 households in Grades[4] 1 and 3 spoke Spanish more frequently and more extensively with their teachers and with their peers than students from English L1 households. This is in contrast with Potowski's (2004, 2007) finding that students' L1 was not linked to their Spanish language use.

Potowski (2004, 2007) also found that the presence of Spanish L1 speakers in the classroom was not linked to enhanced opportunities for Spanish input or output for the other students. Since the Spanish L1 and bilingual students in present study contributed more often and more extensively to classroom conversation in Spanish at both grade levels, in terms of enriched input, one could argue that the English students were benefiting from the presence of Spanish L1 and bilingual students in the program; this is a finding that is supported by Panfil's (1995) qualitative study of two-way immersion students' collaboration and scaffolding.

When Spanish was used for student–student communication, it mainly occurred between students with Spanish L1 or bilingual backgrounds, suggesting that the student–student reciprocal language learning embedded in two-way immersion's language practice of combining English L1 and Spanish L1 students in the same classrooms was not evenly distributed. Only the Spanish L1 students were directly practicing their L2 with their peers. In this, they supported Valdés' (1997) concerns that mixing monolingual English L1 speakers with bilingual Spanish L1 speakers in two-way immersion will inevitably lead to students speaking English with one another to accommodate the monolingual speakers' needs, and that only the English speakers will benefit from the mixed language enrolment that two-way offers.

The language accommodation observed in this study was almost always unidirectional in favor of English speakers, and students seemed to use Spanish only with the most Spanish-dominant speakers. While this could arguably have occurred because most students spoke English, the behavior of the Spanish-dominant newcomers indicated otherwise. One example was the Grade 1 Spanish-dominant newcomer who avoided speaking, even in Spanish, except when playing alone with another Spanish L1 friend. In Grade 3, the only extensive student–student Spanish communication observed occurred between Spanish-dominant newcomers when no other students were present. They essentially appeared to be hiding their Spanish use from non-Spanish-dominant students. This seemed to clearly reflect the status held by English, not only in the broader US society but also within the walls of La Comunidad.

There were, however, instances of language accommodation for Spanish-dominant speakers and, the more Spanish-dominant students were perceived to be, the more all students were likely to speak Spanish to them. Once again, the newcomers were at the heart of this observed behavior. Students were observed producing more Spanish with

Spanish-dominant newcomers at all grade levels, and the Spanish-dominant newcomers in Grades 1 and 3 avoided using Spanish unless they were in the company of highly proficient Spanish speakers or other Spanish-dominant newcomers.

While the findings of students' preference for English in this and other two-way immersion settings could be discouraging for educators working in such contexts, other findings from this study indicate that educators involved in two-way immersion do have feasible options for promoting the use of the non-English language. For example, efforts to promote Spanish language and Hispanic culture (i.e. the Spanish language tours of local museums, the school trip to Puerto Rico, an attempt to integrate projects, and class discussions on Hispanic culture) were linked to increased Spanish use among students. In addition, the teachers' own language use and their expectations of students' Spanish production were also linked to student Spanish use.

The Grade 1 and Grade 8 teachers' English use during Spanish time in this study coincided with students' increased English use during Spanish time. The degree to which teachers enforced the Spanish-only rule during Spanish time also coincided with students' language behavior. The Grade 1 teachers did not push English L1 students to use Spanish in any context, and these students were never observed using Spanish. The Grade 3 Spanish teacher required her students to speak to her in Spanish, and they did so in almost every situation. However, they rarely spoke Spanish with classmates, and she did not expect them to. Jorge, the Grade 8 Spanish language arts teacher was the only teacher to require his students to speak to each other in Spanish, and they spoke more Spanish to each other than in any other classroom.

2 Implications for two-way immersion pedagogy

From one point of view, the findings presented here support the traditional tenets that, if immersion teachers aim to prioritize students' use of the non-English language, they should not use English during non-English instruction time and they should encourage students to speak the language of instruction with them and with each other. This and other two-way based studies demonstrate the difficulties that educators already face in trying to create an environment that offsets the majority language status of English in North American society. If teachers appear ambivalent regarding the importance of their own and their students' use of the minority language, their students may perceive them as reinforcing the minority/majority societal language divide within their classes.

