

**The Education of Biliterate and Bicultural Children
in Ethnic Schools in the United States**

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1. Introduction.

Ethnic groups in the United States have organized and maintained day schools that teach their culture, religion and language to the group's children since early colonial times (Fishman, 1966; Heath, 1977; Heath and Mandach, 1983; Kloss, 1966, 1977). These ethnic schools experienced tremendous decline in the xenophobic period of the early 20th century. However, the worldwide ethnic boom of the 1960's created a climate that encouraged the growth and development of such schools in the United States. As early as 1966, in Language Loyalty in the United States, Joshua A. Fishman noted their new prosperity.

With the passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968, the United States entered a decade of tolerance toward the use of non-English languages in the nation's schools. As transitional bilingual programs of instruction in public schools for non-English speaking, mostly poor, children were

being developed, some more successful ethnic groups started establishing independent day schools to maintain their language, culture and religion among the next generation. In fact, when afternoon and weekend supplementary programs are counted along with all-day schools, the number of ethnic mother tongue schools in the United States increased by 228% from 1960 to 1982 (Fishman et al., 1985). These newly established day schools joined other more elite institutions, as well as a few enlightened bilingual programs of instruction in public schools, in developing literacy in both English and a minority language among American ethnic children.

These ethnic schools, the few elite bilingual institutions in the United States, and the small number of privileged bilingual programs in public schools succeed in educating children that are biliterate and whose cultural values encompass, but go beyond, those espoused by North American society. At a time when many public schools are failing to teach American children to effectively read and write English, these schools succeed in teaching literacy in both English and a minority language. The complexity of teaching children to read and write a non-English language, as well as English, and the relative ease with which it is accomplished in such schools motivated me to study these schools in depth. It was hoped that the lessons learned

would shed light into ways of alleviating the failure of language minority children in public schools in the United States.

2. The present study.

This article is a result of ethnographic research conducted over a one and a half year period in 13 schools in the New York metropolitan area (1). Six months were spent visiting independent ethnic schools in the New York metropolitan area previously identified by Fishman et al. (1985). In addition, the author visited public schools with bilingual programs that claimed to develop minority language literacy. On the basis of all day observations and interviews with the principal, mother-tongue teachers and children, 13 schools were identified as being successful in educating biliterate and bicultural children and were subsequently invited to participate in the present research project, **A Study of Biliteracy in School and Community** (2). All but the French school agreed to participate in the entire study which includes a survey of children, teachers and parents. However, ethnographic data collected during the observations and interviews in the French school are included in the present article. The thirteen schools are made up of two Armenian, one French, one German, two Greek, one Haitian,

one Hebrew, one Italian, two Spanish, one Russian and one Japanese school.

The present sample is not exhaustive in that it does not include all the schools in the New York area that are successful in educating biliterate children. For example, there are 126 Hebrew day schools in New York City alone. Many of these Yeshivos are successful in teaching children to read and write English, Hebrew, and many times Yiddish. Yet, only one Hebrew day school was included in our sample. In limiting our sample to only one Hebrew day school it was felt that many North American educators were familiar with these schools based on personal experience and/or the existence of other studies (Ackerman, 1973; Helmreich, 1980; Inbar, 1979; Parker, 1981; Pollak, 1981), but that they had very limited information on the education of other ethnolinguistic groups.

All, except the two Spanish schools, were private independent day schools. Although there are many Chicano day schools in the Southwest (Macías et al., 1975) and many Cuban-American ethnic schools in Dade County (García and Otheguy, 1986; 1987), there are no Hispanic all day schools in the New York area. Fishman (1985) has suggested that Hispanics are conspicuously underrepresented with respect to ethnic mother tongue schools. This is indicative of the socio-economic marginalization of Latinos in the United States. Day schools are expensive ventures usually supported by

foreign governments, ethnic religious units or institutions. The interest of New York Hispanics in transmitting their values and language to their children is manifested, however, by the numerous supplementary afternoon and weekend schools run out of storefronts or community organizations that one finds in the Hispanic neighborhoods of New York City. In addition, in some ethnic enclaves, Hispanics have become sufficiently organized to pressure the public school to develop literacy in Spanish, as well as English, among their children. In a very few schools, under the leadership of an enlightened principal, these programs to develop biliteracy in Hispanic children have become a reality. Two such programs are included in our sample since they succeed in teaching children to read and write two languages without the failure usually associated with teaching language minority children in public schools. Their success makes them similar to the independent schools included in our study and worthy of our attention.

A Study of Biliteracy in School and Community includes quantitative data on language proficiency, language use and language attitudes in the home, community and schools of the 10 different ethnolinguistic groups represented in the schools. However, this article will solely report on ethnographic data based on a minimum of seven visits over a one and a half year period to each of the schools except for

the French school where fewer visits were conducted.

Field work started in September 1986. With the exception of the Japanese School where fifth graders were observed, the fourth grade was selected as a basis from which to draw socio-educational comparisons among the ten ethnolinguistic groups. My extended experience with bilingualism had shown me that development of biliteracy takes time and that initial years of schooling are a poor yardstick to measure success. However, constraints due to the nature of the departmentalized secondary curriculum and the dearth of secondary programs to continue development of literacy in minority languages led me to focus on the elementary years. Fourth graders were selected because they would participate in the schools a minimum of three years and were literate enough to complete the questionnaires required of the sociolinguistic part of the study. In addition, the fourth grade educational climate enabled me to focus not on the teaching of initial literacy skills but on the use to which the home, the school and the community put these nascent skills, developed them, and valued them.

3. Characteristics of the Schools.

Although clearly the goal of all the thirteen schools was to DEVELOP BILITERACY among the children they served, the schools in the sample differ with respect to the social

background of the children, the students' linguistic background and the instructional arrangements vis a vis the two languages in the school. Following the three criteria above, the schools can be divided into five different categories:

A. HIGH SES/LANGUAGE MAJORITY STUDENTS/MINORITY LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION.

1. The French school. This school, established in 1935, is the oldest school in our sample. It continues the tradition of highly prestigious institutions worldwide that teach in French. This school serves approximately 400 students, wealthy native-born American children whose parents want them to have a highly prestigious French education, as well as French and non-English speaking children from over 50 countries, usually children of businessmen and diplomats. It is housed in a fashionable mansion in the Upper East Side of Manhattan. It is not financially supported by the French government, although teachers are recruited from France. It follows an all French curriculum with one 45 minute period of English instruction daily that includes American History. Most of the graduates enter highly prestigious universities in the United States.

B. HIGH SES/LANGUAGE MINORITY STUDENTS/MINORITY LANGUAGE

INSTRUCTION.

