

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATING LATINO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH LITTLE FORMAL SCHOOLING

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In a large New York City high school sits 16-year-old Marcos, with almost a mustache, struggling to print on his paper the few Spanish words that are written on the blackboard. Dora, a pretty 17-year-old with lots of eye makeup, sits to his left, carefully copying into a notebook while she reads to herself, loud enough for everyone to hear. Many of the other 17 students in the class toil over their work just as carefully. All of them ask for help continuously from the one teacher in the room. When the teacher doesn't respond immediately, they're up. They walk around, look at someone else's work, talk to them, kid them in a grown up or adolescent way, and then go back to their childish work. There's something odd about this class, having to do with the incongruence between the physical maturity of the young people in this class and their immaturity in handling the classroom script and other academic tasks. There's also a marked difference between their bright and quick dialogue with each other and their slow reading and careful writing.

This is but one of many classrooms in the New York City high school system that are struggling with yet another kind of student whose numbers have been increasing since the early 1970s. Like other immigrant students of the past, Marcos and Dora lack English proficiency. And like other immigrant students of the past, they have to adjust to a new school system in a new society. But many of the bilingual and ESL programs that New York City high schools have developed for immigrant students are inadequate for these students.¹

The focus of most high school bilingual programs in New York City is

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on encouraging the acquisition of English while continuing the students' education in their native language. But in the case of Marcos and Dora, there is little to continue. Their lives have been disrupted by a trip that has taken them away from the intimacy of extended family in the Dominican Republic (where they had gone sporadically to a loosely organized small school), to mothers whom they hardly know and who send them every day to a school with over 3,000 students and a highly structured academic curriculum.

Marcos and Dora, bright adolescents with little formal school experience, inadequate literacy skills for U.S. society, and no English, seem lost in the large high school, just as they feel lost in the new urban environment. But beyond school and society, these adolescents also feel lost at home, a product of having to play the role of son and daughter to women who left their young children in the care of grandmothers to come to the United States. In a poetic metaphor that turns out to be characteristically present in most students who share Marcos's and Dora's lot, Dora explains the alienation she feels not only from people, but also from the "new" family with whom she now lives: *"Allá, uno estaba con la gente de uno. Aquí, nada más está con la familia de uno. Y a veces la de uno es sólo por aquello de la sangre."* ["There, one was with one's people. Here, one is only with one's family. And sometimes one's family is only because of a blood relationship."] Dora's father died when she was a year old and her mother left for Puerto Rico shortly afterwards. Dora and her three older siblings stayed with their maternal grandmother, whom they called "Mami," in Jaina, a town in the Dominican Republic. Dora's mother sent money, toys, and clothes from Puerto Rico and later from the United States. She wrote frequently but never visited, since she had no immigration papers. And then, a few years ago, as a result of the amnesty program, Dora's mother was able to claim her children. Dora and the youngest brother came to the United States. The other two were married by then and stayed behind. And "Mami" stayed in Jaina while the stranger in New York usurped the "Mami" title. The relationship has been strained from the beginning. The new "Mami" is a youngish secretary who lives with a man and speaks English as well as Spanish. The "Mami" Dora knew was an older Spanish-speaking woman who hardly left her home.

This chapter provides some insights into the past and present school lives of others like Marcos and Dora. It also describes efforts being made in two New York City high schools to educate these adolescents, including the curriculum and teaching strategies used. It looks at what works and what doesn't in these contexts. And it offers recommendations for the future, a future that will bring an increasing number of students like Marcos and Dora to U.S. high schools.

THE EMERGENCE OF DUAL LITERACY PROGRAMS

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, New York City high schools developed bilingual and ESL programs to educate the increasingly large number of students coming from non-English-speaking countries. In particular, spurred by the Aspira Consent Decree of August 29, 1974, and by the large number of Latino students and professionals in New York City, the high schools were able to institute Spanish-English bilingual programs. These bilingual programs consist of courses in ESL and courses in the different academic subjects taught in Spanish. Students remain in the bilingual program until they acquire enough English to score beyond the 40th percentile in the Language Assessment Battery, the standardized test used in New York State to exit students from transitional bilingual programs. Of the total enrollment of 167,602 students with Limited English Proficiency in New York City in 1995-1996, 42,599 were high school students, and over two-thirds were Latino students (Board of Education of the City of New York, 1995-1996).

Whereas Puerto Rican students who lacked English proficiency were the main target of the Aspira Consent Decree, the Latino students in the 1980s and 1990s have come not only from Puerto Rico, but increasingly from the Dominican Republic, Central America, South America, and Mexico (for more on Spanish and Latinos in New York, see especially García, 1997; García & Otheguy, 1997; Zentella, 1997). Bilingual programs that focused on continuing an education while teaching English were clearly inadequate for many students whose education had been interrupted by sociopolitical fragmentation and even civil war. But beyond sociopolitical difficulties encountered lay the various expectations that different societies have for the children of the poor. Many of the poor families who have arrived in New York City recently have clearly been excluded from Latin American educational systems, which focus on educating only the elite. Whereas at the elementary level the difficulties have begun to be felt, it is at the high school that the situation has become desperate.

