

THE MASTERS OF SURVIVAL SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL:* BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN THE ETHNIC SCHOOLS OF MIAMI

Ofelia García
Ricardo Otheguy

1. Introduction

Called "Masters of Survival" by their most perceptive student (Llanes 1982), the Cubans of Dade County, Florida, present to researchers on ethnic education a subject rich in its potential for insight.

As in any other community, Cuban children in Dade County go to all kinds of schools, public and private, religious and lay, where approaches vary greatly to both curriculum and use of language.

But a surprising number of working-class and middle-class Cuban children attend schools that are small, inexpensive, and bilingual. We call them *private ethnic schools* to distinguish them from the more familiar private elite schools attended by the children of professionals and the rich and which, in Miami as elsewhere, are frequently also bilingual.

We report on Dade County's private ethnic schools on the basis of on-site research conducted during 1983 using both school documents and extensive interviews with teachers, parents, and administrators. We report, in addition, from the privileged perspective of sharing a Cuban identity and the Spanish language with the educators whose schools we studied. And we write, moreover, from the perspective of long acquaintance with many forms of public and private bilingual education in the United States.

Many aspects of private ethnic schools are worth studying. We look at the general nature—and general effectiveness—of the schools. But we concentrate mostly on the bilingual aspect of the schools, particularly the relationship of the ethnic language, Spanish, to English.

In tone and substance, this is an upbeat report. It is intended to highlight and disseminate information about a highly successful type of ethnic school and to add to the growing, if often ignored, literature on effective forms of bilingual education.

We offer here a history, as well as a current description, of private ethnic schools in Dade County; we also consider the people who own them, their ideas about education, and their stated motives and purposes in opening and running these schools.

Several comparisons run through the text. We compare the Cuban community of Miami to the Hispanic communities in other cities in the United States. We contrast the role of Spanish in Cuban private ethnic schools to the role it plays in Dade County public schools and in the

*We wish to express our gratitude to Joshua A. Fishman for having introduced us to ethnic-mother-tongue schools in the United States. Much of what is said here is a direct application of his sociolinguistic and socio-educational views on bilingualism to a Cuban-American population in Dade County. We would like to also acknowledge the work of José Llanes. His book *Cuban-Americans. Masters of Survival* inspired the title of this paper. Finally, we wish to thank all those administrators, teachers, principals, parents and children in Dade County schools who granted us interviews and gave us so much of their time.

Cuban private elite schools of the area. And an explicit comparison is made between bilingual education as practiced in public and private schools in Dade County and, generalizing perhaps too widely, bilingual education as it is usually practiced in many other cities, particularly in the public schools.

We propose to document our thesis that success in Dade County private ethnic schools results directly from the assumption that bilingualism in children is natural, from the total absence of a deficit approach to minority education, and from the general empowerment in these schools of parents and community. Success does not come, that is, from any one curricular or otherwise technical solution to a perceived instructional problem, or from any especially effective mode of organization, or from any creative arrangement in the use and distribution of language.

Because studying these private ethnic schools requires that we understand both the educational and sociolinguistic context in which they exist, this paper will first discuss the general position of the Cuban community and of the Spanish language in Dade County from 1960 to 1980. We will then analyze the use of Spanish in the county's public schools and in Cuban private elite schools, turning finally to the heart of our study of private Cuban ethnic schools.

2. Spanish in Dade County

Spanish is commonplace in Dade County. One can hardly live in this North American city and not hear Spanish spoken every day, everywhere. Dade County is one of the few places in the United States where a language other than English plays a permanent public role that goes beyond the familiar boundaries of the ethnic community. Or, to put it differently, the boundaries of this community, and of this language, encompass much more in Dade County than anywhere else in the United States.

In most American cities Spanish is confined to a small proportion of the population and to a limited ethnic role. It is spoken in the private domains of the family and of business and personal dealings in the immediate ethnic enclave. In some cities the language also attains wide use in some of the media and in some educational and social-service settings. But in Miami Spanish has gone public and city-wide.

The place of Spanish in Dade County is a direct result of the sociodemographic characteristics of the Cuban community that makes up 88 percent of the Spanish-speaking population of the county (Alvarez 1976).

The first Cuban immigrants to the United States in the early 1960s were mostly skilled professionals and mostly white.¹ The second wave, which came to the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s, was more mixed socially and racially but it was still 76 percent white. This second wave also brought to the United States 1,600 teachers and most of the Cuban academic and scholarly community (Alexander 1966, Alvarez 1976, Jacoby 1974, Linehan 1973, Portes 1978, Prohias & Casal 1980, Rogg 1974, and especially Llanes 1982).

Other Hispanic communities in the United States differ from the Cuban community of Miami in that they have a narrower social and occupational profile and a different racial composition. Many people are poor. There is usually a very large working class, a small middle class, a limited cadre of small businessmen, and an even more limited professional group. And a very large proportion of other Hispanics look nonwhite to white Americans. The Cuban community too has many poor and working people. But it also has a large middle class and a substantial professional and entrepreneurial group. And many fewer Cubans than any other group are seen by white Americans as nonwhite.