1. The German School. This school, established in 1980 for children of German businessmen in the United, is the youngest in our sample. It also seems to be the fastest growing ethnic school in the New York area with an expansion of 100 children in the second year of the study. The school is housed in a former public school in White Plains where an annex is being built to accommodate the 330 children on register. It is financially supported by the German government. There are a few teachers who have been recruited from Germany and whose salary is paid by the German government, although most teachers are German-Americans living in the United States. It follows an all German curriculum with one 45 minute period of daily English instruction and an additional three periods of gym weekly with an English speaking teacher. At present the school only goes up to the 11th grade. However, it has plans to extend its curriculum to the 13th grade, making children eligible for an American degree, as well as the Abitur.
2. The Japanese School. This school has been serving children of Japanese businessmen in the New York area since 1975. With an enrollment of 500 students, it is the largest school in our sample. It includes, however, only fifth through ninth grade. It is housed in a former

public school in Queens to which most children are bused. The teachers are recruited from Japan for a three year assignment and paid by the Japanese government. The school offers a Japanese curriculum that prepares students for entrance examinations into Japan's competitive High Schools. Ninety-nine percent of the students it serves enter Japan's secondary schools after graduation. Only one period a day is devoted to English.

3. The Italian School. The Italian school was started in 1977 by the Consul General of Italy. It is a small school with 110 children that is housed in the fourth and fifth floor of an old parochial school in the East Village of Manhattan. Although the German and Japanese schools cater mostly to foreign businessmen whose visit to the United States may be only temporary, over 60% of the students in this school are Italian-Americans living permanently in the United States. It follows the curriculum proposed by the Italian Ministry of Education. All instruction is in Italian with the exception of two 45 minute periods of English daily in the fourth grade. Students receive both an American and an Italian degree. However, most enter prestigious institutions in the United States.

C. HIGH SES/MAJORITY LANGUAGE STUDENTS/EQUAL TREATMENT TO

TWO LANGUAGES.

1. The Hebrew Day School. The Hebrew Day School included in the sample is a prestigious school in the Upper East Side of Manhattan serving wealthy Jewish children.

It was established in 1936 as a prep school for an elite Jewish education. Although the children of Israeli diplomats attend this school, most of the students are native American born and do not speak Hebrew upon enrollment. It was the most expensive school in our sample and has an enrollment of 400 students. As is customary in most Hebrew day schools, half the day is devoted to an English curriculum and the other half to a Jewish Studies curriculum taught in Hebrew by a different teacher.

D. MID SES/LANGUAGE MINORITY STUDENTS/MAJORITY LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION.

1. The two Armenian Schools. The two Armenian schools were both established in 1976, one in Queens housed in the complex of an Armenian Diocesan Church and the other in New Jersey in a former public school. Both serve mostly American born Armenian-American children.

They are much smaller than the high SES schools, with a student body of approximately 150 students each.

Annual tuition costs are \$1500 in one and \$1700 in the

second one. They receive support of Armenian-American benefactors. The schools follow an American curriculum with one school offering one forty-five minute period of Armenian language, history and religion daily, and the second school providing two forty-five minute periods of daily instruction in Armenian. In both schools many of the English teachers are Armenian-Americans who understand the culture and the language, even though they may not be literate in Armenian. The Armenian language teachers are all foreign born, but they are the minority in both schools. There are no Armenian secondary schools and children most often go to Catholic High Schools.

2. The two Greek Schools. Both schools are under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. For the most part, these schools serve children who have been born in the United States. One of the Greek schools is located in the predominantly Greek neighborhood of Astoria, Queens, and was established in 1957. The number of Greek-American children in the neighborhood made it necessary to build a separate school to house the Nursery through 3rd grade program. The present school houses the 4th through the 6th grade and is attached to a High School that was founded in 1975. With a total student body of 1200 children, it is the largest Greek-American school in the

United States. It follows an American curriculum with two forty-five minute periods of instruction in Greek language, culture and Greek-Orthodox religion. Tuition is \$1300 annually. The second school was established in a newer Greek-American Community in Flushing, Queens, in 1977. The school has an enrollment of almost 400 students and tuition is \$1450. The curriculum is the same as that of most American parochial schools with one daily forty-five minute period devoted to Greek language, civilization and religion. Graduates most often go to Catholic High Schools in the area, although a few go to the Greek Orthodox High School in Astoria. In both schools the Greek language teachers are foreign-born, although approximately half of the English teachers are Greek-Americans with full understanding of Greek.

3. The Russian School. The Russian school was established in 1959 through efforts of the Archimandrite of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. Private funds were secured for the purpose of training "bilingual students with a fluent knowledge of the Russian language, literature, history, geography and culture." It shares a beautiful mansion in the Upper East Side of Manhattan with the Synod of Bishops of The Russian Orthodox Church. It follows a traditional North American curriculum enriched by one period of Russian language daily and a

second period devoted to Russian reading, Russian History or Russian Orthodox religion. The school's teachings do not recognize the Soviet Union. Approximately 75 percent of the students in this Russian Orthodox school are children of Russian Jewish fathers and Russian Christian mothers. Most of them live in Brooklyn in the Brighton Beach area and are bused to the school. The Russian language teachers have been born in Russia. Ten of the fourteen teachers employed by the school are fluent in Russian.

4. The Haitian School. The Haitian school started in 1979 and has a student body of 150 children in K-12th grade. It is located in a former warehouse in Brooklyn. Except for a Nigerian English language teacher, all the teachers in this school are Haitians living in the United States. Instruction is officially in English with four hours a week reserved for French instruction and two hours a week reserved for Haitian-Creole instruction with a third hour devoted to Haitian history. Although the Armenian-American teachers, the Greek-American teachers and the Russian-American teachers rarely speak the ethnic languages in the classroom, the Haitian teachers use Haitian Creole in order to teach English or Social Studies with the same ease that they used it in Haiti to teach content in French.

E. LOW SES/LANGUAGE MINORITY CHILDREN/EQUAL TREATMENT TO TWO LANGUAGES.

1. The Spanish schools. One public school is located in a gentrified neighborhood in the Upper West Side of Manhattan. The school has a child-centered curriculum run by a liberal Principal who insisted on bilingual instruction for Hispanic children before it was mandated in New York City. The school at present has a dual language program with one day devoted to Spanish with a Spanish language teacher and a second day devoted to English with a different bilingual teacher. Participation in the dual language program is voluntary. Although the program serves mostly second generation Hispanic children of Puerto Rican descent, it also attracts a few Anglo children whose parents insist that their children receive bilingual instruction. This year almost a third of the kindergarten class in the dual language program is of non-Hispanic descent. Only 200 of the 700 students in this school participate in the dual language program. All the teachers involved in the program are Hispanic. The second school is located in a poor neighborhood in Upper Harlem with a mostly Dominican population. The principal of the school is a Puerto Rican who allows the community the choice of continuing in bilingual

instruction after the children learn English. Ninety percent of the total student population in this school is Hispanic, and all the children in the optional bilingual program are Hispanic. Hispanic teachers comprise two thirds of all the teachers in the school. Although there is no school wide policy for a clear allocation of the two languages in the bilingual program, the teacher of the fourth grade observed devoted approximately half the day to Spanish and the other half to English.