In New York City students who are 15 years old are automatically placed in the 9th grade. But departmentalized high school bilingual programs cannot be of help to students with little formal schooling. These students regularly fail not only the ESL class, but also the Spanish-language class and the subject classes taught in Spanish. In addition, they are considered discipline problems and many are referred to special education programs (Dual Literacy Programs, 1993).

In order to alleviate this situation, the Office of High School Bilingual/ESL Programs in the New York City Board of Education recom-

mended the establishment of what are broadly known as Dual Literacy Programs for Limited English Proficient Students (for an extensive study of one such Dual Literacy Program, see Marsh, 1995). Dual Literacy Programs grew steadily throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, and are now available in New York City not only in Spanish, but also in Chinese and Haitian Creole. By spring 1993, there were programs in 18 high schools serving a total of almost 700 students, 85% of whom were Latinos (Dual Literacy Programs, 1993). Cuts in the budget for such programs brought the number down to nine in 1996. But by 1997, because of increased funding through the new Emergency Immigrant Program and a surge in the number of students in need of such programs, there were Dual Literacy Programs in 32 schools.

WHO ARE THESE STUDENTS AND WHAT HAS BEEN THEIR PAST SCHOOL EXPERIENCE?

The portrayal of students in Dual Literacy Programs that follows is based on my intensive observations and data-gathering in two Dual Literacy Programs in two New York City high schools. These two settings give us but a glimpse of the lives of students with little formal schooling.

In the two settings studied, the typical student (84%)² was born in the Dominican Republic, arrived in the United States in the last 2 years (72% had lived in the United States for less than 2 years), and was older than the typical ninth grader (61% of them were 17 years old or older). In addition, and extremely important, three-fourths of the students (72%) had been raised by relatives other than the parents.

Although all these students were placed in the 9th grade upon entering high school, only 26% had finished the 8th grade in their countries. Over half had not even completed the 6th grade. But beyond years of schooling lies the very different context of schooling with which these students are familiar.

It turns out that the limited experience that most of these students have had in school has been in what they refer to as a "*colegio privado*" ["private school"]. But private schools in Latin America are very different from private schools in New York City. Most described their school as simply "*una casa*" ["a house"]. Many spoke of how they knew the teachers personally. Others described their teachers as relatives. One said, "*Conocíamos a los maestros. Sabíamos donde vivían. Había una que era prima mía. Vivía en el mismo centro y yo iba mucho a su casa.*" ["We knew the teachers. We knew where they lived. There was one who was my cousin. She lived right in the middle of town and I used to go a lot to her house."]

Most of these adolescents, even those whose attendance was sporadic or who had been out of school for years, had very fond memories of their past schoolteachers. One young woman told me how her teacher still wrote to her and then showed me the letter she had just received. The letter was wonderfully revealing, for it contained many of the writing errors that these students displayed in their writing. After sending regards from all classmates, the teacher reminded the student to send something for Christmas because they were poor and the student was fortunate to be living in the United States.

As children of the poor in a Latin American society that formally educates only the rich and the middle class, these students have been schooled by teachers with little education and minimal expectations. Many had few opportunities to be schooled. In explaining why he attended school only sporadically, one young man first told me that he had problems with his eyes ("*Sufro de los ojos*"), but then pointed to the real reason for his lack of attendance: "*Allí hay que pagar por los libros y comprar la comida también. Pasaba mucho trabajo.*" ["There I had to pay for my books and also buy food. It was very hard for me."] Many also described their frustrations in a school system that didn't tolerate their differences. Another young man explained: "*Allá es como una cárcel. Le dan con un palo a uno.*" ["There, it's like a jail. They hit you with a stick."] And others spoke about their academic failure and the inability of the school system to help them. A young woman said, "*Fui hasta cuarto porque no pasaba el cuarto. Me quemaba en todo casi siempre.*" ["I went up to fourth grade because I couldn't pass fourth. I used to fail everything most of the time."]

The place of school in these students' lives has changed drastically. Whereas two to three years ago school was a place that they did not have to contend with, now school has become the place they're required to go to every day. A student from Honduras told me how the school system there was different from the one here: "*En Honduras sólo hay seis grados y aquí hay doce.*" ["In Honduras there are only six grades and here there are twelve."] Of course, schooling in Honduras for the elite goes beyond the elementary level, but for this student, elementary school was all that was available. And not only did school mean fewer years for most, it also meant fewer hours. For example, in the Dominican Republic these students went to school only between 8:00 and 12:00.