There seems little doubt that the rapid integration of these Cubans to the U.S. economy is due to their racial and class congruence with the power groups in the United States. Although the comparison is by no means exact, it was the case with these Cubans, as with turn-of-the-

century Greeks and Jews, that economic success came faster to them because their social and occupational status in the old country prepared them well for life in the United States (Greer 1972, Otheguy 1982). Despite its distinctive, separate character, and because of its racial characteristics and economic prosperity, the social stigma suffered by other Hispanic communities in the United States is considerably attenuated for the Cubans of Miami.

Cubans of the first two waves quickly created their own Cuban-owned and Cuban-run economic enclave (Wilson & Portes 1980, Portes & Bach 1980). The number of Cuban-owned enterprises in Miami increased from 919 in 1967 to about 8,000 in 1976. By the end of the 1970s Cubans owned 40 percent of Miami's construction companies and controlled 20 percent of its banks (Clark 1977, *Time* 1978).

Yet, as we shall see, Cubans resemble other Hispanics in their attachment to an ethnic identity. Economic success does not appear to have weakened loyalty to Spanish or to other cultural traits associated with ethnic ways.

An anecdote will make the point. The first day of our investigation in Miami we walked into a drug store in a shopping center where the stores, the products being sold, and the physical appearance and dress of the people seemed typical of any United States suburban, professional neighborhood. We were surprised to hear Spanish spoken by shoppers, employees, and the pharmacist, for long experience with Hispanic communities in other American cities had led us to associate Spanish with less suburban-looking and frequently less prosperous surroundings. That we were indeed in an ethnic store was only brought home to us when the pharmacist, obviously following Cuban cultural patterns and providing a very personal and ethnic interpretation of the law, advised us against the medicine that we were seeking and gave us instead a strong medication which would have required a prescription in any other American drugstore.

From April 1973 to September 1980, Dade County was officially bilingual in English and Spanish, reflecting the prominent place of the Cubans' language. In addition to being a means of servicing and integrating the county's large Spanish-speaking population, the use of Spanish by Dade County then was an expedient way to promote investment and tourism from Latin America.

But things changed in 1980. In a backlash against the Cubans, xenophobic groups forced a referendum on bilingualism that led to the passage of an English-only rule in all official county dealings. It is worth remembering that in most North American cities the controversy over bilingualism only reaches the school domain. The fact that in Dade County the battle was waged at the county and governmental level is itself indicative of the strength of Spanish in the city.

In 1984, four years after the English-only ordinance was passed, we found that the now officially subordinate status of Spanish has not weakened its use among Cubans. The still mostly first-generation Cubans use Spanish even more than Mexican Americans or Puerto Ricans. In fact, 80 percent of Cuban Americans are said to be monolingual Spanish speakers or bilingual Spanish-dominant speakers, compared to 59 percent of Puerto Ricans and 39 percent of Mexican Americans (National Commission for Employment Policy, 1982).

The widespread use of Spanish among Cubans is the result of several factors, first among which is the demographic one. Quite simply, Cubans use Spanish so much because there are so many of them. The use of Spanish among Cubans of the first and second wave has been reinforced most recently by their compatriots who came during the Mariel boatlift in 1980. Thus, as in other American cities, the Spanish of Miami Hispanics is constantly renewed by more recent arrivals. When one adds to the Cubans the now increasing number of other Hispanics, the high density of Spanish-speakers in Dade County becomes in itself the most obvious explanation of the widespread use of the language.²

In addition to demography, there is the economic factor. The well-established ethnic business enclave attracts, as one would expect, other speakers of Spanish, many now from Puerto Rico,

the Dominican Republic, and Central and South America. Unlike other American cities, Miami offers to the Spanish-speaking newcomer the possibility of many points of entry into the economic structure, as jobs for those who speak only Spanish exist at the managerial and entrepreneurial, as well as labor, levels.

In common with Hispanics in other cities, Cubans in Dade County see Spanish as a vehicle for the transmission of culture and tradition. But, in addition, Spanish in Dade County has become the resource of an economically viable community where the language is used to run businesses and to link Miami operations with Latin America. Thus Spanish is favored by Cubans not only as a sentimental bond to the Cuban past but also as a practical economic asset now in the United States.

But despite the relative prosperity of the community as a whole, despite the relative acceptance of Cubans in Miami when compared to Cubans and other Hispanics in other cities, and despite the continued use of Spanish in businesses and in private life, the campaign during the referendum on the English-only ordinance gave Cubans a jolt. It gave them a conscious sense, perhaps not explicitly present before, that they were indeed an unwelcome minority in the United States.³

As Cuban Americans became aware of discrimination against them, they developed mechanisms of self-preservation. None was more self-conscious than the intensified and exclusive use of Spanish among Cubans in business dealings. This has increased the need for everyone in Dade County to know Spanish. And yet, the ordinance has reduced the exposure of the majority to Spanish. Before the ordinance, the majority had access to publicly sponsored uses of Spanish. Now, all uses of Spanish are privately sponsored and of difficult access to the majority. Thus the English-only ordinance is viewed by Cubans as having hurt not them, but the English-speaking majority.⁴

It is within this controversy over Spanish in majority public institutions for the benefit of all versus Spanish in ethnic private institutions for the benefit of the ethnolinguistic minority that we must see the role of Spanish in the schools of Dade County, both public and private.