In examining the development of successful biliteracy in schools in the United States, my study has taken me beyond the kinds of schools that American educators often associate with bilingualism and biliteracy. Bilingual programs in public school are the subject of much controversy and debate among North American educators. It turns out, however, that unfortunately the development of biliteracy in those programs rarely takes place. American educators know of the existence of the Hebrew day schools and are marginally aware of the ethnic mother-tongue schools of other ethnolinguistic groups such as the Greek-Americans and the Armenian-Americans. Fortunately, the studies conducted by Fishman and his colleagues have brought the ethnic mother-tongue school to the attention of some American educators (Fishman, 1964,

1980a, 1980b, 1980c, 1981, 1985; Fishman and Markman 1979; Fishman and Nahirny 1966). Although elite schools where children learn a non-English language, most often French, abound in the United States and have served American children for decades, few studies of bilingualism have been conducted there. Finally, elite foreign-oriented schools are such a new phenomenon in the United States educational scene that little attention has been paid to them. In fact, this is the first time that they are being studied as part of the American educational establishment.

This study has a much wider scope than has previously been taken in analyzing bilingualism and biliteracy in the nation's schools. In addition, although the development of biliteracy is the main focus of the paper, it is the EDUCATION of American ethnic children that is the topic of this paper, even though this education often takes place in a non-English language, with non-native teachers, with foreign texts, with clearly a different philosophy about language and education, with little emphasis on English language skills and with the affirmation of a non-American culture. The remaining sections of this paper will shed light on how this seemingly non-American educational climate develops children who are educated, self-assured and who feel and act very American while affirming their individual ethnicities.

4. The context of education: The ethnic educators.

The physical settings of these schools are not unlike what we might expect in any other school in the United States. The elite schools look like other elite schools, the parochial schools look like other parochial schools. Often the only difference perceived from the outside is the presence of a foreign flag along with the American flag. Once inside, the only difference is created by the unknown signs, symbols and sounds. Fourth graders are the same in all schools although Jewish boys wear kipots and Japanese boys use shorts, Greek children have on Greek-blue uniforms and Russians use Czarist-brown uniforms, whereas German and Hispanic children wear street clothes.

My initial impression as an American educator was that the classrooms were often more structured and rigidly organized than those we often associate with good educational practices. Children most often sit in traditional rows. In the Japanese School, for example, bulletin boards are bare. I soon found out that the rigidity of the classroom's structure was a reflection of an external order that had nothing to do with the physical, emotional and intellectual freedom that were given to the students, as will be seen in the sections ahead.

The adults in the schools created the biggest

differences with the traditional North American educational context. In speech, behavior and educational practices, these educators are different from most North American teachers. Seven out of the thirteen principals were foreign born, and there is only one non-ethnic principal in the remaining group. Among the seven foreign-born principals, three of them are on three year assignments in the United States. They seldom have contact with North American institutions and do not have any first hand experience with American education. They are knowledgeable, however, about education in their respective countries and consider it academically superior to the educational system in the United States. Two of the principals do not speak English and need an interpreter. Most of the others speak English with an accent.

There were 20 ethnic mother tongue teachers involved with the 13 groups of fourth graders in the study. All of the teachers are foreign-born, and all except the two Hispanic teachers have been trained abroad. Fifty percent of the teachers have lived in the United States over 10 years, and the other 50 percent have lived in the United States less than 10 years. In fact, seven out of the twenty teachers have been in the United States less than five years. Only four out of the twenty teachers have taught children of another ethnic group than their own, but none of them have

ever taught American children in public or private schools in the United States. Thus, they are also misinformed about the reality of the nation's schools. Their English ability varies, although they predominantly speak highly accented English. All but five speak a third language besides their native language and English. Although they speak highly of the United States, they often lack regard for the work their children do with their American colleagues, with the material they use and the behavior they elicit. "English is rest," the French teacher told me.

The striking difference between the attitudes of these teachers and those of most North American educators is the complete TRUST that they have in these children. With the exception of one of the Greek schools and one of the Spanish schools, all the other classrooms I observed had heterogeneous groupings. In other words, children of mixed ability worked on the same academic tasks and were expected to master the same material. I did not meet any ethnic teacher who pointed out the inability of the "slow" students, as is so often the case in many of the public school classrooms I visit. They distinguish between the "good" students and the "lazy" students, and they expect the same from those that they perceive as being distracted, uninterested, not working hard enough, but innately capable. Within these heterogeneous classrooms there is never any

grouping by ability, and reading groups are nonexistent. As is often the case in French schools, the French teacher runs a highly individualized classroom. But individualized instruction just means that all children complete the same tasks, although each child works on it individually at his or her own desk. The same pattern is curiously observed in one of the two Spanish public room classrooms. In this open fourth grade classroom Hispanic children most often work in small groups. Yet, the same academic assignments are expected of all children. In most of the other schools, the teachers most often lead the group lessons, although there is opportunity for much individualized and cooperative work. It is significant that the only grouping by ability that exists within these schools is the one done by the American teachers who teach English. Even the large heterogeneous Japanese classes of 35 to 40 students become homogeneous classes of 20 for English instruction.

The trust exhibited by the teachers does not just involve the realm of academic work. I was surprised by how much trust, openness and warmth there was between the teachers and the children. These teachers know these children much better than other adults that the children meet in the United States. They know their language, their cultural values, their religion. This creates a bond that is noticeable in the classroom atmosphere. These teachers are

much more than the transmitters of knowledge, they are the adult link to the children's innermost feelings. Children trust these teachers in the same way that the teachers trust the children. They value, respect them and appreciate their knowledge of the other culture, the other language. This bond between teacher and children is encouraged by the institution. In the Italian and the German school the teachers move up with their children through fourth/fifth grade. The German teacher had been with her group since first grade. In fact, she seemed to be the stabilizing influence among the highly mobile student population of the German school. The classroom artifacts had been collected by the children and the teacher since first grade. The mannequin which was found in the woods during a second grade outing, the mural of the New York skyline, the bulletin boards, all tell the story of this group of fourth graders from the beginning of their history with the German school.

In most of the other schools, there were fewer ethnic subject teachers than teachers of the American curriculum. These ethnic subject teachers were in charge of assemblies, of extra-curricular activities such as Choir and Dance. Therefore, students knew them, valued them and respected them even when they had not had them as instructors.