The differences in the schooling experience of these students and those in the regular bilingual program become evident in the different ways in which students describe their own schooling experience. All students in the regular bilingual class reported that school in their country of origin—even when that country was the Dominican Republic—was harder than school in the United States. Their comments were as fol-

lows: *"Allá es más duro el estudio. Allí uno tiene que esforzarse y sacar su nota."* ["Studying is harder there. You have to put a lot of effort and get your grade."] *"Las matemáticas aquí no es tan avanzada. Es muy fácil."* ["Here math is not very advanced. It is very easy."] *"Acá lo veo tan fácil. No me afano porque sé que es por crédito."* ["Here I see it all so easy. I don't put any effort into it because I know that it goes by credit."] *"Aquí no exigen mucho y allá exigían más."* ["They don't demand a lot here and there they used to demand more."] In contrast, the students in the Dual Literacy Program all referred to how much more difficult it is to study in the United States. One said: *"Aquí son más recios que en Santo Domingo. Hay demasiadas leyes."* ["Here they are stricter than in Santo Domingo. There are too many regulations."] Another one said: *"Aquí aprendo más. En Santo Domingo enseñan menos. Conocía a la maestra. Aquí no conozco a los maestros, son más fuertes."* ["Here I learn more. In Santo Domingo they used to teach less. I knew the teacher. Here I don't know the teachers, they're more difficult."]]

Besides having very different appreciation of their schooling experience in their old countries, students in the regular bilingual program also seem to have had a very different experience with English than that of students in the Dual Literacy Program. None of the students in the Dual Literacy Program reported having studied English in their countries of origin. In contrast, all but one of the students in the regular bilingual class reported having studied English. Two reasons may account for this difference. First, two-thirds of the students in the regular class had attended secondary schools in their country of origin; a secondary education in Latin America includes English as a subject. Second, it may be possible that students in the regular bilingual program are more middle-class, and we know that studying English is a common endeavor among middle-class Latin Americans. At least three students in the regular bilingual program had attended private English-language schools after their regular school.

It turns out, then, that an important piece of information in selecting the appropriate educational context for recently arrived Latino high school students is a detailed history of their schooling experiences, since going to school in Latin America means very different things for the children of the poor than for the children of the middle class. For the middle class, schooling often means a rigorous academic curriculum with English language lessons. But for the poor, schooling often includes just basic functional literacy and numeracy, with little emphasis placed on cognitive complex tasks or on advanced study. In fact, a secondary education is often beyond the reach of many poor Latin Americans.

WHAT THESE STUDENTS KNOW AND DON'T KNOW

One of the most disturbing aspects surrounding the education of students with little school experience is how differently they evaluate their knowledge and expectations compared with what teachers have to say about them. In the two Dual Literacy Programs I studied, 91% of all students expected to graduate, and 58% had career goals for which a college diploma is necessary. In fact, most students wanted to be either teachers or lawyers.

The teachers, however, tended to evaluate the students very negatively. Students regularly failed courses. One semester, for example, 81% of the students had failed the ESL class, and 74% had failed the Spanish literacy class. The failure rate for the other subjects was 76% for math, 69% for science, and 46% for social studies. This failure rate, which significantly reflects the greater failure of students in language skills areas than in content subject areas, is important because it points precisely to the problem of schooling these students in traditional ways. These students are capable of learning academic subjects, and have the basic background knowledge to make sense of scientific, historical, or social ideas. It is the ability to use their limited literacy and numeracy in complex academic ways that these students need to develop. And it is the knowledge of classroom script, especially the understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and expected behavior of students and teachers, that they lack (for more on scripts for school, see Saville-Troike & Kleifgen, 1986, 1989).

Significantly, then, it is the ESL teacher who has the least understanding of these students. One of the ESL teachers describes her students as "extremely immature. . . . They act like seven years old. They cannot comprehend being quiet. . . . They're uncontrollable. . . . There's hyperactivity and incessant talking." Indeed, students in ESL classes, even with the most gifted teachers, make evident their lack of knowledge of the classroom script. As we will see in the next section, ESL teachers spend most of their time teaching these students how to behave in the classroom, rather than attempting to extend their English-language development.

It is interesting that these students seem to show better understanding of the classroom script with bilingual teachers, especially with those who teach the Spanish literacy classes. The difference may lie in the bilingual teachers' ability to understand and respond to the students' oral outbursts, which often reveal understanding and thinking. For example, when the teacher of the Spanish literacy class asks what a letter of apology is, one student replies in almost one breath:

Maestra, es por ejemplo:

Estimados Profesores Míos,

La presente de esta carta es para comunicarle que mi hija no pudo asistir a la escuela ayer porque está enferma. Por esta razón le suplico que la disculpe por esa falta. Muy sinceramente,

[Teacher, it is for example:

My Dear Teachers,

This letter is to let you know that my daughter could not attend school yesterday because she was sick. For this reason I beg you to excuse her for her absence. Most sincerely,]

The teacher then reacts not to the student's spontaneous outburst, but to her ability to instantly compose a letter orally.