However, this study also raises important questions regarding the extent to which teachers should use students' L1 in two-way immersion and how much they should push their students to produce their L2. First, two-way immersion teachers must balance the need to offer their students extensive exposure to the non-English language with the possibility that they might negatively affect students' attitudes toward the language. In this study, the Grade 1 teachers, whose English L1 students who assumably had received far less exposure to Spanish than the English L1 students in Grade 3, were particularly sensitive to this issue. Pragmatically speaking, teachers also have language and content teaching goals that may actually be supported by some use of the students' L1. Macaro (2009) has argued that there is very little research investigating whether limited use of the L1 in L2 classrooms affects L2 learning, either negatively or positively.

Several teachers in this study believed that some use of English was necessary to ensure classroom management as well as their students' comprehension of content, which is in line with statements made by teachers from studies on L1 use in foreign language contexts (Polio & Duff, 1994; Castellotti, 1997; Rolin Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002; Edstrom, 2006). Future studies of language use in immersion contexts should closely examine how teachers can effectively walk the line between meeting their pedagogical goals vs. meeting their minority language support goals. Moreover, such research should also consider the differential effects of program design on students' language use and the extent to which teachers need to support students' L2 development through L1 use by taking into account both the proportion of instructional time devoted to each language (90:10, 80:20, or 50:50) and the distribution of instructional time (switching languages on a weekly vs. a daily basis). The students in this study were enrolled in a 50:50 two-way immersion program. Perhaps they would have demonstrated more Spanish use and less of a need for English support, particularly in Grade 1, if they had received greater exposure to Spanish.

Despite the fact that language use studies such as this one have revealed diglossic learning environments across immersion contexts, this particular study also positively highlights the fact that two-way immersion students are sensitive to other students' language needs and that, regardless of their own Spanish language proficiency, they make efforts to accommodate the needs of Spanish-dominant newcomers. These findings open another window for future language use research: determining what conditions of student interaction and what groupings of students for cooperative work successfully lead to more student–student use of the non-English language. Pairing English L1 students with Spanish L1 students has been one route that two-way immersion teachers have been documented to take in dealing with this issue (de Jong & Howard, 2009), and this certainly meets the goal of integrating mixed language classrooms for enhanced language learning. However, as de Jong & Howard (2009) have pointed out, teachers may need to be more flexible in determining how they group students according to language background. The fact that Spanish L1 students tend to speak more Spanish with other Spanish L1 students and minimal to no Spanish with English L1 students may in fact mean that it is also important to sometimes create homogenous groups of minority L1 speakers in order to promote practice and enrichment of their L1.

Since this study has also indicated that two-way immersion students' Spanish language use is sensitive to topics, tasks, and activities that promote Spanish language and culture, perhaps integrating such a focus into strategically paired cooperative tasks could also be a promising direction for efforts to encourage increased Spanish language use. In the 15 years since Tarone and Swain (1995) first called for immersion researchers to systematically investigate students' language use in various immersion contexts, a number of studies have established that, in general, students speak Spanish with their teachers and English with their peers. It seems clear that the time has now come for immersion researchers to shift their focus to creating research interventions experimenting with pedagogical approaches and collaborative tasks that lead to greater non-English language use and increased reciprocal L2 learning among immersion students.

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Notes

1 The Grade 8 teachers went by their first names with their students.
2 The Grade 1 students were deemed too young to answer questions in this format.
3 This section examines English L1 students in only Grades 1 and 3 because there was only one English L1 student in Grade 8. An administrator as well as two teachers reported that the school was working to offset a high attrition rate for their English L1 students.
4 For the majority of my examination of the influence of language background on students' language use, I must omit the Grade 8 students since almost all were from Spanish-speaking or bilingual homes.

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