In the more foreign educational contexts, the educator's trust of the children was so strong that children were often

left unsupervised in their classrooms while they completed academic assignments. The Japanese teacher, for example, often left the classroom to get material that the children needed to complete a project or video equipment which he used to tape the children's work. In one recorded instance, the teacher was absent for twenty five minutes. Yet, the children continued working with the same zeal as if the teacher had been present. There was no warning of his exit and no explanation upon his return. Children knew what was expected of them regardless of the teacher's presence. The Japanese teacher spends a few minutes each day reflecting on discipline. This reflection is led by a different student monitor every day who ask questions such as, "What did you think of today? Did someone do something bad?"

Nowhere is the trust better felt by a visitor than during recess. Again, the more foreign-oriented schools, the Japanese and the German schools, give children more recess than is customary in any American institution. The German school gives a five minute break every forty-five minutes, a 15 minute morning break during which they eat lunch, and a 30 minute recess period for the whole school. The Japanese school gives a five minute break after every forty-five minute period, a 15 minute break after the second period, and a lunch break of 50 minutes which includes 30 minutes of play time for the entire school. This observer was surprised by

the amount of freedom given to children during the breaks. The children were completely unsupervised. They were allowed to play outside in the school yard, stay in the classrooms or roam freely around the school. During nice weather most prefer to go outside where the boys mostly play soccer and the girls play group games. During the short breaks the same freedom is observed, and children use this time to bring out their possessions and toys. The transition is most abrupt in the Japanese School where children who wildly play with balls, cars and action figures during the breaks turn into disciplined students after the bell. The bell introduces a different behavioral context. With the teacher present, the children are called to attention by a student monitor, bow, and return to their disciplined study. Children appreciate both the freedom and the structure given to them by their teachers. In explaining the differences between the American public school he had previously attended and the Japanese school one boy told me: "The Japanese school is more fun. American school only has two breaks. Here you have a fifteen minute and a 30 minute recess. You can move so fast, run everywhere, there's more freedom. You also learn more in this school." There seems to be no conflict between the high academic and behavioral expectations of the teachers, the structure provided during the completion of the academic tasks, and the freedom given to students to think, and enjoy

their time as children in school. Children respond well to this rigorous climate of high expectations, but deep trust and love. Another child in the Armenian school expressed it this way: "We love Armenian. But Mrs. X doesn't let us get away with anything. She pulls our ears." And yet another child in the Japanese School proudly remarked on the orderliness of the Fire Drill procedure: "In America," he said, "you can go anywhere. In Japanese School the announcement says Exit and you have to remember the number of the exit." Children are very clear as to what the school expects from them.

The teacher's concern for the whole child, not just for his academic development, is also seen in the attention given to teaching values, morals and religion. Except for the two public schools and the Japanese school, all of these schools teach religion. Although the Japanese school does not teach religion, its curriculum and tenets inculcate certain values and morality to the children. Many of the stories read and discussed are moral stories that teach human values. Much of the teacher's time is devoted to discussing rules of general behavior, and the four class rules in Japanese that dominate the front bulletin board read:

1. Do your work without anyone telling you.
2. Don't hurt anyone's feelings.
3. Keep a healthy body.

4. Be friendly towards Americans.

The Greek, Armenian and Jewish teachers teach their respective religions. The Greek teachers take the children to church once a week where the Greek Orthodox Priest conducts a short service for them. The Armenian teachers regularly prepare ethnic programs that the children perform in the many Armenian churches. For the Hebrew teacher, religion is the essence of her curriculum. A small group of fourth graders attends a daily special session led by a Rabbi. A Catholic priest from the parish in which the Italian school is located teaches a weekly 50 minute lesson in Italian to the children, whereas a Russian Orthodox priest teaches two weekly periods of Russian Orthodox religion to the children in the Russian school. Depending on the child's religious affiliation, children in the German school attend classes in Catholic religion led by a German Catholic Priest or Protestant religion led by a German pastor. These religion classes take place twice a week. In the Haitian school the French teacher is a Catholic priest who prepares children to receive Holy Communion. Except for the two public schools, grace is said before meals in their respective languages in all schools, including the Japanese school. Teachers reinforce these moral attitudes in their daily teachings.

5. The Materials and the Texts. Differences in Approaches and Philosophy.

The ORDERLINESS of the non-English educational context is also obvious from the care given to the learning materials used. By the fourth grade children have acquired routines that include the common use of material that is foreign to an American educator. The most obvious difference is the absence everywhere of loose-leaf-binders and of spiral notebooks from which papers can be torn. The act of writing is a sacred one, and children are encouraged to write neatly and permanently in their bound notebooks. In the German school children use thin lined notebooks called a Merkheft and only write with fountain pens and draw with pencils of the Faber-Castell brand. Soft notebooks with graph paper are also used for Geography, History, Poetry, French, Orthography, Natural Sciences and Homework in the French school. Children there also proudly display neat pencil cases with red, blue and green pens. All original writing is done in blue, children's corrections are done in green, and finally, the teacher's corrections are done in red. This system is also understood by the German, Italian and the Japanese fourth graders. Soft notebooks are also used in the Japanese school, and the use of the Shitagiki or plastic pad that is used underneath the page so that pencil marks do not

go through to the next one is prevalent. One of the children explained to me: "We always use pencils because if you write in pen you make mistakes and the notebook is going to be messed up." Mitsubishi pencils are carried in fashionable Hello Kitty pencil cases in the Japanese school. And, of course, the square eraser in a little box is always visible in the student's desk. In the Hebrew school the teacher has also started using soft bound notebooks with special lines made in Israel. In the Russian school the specially lined notebooks portray a picture of Gorki on the cover.

There are no workbooks, and children only write in these notebooks. There is a feeling that writing is permanent and sacred and that one must cultivate it and preserve it. German children, for example, were able to bring me the merkhefts they had used since first grade. The notebooks portrayed a clear evolution and development that children were proud of. Children are encouraged to cultivate the form of writing and much time is spent copying and practicing calligraphy. One child in the Russian school said, "Russian writing is easier than English because we can just copy from a book." Indeed, much time is spent imitating the art of writing.