Verbally, and in Spanish, these students are articulate and capable of participating in academic discourse. But because of their limited schooling, they read haltingly and have difficulty constructing the author's meaning. Yet these same students' writing is often fluid and expressive, although, as we will see, different from the writing of more schooled adolescents.

Answers to our survey of literacy use in the home confirm the students' greater familiarity with writing their own texts (an index of 2.6 was obtained for use of writing at home in a scale where 1 = Never and 5 = Very much) than with reading others' texts (an index of 2.2). Although answers to what students read at home were vague, writing emerged as a clear and extensive activity. In most cases, writing occurred when completing homework assignments (50% of the students gave homework as an answer). However, a significant number of students said they wrote letters at home (24%). And an even more significant number said they wrote poems (26%). Clearly, writing, a productive skill able to be used regardless of the presence of printed texts and outside stimuli, is more common for these students than reading. It is possible that in the case of more schooled adolescents who have greater familiarity with printed texts, the opposite may be true.

This greater and natural use of writing among these students became obvious on one particular day when, as the Spanish literacy teacher struggled with oral reading, girls passed around hardbound composition books. Schoolwork was set aside, and many of the girls became engaged in reading and writing in these notebooks. After weeks of sitting in classes, the girls started sharing with me these journals, which they significantly call *pensamientos* [thoughts]. Most of these *pensamientos* are love poems that have been copied from books, but others have been written

by the girls. They spend a lot of time sharing the *pensamientos* with each other. Whereas often the academic writing done in class is sloppy and letters are ill-formed, the *pensamientos* are written in the best calligraphy, illustrated profusely, and shared only with best friends. I reproduce an example of a *pensamiento* with the writing errors contained in the original.

Soy tu amiga
Tú y yo somos amigas,
puedes contar con migo cundo
quieras porque soy especial
por el simple echo que te
quiero seas rica o podre pero
no vanidosa y tambien que
se guardar un secreto y como
tú y yo sabemos que hay muy
pocas personas que guardan secreto.
Quiero ser tú amiga
dejame abril las puertas
de tú corazon y sabras
como soy.
Me llamo
xxxx
soy tu amiga

[I'm your friend
You and I are friends,
you can count on me whenever
you want because I'm special
because of the simple fact that I
love you whether rich or poor but
not vain and I also
can keep a secret as
you and I know that there are very
few people who keep secrets.
I want to be your friend
let me open the doors
of your heart and you will know
how I am.
My name is
xxx
I'm your friend.]

Little by little, the boys too started sharing their poems. And it became obvious that these students, despite their limitations with academic skills, had an ability for poetic metaphor and written expression that exceeded that of many of their schooled adolescent peers. Their images were complex, their metaphors forceful. Standard language did not constrain them, and students felt free to construct their own language to write poetry.

Yet the students' writing system is unlike that of schooled adolescents. In fact, it often resembles that of first graders experimenting with invented spelling. Just like first graders who are making guesses about how words are written, these adolescents' writing reflects not the printed words that are unfamiliar, but their own inner bright and forceful voices. Just like the young children in Emilia Ferreiro's studies (Ferreiro, 1990), these adolescents have hypothesized relations between writing and language that are different from those held by schooled young people. These hypotheses result in the following common categories of writing errors:³

1. Word agglutination
Ex: *querespetar, miabuella, queno, llavoy*
2. Word separation
Ex: *en seña, a buela, a tras, a prender, don de, con migo, en contró, se queda, inutil mente*
3. Acoustic equivalency (following phonological patterns in Caribbean; see del Rosario, 1979)
 - a. equivalency of r = l
Ex: *fácir, gorpes, fartavan, aprendel, entendel, demostrál*
 - b. equivalency of b = d
Ex: *paladra, anbrajoso*
 - c. equivalency of i = e
Ex: *descutiendo, se era, se intero, peliado, pelio, peliandose*
 - d. equivalency of f = s
Ex: *defilachado*
4. Deletion of unstressed final consonants
 - a. Deletion of r, j, d
Ex: *dolo, relo, necesida*
 - b. Deletion of s (in pronunciation, /s/ to /h/)
Ex: *los cuento, mucho meno, sus ojo, eran bueno en darle lo sesenta peso*
5. Metathesis
Ex: *repestar*
6. Dissimilation
Ex: *enforsándose*

7. Equivalency of two or more graphemes when they represent one phoneme

a. b, v = /b/

Ex: *havía, estava, iva, vuscar, save, conbiértala, trabiesa, bamos, volbia, bez, probocaron, boy, llebaron, a berla, bacaciones, atrebo, ba*

b. h, 0 = /0/

Ex: *ija, avia, ombre, ablo, ay, asta, onor, abra*

c. y, ll = /y/

Ex: *la lello, calleron, lla, llo, alludar*

d. s, c, z = /s/

Ex: *ansiano, fásil, cresía, ensusiaron, antesedente, enceña, divercion, ece, en vos alta, hiso, eforándose*

8. Hypercorrection

a. h for 0

Ex: *habes, haberla, habuela, hera*

b. s for 0

Ex: *el días siguiente, de la escuelas, lo siento muchos*

9. Lack of accents

10. Wrong words

Ex: *la dejaron por un trato en la oficina, dentadura paliza*

The most prevalent conventional error in the students' writing is the deletion of the "s." Yet, an analysis of when this error occurs gives us some understanding of the coherence of the students' writing system. These students, mostly Dominicans, delete the /s/ in speaking, and therefore do the same when they read and often when they write (for more on Caribbean radical Spanish, see Guitart, 1982). It is interesting to note, however, that all the examples of /s/ deletion that we encountered in the students' writing occur in instances when the /s/ is redundant and when plurality has already been communicated. An example of this is found in example 4b above. "*Eran bueno en darle lo sesenta peso*" contains three instances of /s/ deletion. However, the plurality of *bueno* has been communicated by the verb *eran*, and the plurality of *lo* and *peso* has also been suggested by the number *sesenta*. Only when the /s/ marker is redundant do students tend to delete it.

These students are much more active thinkers than many teachers give them credit for, although their hypotheses often result in different applications of knowledge. Whereas these students still hold on to the immigrant dream of making it through schooling, even the dedicated teachers only want to help them for another year, until the clock runs out, that is, until they turn 17 and can drop out and register with a high school equivalency program.

In the next section we will describe the curriculum and teaching strategies used by the teachers. The gap between the teachers' practices and the students' knowledge is made evident, especially in the ESL classroom.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES FOR THESE STUDENTS

The Dual Literacy Program: Its Structure

The instructional program recommended for students in Dual Literacy Programs generally consists of a block program of double period classes of native language literacy and ESL, as well as single periods of math, social studies, and occupational education taught in the native language, and a physical education class. Students usually remain in the program for one full semester or one full year.

Despite recommendations for process-oriented and integrative instruction, in practice the curricula in many of these programs remain largely reductionist, except in the Spanish literacy class. We will look first at what happens in the ESL and content classes, and contrast those situations with the more fortunate one surrounding the development of Spanish literacy.

Teaching English as a Second Language

In the two sites observed, the gap between the students and the teachers seems greater in the English as a Second Language classes. In general, the ESL curriculum for these students overcompensates for the limited literacy of the students. That is, the ESL curriculum assumes that students are not capable of handling any academic material. ESL texts are thus either nonexistent or extremely easy and childish.

On a particular day, 2 ESL periods were spent on 13 English words dealing with relatives, which the teacher had written on the blackboard: "mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, cousin, niece, nephew, grandmother, wife, husband, and cousin." The teacher asked only the same question: "How many brothers/sisters/aunts/uncles/cousins/niece/nephews, etc., do you have?" There was traditional choral repetition, common of the outdated and ineffective audio-lingual method. There was also little comprehensible input in this classroom, since the teacher spent most of her time telling students to be quiet. Students copied words from the blackboard but failed to grasp their meaning. I looked over a student's

notebook, where many of the English words were written with Spanish accents: "cousín, neíce, síster." When the class was over, I asked the student if he knew what those words meant. He said: "*Ella no lo ha explicado todavía.*" ["She hasn't explained it yet."]. Only the question about cousin provoked a heated discussion in Spanish about the meaning of the word "cousin." One student argued: "*Allá hay infinidades de cousins. . . . Allá hay cousin primero, cousin segundo y cousin tercero. Pero no hay nada tan bueno como primo hermano.*" ["There, there is an infinity of *primos*⁴ . . . There are first *primos*, second *primos* and third *primos*. But there isn't anything as good as first cousins."] And as the students argued in Spanish with each other, the ESL teacher, unaware of what the discussion was about, desperately asked for attention.

During a second visit, the same ESL teacher had the following instructions on the blackboard:

Write a composition using the present continuous and present simple.

Write a composition of two paragraphs:

My Life

Par. 1: Present continuous. Ex: I am studying

Par. 2: Present simple.