The ulterior motive for writing in the non-English languages seemed to have been perceived by the boy in the Armenian school who told me: "We write compositions in both

languages, but we write reports only in English." English is the secular language, the one used to communicate daily messages, the one used for reports and lists. The non-English language is used in more prestigious endeavors, in literature and in Church. The different view that children have of one language over the other, and of course the different attitude of the ethnic teacher from that of the American teacher clearly affects the written work of the same child. Although the non-English work is always neat, always careful, almost a work of art, the English notebooks are generally messy and in disarray. It is often difficult to match one child's written work in the non-English language with the same child's written work in English. Even in cases where the alphabet is the same, such as in the Italian school, the differences are noticeable. The children's Italian notebooks show wonderfully uniform handwriting, whereas their English notebooks show print along with script, large handwriting along with small handwriting. Often the English script is also more slanted to the right. One of the girls tells me, "In Italian I'm only allowed to write in a certain way, and I am not allowed to print. In English the teacher doesn't care, so I sometimes print."

The PERMANENCE of school work is also noticeable in the care that is taken with art projects. The German children worked one whole semester in completing the New York skyline.

Twice a week children take out their Tukan watercolors, their Zirkel compass sets and their drawings and carefully add to their work. At the end of the period, the paintings are put away to dry in the window sills and remain there until the next session. When this observer visited the class the second year of the study, the children proudly pointed to the New York skyline in the front of their new fifth grade classroom. The skyline was made up of all the individual buildings that the children had drawn and painted all through their fourth grade.

The common characteristic of the non-English books is that they are DIFFICULT for these children. One first senses that the difficulty might stem from the limited experience that these children have with the non-English language while living in an English speaking society. However, the teachers quickly point out that the written language is difficult even for those living abroad. The Italian teacher told me: "Italian books are very difficult. The language is different and difficult." As one of the Armenian teachers proudly shows me the Armenian textbook, her words echo what other ethnic educators tell me about their non-English books: "English books are very easy for children. With these (Armenian) books children have to learn. Whatever comes easy you forget. In the English books everything is there, even for the teachers. Here, the teacher has the knowledge.

They have the same book as the children."

The books used are usually composed of short selections and few academic exercises. They transmit insights, but do not parrot knowledge. The teachers, and not the books, are the recipients of the knowledge that these children want. Generally children are not asked to look up words in the dictionary or to complete a series of comprehension questions. Rather, the difficult reading passage involves the teacher and the children in discussion often not about the immediate passage but about an academic subject related to the reading or the author's particular literary style. Thus, reading a poem by García Lorca in the Italian school engages the teacher and the students in an informed discussion about the Spanish Civil War, about Franco and Mussolini, about other Spanish and Italian writers of the same period, about Lorca's literary production. Attention was not only paid to the immediate message of the poem, but to the socio-political context that created it, as well as to the literary creation in its exact form.

In this absence of teacher's guides, workbooks and rigidly structured questions, children learn to exercise their imaginations and think abstractly. Reading is never seen as a skill, but as a window to other worlds, other knowledge, other contexts, other ideas. Thus, what is learned through reading is never tested in writing. Reading

is never tested because reading does not mean, but SUGGESTS. In the Italian school, Language, History, Geography, and Science are always tested through oral examinations called Interrogazione. The focus during the Interrogazione is never on facts but on an abstract idea that children are asked to think about. Writing skills are tested separately through a dictation and a composition. Language is not seen as a skill but a powerful instrument that children have at their disposal to create, to learn, to imagine, to expand their immediate experiences.

The terseness of the books and the compactness in their construction is supplemented by well informed teachers. Children learn to take notes as teachers lecture on subjects of their choosing. These notes written by fourth graders supplement the texts with their teachers' insights.

Many of the ethnolinguistic groups represented in the study have experience with varied dialects, some of which are used in Church services, others are taught in school, and still others are spoken at home. Armenian schools in the United States teach Western Armenian, as opposed to Eastern Armenian, the dialect spoken in Soviet Armenia. In church an Ecclesiastic Armenian known as Krapar is used. Greek schools teach a demotic standard, although many children speak regional varieties and the Greek Orthodox Church uses a considerably older ecclesiastic Greek. Fourth grade Jewish

children in the Hebrew school learn Biblical Hebrew and Middle Age Rashi script, as they acquire Modern Hebrew for speaking purposes. Although the Russian children learn modern Russian, they are also exposed to Old Church Slavonic. There are a number of Austrian and Swiss children in the German school, as well as children of different dialect background. Instruction, however, goes on in High German. The same happens in the Italian school where children of different Italian dialects are instructed in the standard. Although the dialectical differences observed in these schools were much more varied than those in North American schools, none of the teachers, administrators and children I interviewed perceived this to be a problem. The understanding is that written language is DIFFERENT from speech, that it is more DIFFICULT to understand, and that it contains a message that is often SACRED, always MAGICAL and many times OBSCURE. Therefore, written textbooks are difficult and require interpretation.

There are no basal readers in these schools in the North American sense. The readers are not watered down versions of great literary works or special stories written for a particular reading level. The material which children read has not been carefully reworded or reconstructed for them as the audience. In the French, German and Italian schools the readers consist of world literary passages. Thus, in the

French school the fourth graders toil over Daudet, Leconte de Lisle, Supervielle, Cendrars, as well as Kipling, Steinbeck, Swift and Stevenson. Andersen, Brecht, Goethe, Grimm, Lewis Carroll, Kipling and Tolstoy are read by fourth graders in the German school. In the Italian school fourth graders read Eco, Ungaretti, Montale, Italo Calvino, D'Annunzio, and also Aesop, Tolstoy, Brecht, Chekhov, Boris Pasternak, Lope de Vega and Juan Ramón Jiménez. Children read the same texts that their teachers read when they were young and that they continue reading and enjoying as adults. There is a sense that language and literature are PERMANENT and forever enduring and that children need to learn the values of humanity. Reading becomes not a cognitive intellectual task where children must make sense out of language, but an EMOTIONAL transaction that puts children's sense into language. That is why textbooks are seldom changed and reprints include the same literary selections as previous editions. The Principal of the French school knowingly told me: "American books change every year and history is only two hundred years old. French books rarely change."

Passages are short, most often one to two pages long. Whereas fourth graders in American schools read selections from basal readers that are often ten pages long, these children read passages that are short by American standards. It was the principal of the French school who

pointed out this difference: "You read twenty pages in English. In French you read one page at a time and you do it thoroughly."

The unit of analysis is much smaller than in the American educational context. Whereas in American public schools pupils are taught to comprehend the entire reading selection, to get the main idea, in these schools children are taught that each word has to be INTERPRETED and analyzed. Words, however, do not mean, and children are seldom taught to look for an equivalent meaning in the dictionary. Words SUGGEST and they are discussed as they relate to other words or to the message that the children gather from the reading. Reading is never a final act where children comprehend the main idea, but a transactional process whereby children gain certain insights that are not and cannot be fully understood.

Children are not taught to understand and comprehend but to INTERPRET. Using literary passages forces children to focus not on the denotative aspect of the word but on its connotative function, on its metaphorical value. Children learn that words do not mean, but that they hold the meaning to language. This is a lesson that takes place daily in the painstaking reading of short literary passages.