At the end of the period only a few students had produced compositions. This is an example of a composition of one of the students. It is reproduced exactly as written, although the reader will have to imagine very childish block letters interspersed with sloppy script:

I an talking to my Deurys
 Now I to toiking to my mother
 Now I study in English
 My brother is bery tol an fat
 he toiking to my Deurys
 He do the homework

As one can see, this composition even fails to communicate a message to the reader. The student has been limited in his use of language by a teacher who focuses on the forms of language rather than on the messages that those forms communicate. This vision of language shows a linguistically naive comprehension of how language works, for language forms are simple reflections of differences in meanings (for more on communicative grammar, see Otheguy, 1997). Good language teaching should focus on helping students use the meanings of language in order to communicate messages.

Another ESL class used a text with very controlled vocabulary and mechanical exercises. The lesson observed on one day dealt with food and different food groups. Students were asked to orally categorize certain foods into the main food groups. After this oral exercise, a worksheet was distributed. The worksheet asked to circle the right answer and to unscramble some words. Many students did not understand what they were being asked to do. An example that read "Pineapples are proteins-grains-dairy products-fruits" was answered by one student by circling every choice available. Some other students guessed the right answer, although they didn't know what all the words meant. There was no evidence of the use of actions, gestures, or Spanish to contextualize the meanings of English in this classroom (for more on the importance of comprehensible input and the use of the students' first language in ESL classes, see Auerbach, 1993; Krashen, 1981; Lucas & Katz, 1994).

Students in this class had also been asked to memorize the following dialogue, which they recited by heart in front of the room:

I'm going to the store.
What do you need?
I need bread and eggs.
Do you need milk?
No, I don't. I have milk.
Do you want ice cream?
No, I don't.

Student after student came up to the front of the class and repeated this useless, mechanical exercise. There was no evidence in any of the ESL classes of the use of English language or literacy for meaningful and real communication.

Teaching the Subject Areas

Whereas the ESL class overcompensated for the students' limited literacy, the science curriculum seemed to undercompensate, that is, there had been no change in teaching strategies to meet the needs of these students. A science lesson was observed, the aim of which was to explain the function of electrons. The teacher merely dictated a paragraph about Bohr's atomic model. Needless to say, most students in the Dual Literacy Program did not take down the dictation, and therefore would be unable to study.

The math curriculum undercompensated in one school and overcompensated in the other. In one bilingual math class the teacher used

the same ditto sheets written in English that he used with the regular bilingual program. But the teacher had little understanding of bilingualism and the limited literacy of these students. His instructions were: "*Vayan leyendo la hoja esta. Leyéndola, penséndola en español.*" ["Start reading this sheet. Start reading it, thinking about it in Spanish."]

The translation of one such math problem becomes a classic example of the complexity of bilingualism. An example read: "Each pump represents 100,000 liters of crude oil . . ." One student translated it as "*Cada pompa representa 100,000 litros de aceite crudo.*" The teacher corrected the student and said: "*Pompa no. Se dice bomba. Pompa es lo que sale del jabón, la bolita que sale del jabón.*" ["Not *pompa*. It is called *bomba*. *Pompa* is what comes out of the soap, the suds that come from the soap."] At which point, a Puerto Rican student for whom balloons are *bombas*, said: "*Mae-stro, eso sé que es una bomba.*" ["Teacher, that is truly what a *bomba* is."] The same inefficacies of communication that exist in the ESL classroom are prevalent in this bilingual math classroom. This teacher has not even started to solve the problems that come from having to develop numeracy when literacy is also limited and when bilingualism and biliteracy are involved.

The bilingual math teacher in the other school, however, has worked diligently on this problem. He uses computers and very simple language in order to teach the math skills these students need to pass the New York State Math Competency Exam.⁵ Although the reductionist approach of this class may also be criticized for its emphasis on arithmetic and its evasion of higher-order thinking skills, the fact is that this class does what it sets out to do. This teacher is effective in getting students who have had very limited schooling experience (and therefore very little exposure to math) to pass the state competency exam. But in so doing, he reduces further the language with which students come into contact. The math examples are written in such a way that literacy does not become the obstacle to understanding the example. And although this method is successful in getting students to understand math, it further reduces their opportunities to interact with written language.

Things seem to have reached a happier medium in the social studies class, where students discuss a historical event, read in silence, and then discuss again. Some of the students who did not participate in the science lesson were able to do so now. In general, the social studies teacher relies less on decontextualized Spanish literacy skills in order to teach his subject. Instruction doesn't stop with historical facts, and students practice getting meaning from actual print, participating in the psycholinguistic guessing game that turns reading into an evolving source of knowledge. (For more on this interpretation of the process of reading, see Goodman,

1970. For more on reading in the bilingual classroom, see Freeman & Freeman, 1997.)

Teaching Spanish Literacy

The core of the Dual Literacy Program is the Spanish literacy class. The teachers have been involved in staff development efforts spearheaded by the NYC Board of Education. And significantly, it is in the Spanish literacy class where the most is being done to use the students' sophisticated oral language to develop age-appropriate literacy.