Children are often asked to memorize lines, especially of poetry. "It's good head training," the Russian teacher tells me about children's memorization of lines from Pushkin.

At other times, they are asked to copy literary selections in their best handwriting in their special notebooks. On the whole, there is an "ENSHRINEMENT" of the word, of language. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God" seems to be a principle that is applied with rectitude in these schools.

Nowhere is this better seen than in the Hebrew school where students toil over six to seven phrases a day that encourage long discussions about very minute sensitive details. The discussion never focuses on what happened in the story. "We've known these stories since Nursery 3," one boy nonchalantly tells me. Children are mystified, however, by the careful reading of the text and by the discussion that helps them unearth deeper, richer messages which still leaves the text with a sense of mystery and power beyond the present message. The newsletter that the Rabbi distributes weekly warns the children: "Every syllable in the Torah is precious and necessary. We can miss important things if we hurry when we learn." This principle is carefully adhered to by the teacher. In one of the lessons observed, children read about the rape of Dinah by Schechem. In the children's rendition of this event "Schechem made Dinah suffer." This is indeed the signifié of the Hebrew word. Most of the children do not have the knowledge about sexual mores in order to interpret this event as rape. The interpretative message that each

child gets from the text will be different depending on the knowledge and information they have. In addition, it will yet be different when they again read it the following year and the many years to come.

In the Hebrew school there is little reading out loud. In fact, most of the time it was the teacher who read the Hebrew with the children silently following her careful reading. Reading does not mean sounding out words but interpreting them. Therefore, much time is devoted to careful analysis of the use of the words and little time to the actual sounding out of the words. Homework, however, often asks the children to read the passage at least three times.

Fourth graders in the Hebrew school read Biblical Hebrew and Rashi's commentaries with the same ease with which they read English. Children are taught that words have such deep connotations and powers that they need to be carefully studied. They seem fascinated by Rashi and one of them proudly told me, "He's the only one who has explained certain words." The different scripts, the different word order does not seem to interfere with the two very different tasks to which they put their languages. English is the secular language, the one that means; Hebrew is the religious language, the one that transforms reality.

Both the Armenians and the Greeks have a sense that

their language is holy and a link to their state religion. Since the first day that I entered the first Armenian classroom, children told me that the Armenian language was "miraculously" written by St. Mesrob Mashtots in 406 A.D. A hand, the legend told to me by the children says, wrote the phonetic alphabet on a rock. The alphabet was recorded in order to translate the Bible into Armenian. One of the children showed me a plaque in one of the Armenian schools in memory of an Armenian couple "who were martyred with the magnificent Armenian language on their lips." Children deeply feel that the Armenian language is magnificent and miraculous and that it holds the key to their identity as Armenians and to the Armenian nation. Armenian children are more eloquent than others about their writers and poets. A girl enthusiastically tells me: "Did you know there's an Armenian writer in my family? He died a long time ago in Russia. His name was Raffi. My grandmother said he wrote stories and morals." Children proudly recite Vahan Tekeyan's poem about the Armenian language and regularly quote Silva Gaboudikian's "Advice to My Son". The messages are all the same. The Armenian language is the link to their nation and their ethnicity and it must be maintained and cultivated until death. Children and teachers must work hard to develop it. In the process, teachers make children read the same short passage seven to eight times. Each line of

written text is explained orally in Armenian. Memorization of certain lines follow. When I questioned one of the Armenian teachers about this practice, she said: "We must fill their brains with Armenian phrases." Children are deeply aware of the 1915 genocide of one and half million Armenians. They see the Armenian language as their magical protection against harm from others.

Although the Japanese do not link their language to holiness, they do associate it with a realm of mystery and difficulty that is not of this world. Most of the stories that Japanese children read in class consist of moral selections. Although Armenian, German, Greek, Italian, Spanish and Russian fourth graders can easily name ethnic writers, the Japanese children search for names. Many cannot think of any. The most popular Japanese writer among this group of fourth graders is Komatu Sakyō, a Science Fiction writer, although none of his selections appear in the fourth grade reader. Children often visited the library during the breaks. Western books written in Japanese were most popular, and two children in this class avidly read Annie and The Diary of Anne Frank in Japanese.

The Japanese language is difficult for children. One girl showed me her English reader and told me how easy it was. Then she showed me her Japanese book and pointing to the kanji characters proudly said: "It's read up and down

and we're still learning it." On my first visit one boy proudly pointed out the differences between the three scripts that Japanese children must learn: Hiragana, learned first for common Japanese words, Katakana, used for foreign words, and Kanji, the Chinese characters. "In America," he said, "you have 27 letters. In Japanese you have 50, then 50 more, and then you don't even know how many kanji. You learn about 300 kanji for each grade. There are more than 1,000, I think." Another boy showed me his kanji dictionary and said: "These are hard kanji. There are millions of them, and you never finish learning them."

The written word is so important and sacred to the Japanese that it is displayed only to transmit serious messages. Bulletin boards in the school do not exhibit children's art work or decorative prints. Rather, they are reserved for the weekly schedule, the class rules and the children's exact and repetitious Japanese Syujii or calligraphy work. Children have calligraphy twice a week. The Syujii usually encapsules in a word a moral message. The children were observed making three exact copies of the word "Success". The first copy was used for practice, the second one was sent home and the third one was displayed in the bulletin board.

A lesson in which children were writing for a school journal was observed. Most stories were written in groups of

three with one child writing the beginning, another the middle and a third child writing the end of the story. Children are responsible for topic selection and for the development of the story. Dictionaries were widely used by the children to correct their writing and to look up "hard" kanji. The teacher did not interfere with the writing process, he simply facilitated the event by providing them the tools necessary to write.

Although we have focused on the treatment of language, it would not be inappropriate to say a few words about these schools' Social Studies and Math curricula. Whereas Social Studies fourth grade books in the North American public schools always start with the child's environment and his present, these texts enlighten the child about his remote past and distant lands. History and Geography, and not Social Studies, are serious subjects in these schools. The Italian teacher was amazed that a fourth grader recently arrived from a public school did not know who the Etruscans were. The Math curricula is also refreshingly different. Fourth graders are familiar with geometrical concepts and algebra. Arcs, rulers, compass sets are readily used by the children as they measure angles, meters, dekameters, hectometers and kilometers. Fourth graders are familiar with the numerical bases. The Italian teacher tells me: "Conversions to different bases are good exercises for the

mind. They also free you from the slavery of absolute numbers. They teach you that nothing is absolute. Everything is relative." Mathematical operations are never isolated from a concrete problem. In the Italian school the final Math exam consists of a single word problem that requires a minimum of three different operations.

Although the two Spanish public schools are naturally nearer what American educators consider standard practices in the public American schools, they share with the independent schools studied the lack of emphasis on reading as a mechanical skill. In one of the schools basal readers are not used. The Spanish texts that have been designed for bilingual programs in the United States repeat in Spanish the norm of reading practices in American society. Thus, the readers again consist of shallow stories that have been developed by educators for the children's particular reading level. In addition, these books do not give children a different view of the world from that given in any fourth grade English reader. Instead of using these childish texts that make reading a non-emotional skill oriented pursuit, the bilingual coordinator has assembled a good collection of myths and children's literature written in Spanish. The traditional public school practice of practicing for the test and learning the skills involved in completing cloze tests is absent from this school. Although the second

Spanish public school has a more traditional curriculum, this particular teacher emphasizes language as a creative tool that children have at their disposal. For example, children, even those that reading tests would label as being below grade level, write magnificent poetry in Spanish in this class. Children are encouraged to write and read freely in the rich context of this classroom. Spanish is cultivated as a special gift that these children have, and every effort is made by the teacher to give it a special and separate place in the curriculum.

5. The teaching of English.

Schools that are successful in developing biliterate children have less interest than many in the English curriculum. The French, German and Japanese schools only provide one daily period of formal English instruction. The Italian school gives children two periods a day of English. The Hebrew and Spanish schools devote only half a day to English. It is difficult to categorize the curriculum in the Haitian school. Although formally most instruction is in English, there is much evidence of code-switching to Haitian Creole. Although the Greek-Orthodox schools devote most of the day to English with only one or two periods a day for

Greek, the two schools selected were successful precisely because they were more interested than other Greek-Orthodox schools visited in developing the children's Greek. The commitment of the Armenian schools and the Russian school to the children's non-native language was also extremely strong, even though only one to two periods a day were used for non-English instruction.

Most of these schools claim not to be bilingual schools. It became obvious to this researcher that what these groups were saying is that they were not bilingual schools in a North American sense. One of the ethnic educators told me: "A bilingual school has to have interest in a second language, not in English. That is why bilingual programs in American public schools fail." These school's bilingualism is not tainted with the controversy, the prejudice and the xenophobia with which it is often perceived in the United States. Out of the 23 children in the French fourth grade, fourteen spoke a third language besides English and French. Spanish, Greek, Arabic, Italian, Hebrew and Creole were the native languages of many of the children in the French school. When I questioned Armenian youngsters about their bilingualism, one of them modestly answered: "My parents speak four languages. I only speak two." A second child added: "My parents speak five: Armenian, English, Turkish, Arabic and French." One of the Armenian teachers explained:

"In Lebanon every Armenian student has to learn four languages. They are born with Armenian, they learn Arabic as a second language, and then French and English in school." Biliteracy is not problematic to these educators and parents.

"In Lebanon," another Armenian teacher told me, "children catch Arabic from the air." Many ethnic educators feel that English in the United States is also "caught from the air" and that the emphasis must be on the non-English language. "Our only policy is that the children learn French," tells me the Principal of the French school.

It is interesting to note that the more prestigious schools provide less instruction in English than the schools that serve middle-class ethnics. When I first asked the German teacher how much English instruction these children had, she said: "One period in school and the rest of the day outside." "English is not our problem, French is," the Principal of the French school tells me. Although children were quite fluent in English, I noticed that some students in the elite schools lacked standard academic writing skills in English. When I questioned the Principal of the French school, she told me: "By the end there is no problem. You can't compare grade by grade. These children do well on the PSAT and the SAT. They follow the Education Nationale Francaise, that's why they do well on the SAT. These children have culture."

On the whole, the children's preference for English is great. When I questioned an Armenian teacher about her children's fluency in Armenian she said: "They speak Armenian and prefer to talk English." Except in the Japanese school, children were always observed speaking English among themselves during recess. Although the children always spoke to the non-English language teacher in the non-English language, they seldom spoke the non-English language among themselves even in the classroom. For example, in the all Spanish open classroom, the children always speak in English when they work in small groups. One only hears them speak in Spanish when they have to address the teacher. Although less English is heard in the whole group approach of many of the other ethnic educators (simply because the children speak less to each other), children's comments to themselves are always in English. So, in an all Greek lesson one often hears: "Me, me me." "I want to go." "Oh, yeah."

Most children speak unaccented English. However, those that have a foreign accent are not embarrassed because their teachers and principals most often do too. Children's progress in English is likewise never compared to that of monolingual Anglo children but to other non-English language children in the same school. In these schools recently arrived non-English speaking children are rapidly followed by others who have just arrived. One, therefore, often observes

children with limited English skills act as translators.

English language acquisition seems natural and non-problematic in these schools. The schools' main goal is to educate these children. The education which they impart involves the use of two languages, one of which, the non-English language, requires a lot of attention, the second, English, seems to come naturally. Many of the non-English language teachers are unaware of the children's English abilities and thus judge the students on their academic abilities, and not just on their linguistic proficiencies. In fact, the same is observed when judging students in non-English language classrooms. For example, the teacher in the French school observed that his "best student speaks no French at home and his worst student speaks French at home." This absolute differentiation between academic abilities and oral language proficiency is made most evident in the Hebrew school where the best Hebrew students are never the ones who are most fluent. These non-American educators, used to distinguishing between literacy ability and oral fluency, never mix the two in judging children's ability in English. Thus, again, the best English student in the German school rarely speaks English. "X does the most excellent work in English, but she does not want to talk," says the teacher in the German school. And in commenting on the English ability of the students in the Japanese School, one of the English

language teachers tells me: "Even though these kids can't speak English, they can read The New York Times."

On the whole, there is a climate of total naturalness to the process of teaching English that only adults who are familiar with multilingualism can appreciate. It is worthwhile to note that most often English teachers in these schools are bilingual and that they regularly use their knowledge of the non-English language to teach English. The Principal of the Haitian school remarks: "They learn English faster because we give it to them in Creole. They're not frustrated. They're successful because they're not being forced to learn in English." In the Japanese school the teacher discusses George Washington in Japanese. Although they read in English, they take notes in Japanese, and Japanese-English dictionaries are used by all children. The mechanical drills in the very basic English class for Japanese recently arrived children include drills such as: "What do you like? I like Sushi." A fourth grader in the German School's Advanced English class reports on William Tell by the German poet Frederick Von Schiller. In a Show and Tell English Oral presentation in one of the Greek schools, the children predominantly talk about the Greek coins and Greek embroidery that they have brought from home. English language teachers in these ethnic schools recognize that bilingual children's knowledge of their two worlds

generally comes into play when speaking, reading and writing the English language. The children's world is never ignored, but creatively used in developing biliteracy.