One Spanish literacy teacher is talented in her use of cooperative learning with small groups. Roles have been previously assigned and students function as secretaries, readers, and animators. They then share their written products with the class. The composition that follows was written by a group and was based on a picture the teacher had given them. Although many mechanical errors are evident in the composition, the flow of language is complex and shows control of the writing process.

Abigail Guzmán tiene 10 años, estudia en un colegio de señoritas.

Todo el mundo la quiere por la personalidad que la distingue de las demás compañeras. Todas las profesoras la quieren por el entusiasmo que pone al estudio. Algunas compañeras le tienen envidia por su belleza, inteligencia, comportamiento, por su gentileza, inocencia y porque siempre anda arreglada. Una tarde cuando salían del colegio la llamaron varias compañeras y le empezaron a insultar levantándole falsos testimonios. En esos momentos ella perdió todos sus estribos lanzándosele a una de sus compañeras por haber incluido a su madre en sus insultos. Duraron unos instantes dándose golpes cuando el director y varios profesores las separaron y la llevaron a la dirección para averiguar por qué se avian peliado siendo Abigail tan sencilla y buena y no le gusta el chisme.

Llamaron a los padres de las compañeras de Abigail porque ya ella tenía antecedente de mala estudiante y Abigail la dejaron por un trato en la oficina asta que la fueron a vuscar.

Aunque tu seas la mas buena y sencilla no deje que un insulto a tu madre pase por alto pero no te jales de las grenas con la persona que la insulto.

[Abigail Guzman is 10 years old, she studies in a school for young ladies.

Everyone loves her because of her character which distinguishes her from her other friends. All the teachers love her because of her enthusiasm for her studies. Some of her friends are envious of her because of her beauty, intelligence, behavior, for her gentleness, innocence, and because she's always well dressed. One afternoon when they left school some of her friends called her and started insulting her and accusing her of lies. At that

moment she lost her senses, hurling herself at one of her friends because she insulted her mother. They hit each other for a few minutes when the principal and other professors separated them and took them to the principal's office to find out why they had fought, since Abigail was so simple and good and doesn't like to gossip.

They called the parents of Abigail's friend because she already had a reputation of being a bad student, and Abigail they left her for a while in the office until they came for her.

Even if you're the nicest and most simple, don't let anyone insult your mother, but don't pull the hair of the person who insulted her.]

When students are encouraged to write freely and are made to understand that writing is a system of expression of thoughts and feelings, language flows fluidly and communicates appropriately, even if it contains errors. But as we saw previously, when students are allowed only correct form, their writing becomes limited and fails to communicate.

In another Spanish literacy class, students were reading and discussing short stories by Horacio Quiroga, José Luis González, and Gregorio López y Fuentes. The quality and depth of the oral literary discussions that students have in this class are striking. Still, no reading texts are available, and the teacher is left on her own to make xerox copies of appropriate reading material.

Until recently, high schools in the United States taught Spanish only as a foreign language. And although many high schools with large Spanish-speaking populations now offer programs of Spanish for native speakers (see Colombi & Alarcón, 1997), adequate reading material for these Spanish programs is still scant. The focus of most instruction for Spanish-speaking students then is to teach Spanish grammar and Spanish-language skills in isolation. The Spanish literacy teachers in the Dual Literacy Programs have gone significantly beyond this approach. Besides teaching Spanish literacy skills, these teachers understand that they are responsible for most of the Spanish literacy context with which these students will come into contact. And with little support from the administration, teachers have set up their classrooms as a community in which Spanish language and literacy is used and valued, developed and expanded. The Spanish literacy teacher is successful precisely because she defines her role as setting up an enriched literacy context, rather than providing reductionist skill exercises.

It is unfortunate, however, that this context is limited to the Spanish literacy classroom and to one specific instructional year. And it is to these limitations of the Dual Literacy Programs in New York City high schools that we now turn.

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE DUAL LITERACY PROGRAMS AND WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IN THE FUTURE?

We must judge Dual Literacy Programs effective if we take the teachers' and administrators' expectancies as the yardstick with which to evaluate them. But if we look at the students' expectations of the educational program and at American society's expectations for high school completion, the Dual Literacy Programs fail.

Four years after the original visit to these programs, Marcos and Dora had disappeared. Only one of the students at one site, and two students at the other, were still in the school, struggling to complete their high school requirements. The others had all withdrawn within a year of completing the Dual Literacy Program. Yet the bilingual counselor at one site reported that at least three-fourths of those who dropped out had gotten high school equivalency diplomas in Spanish GED (General Equivalency Degree) programs. And most were employed.