6. Biculturalism of Children.

At first glance, these schools seem to be doing something that is foreign and un-American. Yet, almost immediately one senses the North American identity of these schools. Besides prayer time, lunch time is often the most obviously ethnic experience. The Japanese children bring carefully wrapped lunch boxes called o bēn tōbākō which contain shoomie, tonkatsu and shiso, among other Japanese delicacies. They eat with chopsticks and drink ocha or green tea. The Armenians bring lahmajun, gatnabour and boureg and also tahin bread. The Haitian school cooks a home meal that always includes a traditional Haitian dish.

Jewish boys in the Hebrew school proudly portray their tzitzits during prayer. Japanese children show the many pencils, comic books and video tapes that they have brought from Japan. In explaining the practice of trading that often takes place among Japanese children, a boy tells me: "We trade a lot because there are many students who have just come from Japan. They have good things from Japan, sometimes better than American things." During rehearsals for a play,

Greek boys proudly wear the traditional foustaneles or short skirts that were once worn by Greek soldiers when fighting the Turks. After a lesson on Garibaldi, a child in the Italian school tells me that they are going to Washington Square Park to see the statue of Garibaldi. He proudly tells me: "Garibaldi was a friend of Meucci. And do you know who Meucci was? Meucci was the Italian who invented the telephone before Bell."

The maps of their respective countries are also almost shockingly non-American. The map of Japan in the fourth grade classroom portrays Europe and Africa in the extreme left; North, Central and South America in the extreme right; and Japan in bright red in the center. The Armenian map in one of the classrooms dates from the fourth century. It is this map of Ancient Armenia or Havastan, as it is called in Armenian, with territory that is now eastern Turkey, Northwestern Iran and present Soviet Armenia, that children painstakingly study every day. Russia is drawn in the pre-revolutionary map of the Russian school from a northern angle, and it seems to expand and dominate the rest of the hemisphere. The children in the Greek schools are also familiar with the map of Ancient Greece. The map of Ancient Greece evokes all kinds of stories from the fourth graders, and one girl fiercely tells me: "Do you know that the Turkish territory in the regular maps was all Greece's

property?"

In this deeply ethnic atmosphere, one is always struck by the children's Americanism. These children are not conflicted about being American ethnics. They are extremely proud of being Americans at the same time that they assert their ethnic heritages. I asked a girl in one of the Greek schools about her country of birth. I was struck when she answered: "I was born Greek, but I was born in the United States." Children had difficulty answering the question in my sociolinguistic survey that asked them to identify themselves as Americans, foreigners, or ethnic-Americans. Children in the Armenian, Greek, Italian, Spanish and Hebrew schools claimed that they couldn't answer the question about identity because they were not ethnic-Americans but American-ethnics. One girl in a Greek school bitterly told me: "But I am not Greek-American, American comes first and Greece second."

The morning Hebrew prayers include a section that is sung to the tune of "Yankee Doodle" and another that follows the tune of "Pop the Magic Dragon." The Greek kindergarteners are often heard singing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" in Greek.

In the Haitian school in Brooklyn one girl proudly shows me a picture of a Port-au-Prince that she has never seen but has read about in her Haitian History class. She tells me:

"Port-au-Prince is like Eastern Parkway." Another one shows me a picture of Haiti's countryside and says: "Haiti's mountains are like the New York skyline." An Armenian boy asks me: "Did you see the movie Iron Eagle? At the end they show Armenia." It becomes obvious to me that these children are only ethnic in an American sense. That is, the only images that they have and hold about their respective countries are American images. Whereas their parents, principals and teachers transmit cultural, historic, and religious values that are foreign, these children infuse this foreign past with an all-American present. Although their parents, principals and teachers emphasize the non-English language, these children use English with much more ease and facility that should result from the course of study followed.

During the first year of the study the fourth grade curricula in all these schools was dominated by the news about the Shuttle. The bulletin board in the Italian fourth grade displayed the newspaper headlines: "Shuttle tragico." A group of five Japanese children chose the Shuttle accident as the project which they presented during the Japanese Cultural Festival. The children felt the tragedy of the shuttle as deeply as other American children. They, however, read, wrote and talked about it in Armenian, French, German, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Hebrew and

Haitian Creole.

During the second half of the first year of the study, the schools prepared to celebrate the Statue of Liberty's centennial. The Japanese Cultural Festival took place against the backdrop of a giant Statue of Liberty that dominated the stage. The graduation of one of the Armenian schools included a musical number on the Statue of Liberty. "Shine on America" with liberty torches and Uncle Sam's hats was sung against the background of Mount Ararat, the symbol of the Armenian nationhood. The Armenian children said the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag in traditional Armenian costumes, and "America the Beautiful" was followed by the Her Mayr. The New York skyline produced by the children in the German school was likewise dominated by the Statue of Liberty.

The biculturism of these children is completely natural. In the Hebrew school, the daily Pledge of Allegiance to the United States is followed by the one to Israel. Yet, the children are not conflicted about their total allegiance and love for the United States. During the discussion following the reading about Dinah's rape, the Assistant Hebrew teacher explained in English: "You're not allowed to take freedom from a person even if you love her. Dinah was born free." Immediately, a boy shouted out: "But she wasn't in America." The love, respect, and trust for the United States is evident

even when it is expressed in a different language and through different cultural experiences.

7. Conclusions.

A Study of Biliteracy attempts to analyze the conditions leading to successful biliteracy. It turns out that the schools that are most successful in developing biliteracy in children are those that focus on educating the whole child and developing literacy in the non-English language. English literacy comes naturally along with the sense of being an American ethnic.

The thirteen schools studied have a deeper commitment than most other North American educational settings to a non-English language and a non-American cultural context. Yet, the product of these schools is children who view themselves as American ethnics and who are educated and cultured and thus able to read and write two languages. These schools are successful in promoting biliteracy because their educational practices have not been corrupted by the generalized North American practices of tracking, standardized testing, basal readers, emphasis on skills, and mistrust of foreigners and foreign languages. These schools give children a content-laden curriculum, an appreciation for the sacredness and permanence of the written word, strict teachers, difficult

texts. At the same time, they give them the love, trust and respect that comes from knowing and appreciating their community, their language, their culture, their religion. It turns out that these children are biliterate because they have been given culture. They also have a culture because they are biliterate. In so doing, these children are asserting a new Americanism, one that speaks another language besides English and accepts other cultural values beyond those of North American society. While educators, sociologists and politicians argue about the value of bilingualism in the nation's public schools, an effective education aimed at developing biliteracy in children is going on in the 13 schools studied. These non-conflicted educational institutions may indeed be forging an appropriate model for educators who are committed to the successful education of language minority children in the nation's public schools.

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