The truth is that these Dual Literacy Programs seem to make a difference in the immediate school lives of these students. But as extensions of the remedial bilingual programs from which they have grown, they reflect some limitations, as well as some advantages over the bilingual programs. Ironically, Spanish language and literacy development is an important component of Dual Literacy Programs, although it is not part of the transitional policy of traditional bilingual programs. This deeper understanding that the bilingual students' languages are interdependent and that developed literacy in the first language is conducive to extensive growth in the second language (Cummins, 1979, 1984) is an accepted axiom in the Dual Literacy Programs, yet it remains clearly absent from policy surrounding traditional bilingual programs.

As remedial programs, however, Dual Literacy Programs are also transitional, with specific recommendations that students move to the regular bilingual program after one year of participation. One year of Spanish language literacy development for students with little formal school experience is clearly not enough. And even the most successful student often fails to adapt to the highly departmentalized structure and transitional nature of the regular bilingual program.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGE

The fact that these same students are eventually successful in high school equivalency programs in Spanish holds an important lesson for the educational establishment. It seems useless and economically foolish to estab-

lish educational programs that only act as a Band-Aid for a year. Better use of the high school resources would be to establish alternative high school programs for adolescents with limited schooling that have some of the features presently available in GED programs.

Briefly, then, these alternative high schools for Latino adolescents who are English language learners and have had little formal education in their countries of origin would have the following four features:

1. The focus of the educational program would not just be the development of Spanish literacy, but rather using literacy, both in Spanish and English, to gain social and scientific knowledge.

2. Subjects would not be compartmentalized and school would not be departmentalized. A single teacher working with fewer students in small groups would provide most of the instruction.

3. Students would earn high school credit whenever they achieve appropriate competencies and/or pass the required exams. The educational program would not attempt to graduate students in four years, but rather would be available for as long as it takes.

4. School would not follow the conventional time frame of 9:00 to 3:00, but would offer flexible and compact schedules, making it possible for students to work while attending school.

Realistically, we seem to be moving in the opposite direction. New York State has recently adopted stiffer academic requirements for high school graduation. Students will now have to take and pass the Regents Exam in English, as well as Regents Exams in content areas. The requirement that the English Regents Exam be passed will make graduation highly unlikely for the many English language learners in traditional high schools. And translating the content Regents Exams into Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and Haitian Creole, as is now being considered, will be of little help to language-minority adolescents with little formal schooling.

There seems to be a tremendous gap between the traditional departmentalized high school—which is ineffective with most Latino adolescents today and which, given the new requirements, will precipitate even more Latino high school dropouts—and the GED programs in which most of these adolescents eventually enroll. By refusing to change its structure, the U.S. high school is failing miserably in educating language-minority adolescents. And imposing stiffer graduation requirements for students without making the structural and curricular changes needed to educate the large immigrant population is not consistent with our democratic ideal of schooling for all.

As a nation eager to live up to our democratic ideals and provide educational opportunities for students that the high schools fail to educate, the GED diploma acts as a loophole. But certification of what a student knows or doesn't know is not the same as providing an education. By refusing to educate adolescents who don't or can't conform to traditional schooling, the United States has joined most nations of the world in excluding from a secondary education those who are poor or different.

For United States high schools, the challenge of the year 2000 is clear: As more language-minority students, and especially Latino students, enter the nation's secondary schools, the high schools will have to make a determination. Will they extend to the United States the Latin American practices of excluding the poor and different from a secondary education, or will they evolve enough to accommodate them? Will they take up the challenge as schools in the First World, or will they act as those in the Third World? Beyond resources available lies the way in which we as a nation define our educational task at the secondary level for students like Marcos and Dora, who will be the majority in the 21st century.

NOTES

1. Some of the information for this article is based on a study of the Dual Literacy Programs in two New York City high schools commissioned by the New York City Board of Education's Office of High Schools Bilingual/ESL Program in 1990. The final report was titled "*Socio-educational Limitations in the High School: The Case of Hispanic Students with Limited Proficiency in English and Limited Literacy in Spanish.*" I am grateful to Manny Menendez and Laura Rodriguez, who got me involved initially, as well as to Burt Posner for his update. No specific mention is made of the high schools and of the individuals involved in the original study, but I wish to express my gratitude to the many students, teachers, and administrators who gave freely of their time then and now. Marcos and Dora are pseudonyms; to them, and the others like them, I am most grateful. I learned from them about their dreams and expectations, their frustrations and limitations. Most of all, I learned that beyond their tenacity to learn lies the schools' responsibility to teach them, a responsibility that some schools have shunned.

2. The greater number of Dominicans in the two Dual Literacy Programs studied is simply a result of the greater number of recently arrived Dominicans in New York City. It should not be understood as simply a reflection of the schooling situation of Dominicans.

3. All these examples are taken from students' writing.

4. In Spanish the word for cousin *primo* conveys intimacy while expressing the concept of extended family.

5. As of this writing, these minimum New York State competency exams

have been eliminated and replaced by more rigorous New York State Regents exams, which will be required for graduation.

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