3. Spanish in Dade County Public Schools

The renaissance of American public bilingual education in the 20th century started with the influx of Cubans into Dade County. In September 1963, the Coral Way Elementary School started a program that included both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking students (Mackey and Beebe 1977). In time, fourteen such bilingual public schools would be set up by Dade County during the 1960s.

We should remember that this was a wealthy, well-educated group of Cubans, and that they, and the people of Miami who received them, expected their stay in the United States to be brief. The Castro regime was surely not going to last for long.

Support for bilingual schools came not only from Cubans but also from Americans concerned with maintaining the language of the children of the soon-to-leave Cuban elite.⁵ For the Anglo children of the Miami elite, the opportunity to learn Spanish through bilingual instruction was consonant with the increased interest in foreign languages that Sputnik had sparked throughout the United States.⁶

As the years passed, the motivation for bilingual schools diminished among both the Cuban and Anglo elites. As the return to Cuba seemed more unlikely, interest in developing their children's literacy in and command of standard Cuban Spanish decreased among the Cubans. At the same time, as the racial and social composition of the Cuban migration began to change, sending their children to school with the Cubans became a less attractive proposition for the English-speaking elites. The goal of seriously promoting bilingualism in the public schools for

children from both the minority and the majority was abandoned. In 1984, only four bilingual schools remained of the original 14.

As the Dade County public schools began to move away from bilingualism, two new factors came into play: one, the passage in 1968 of the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) for the purpose of funding programs that use the native language to teach content while minority children learn English; two, the ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1975 *Lau vs. Nichols* case that schools had a legal obligation to provide children of limited English proficiency with some sort of special program.

But the goal of this new federally sponsored bilingual education was indeed different from the full, permanent and literate bilingualism for the Anglo and Cuban elites previously promoted by the Dade County public schools. The new federal programs were avowedly transitional. Instruction in the minority language, usually Spanish, was explicitly required to stop as soon as children could follow classes in English.

As was the case in many districts after the 1975 *Lau* decision, Dade County was required by the Office of Civil Rights to provide this transitional bilingual instruction to the approximately 70 to 90 percent of its Hispanic children who fit the legal definition of limited English proficient (Bureau of Education, Dade County Public Schools, 1982).

Now in frank retreat from any stance of public support for special programs for the Cubans, influential groups in Miami did not take kindly to even this very modest, transitional form of bilingual instruction. Cubans were no longer seen as an elite, small, and transitory group but as an entrenched, powerful local force in need of no federal favors.

What emerged from the interplay of these tensions was the current Dade County public school program for Spanish-speaking children, a curriculum that differs in important respects from that of many other school systems with large Hispanic populations. There are two required and two voluntary components:

1. Required instruction in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).
2. Required curriculum content in English using ESOL techniques.
3. Voluntary home language instruction in Spanish for Spanish speakers (Spa-S).
4. Voluntary curriculum content in Spanish.

In sharp contrast to most transitional bilingual education programs in the elementary schools of the United States, the Dade County program does *not* employ bilingual teachers who teach content in both English and Spanish. Rather, the classroom teacher is usually an Anglo monolingual English speaker who teaches content in English.

This teacher is aided by three specially allocated teachers who take the children out at least two-and-a-half hours every day. An ESOL teacher, who is usually an Anglo monolingual speaker of English, provides intensive English instruction for one to two hours daily; a Hispanic teacher, usually Cuban born and educated, is assigned to teach curriculum content in Spanish for one hour to forty-five minutes daily; another Hispanic teacher, usually also Cuban born and educated, teaches Spanish Language Arts for thirty minutes daily.

By relying on Cuban teachers only for subjects that have to be taught in Spanish, the school system has been able to utilize Cuban-educated teachers who are highly qualified but who lack English proficiency. Significantly, and in contrast to most other American cities that have bilingual programs, Dade County's internal certification only requires native proficiency in the language of instruction. This provides the schools with a large pool of Cuban-born teachers who otherwise would not have been available. (Because of the greater economic incentives they find in other professions, American-born Cubans are hard to find in the teaching ranks.)

The presence of these Cuban teachers has been beneficial to the children. Their teachers have the expertise needed in the subject area as well as good linguistic skills in standard Cuban Spanish. Not only do children grow conceptually from this arrangement, but their Spanish

develops as a result of having to communicate with a monolingual Spanish teacher. Moreover, and although the time devoted to Spanish itself is rather limited (only an hour and fifteen minutes to an hour and a half daily), the curriculum compartmentalizes the use of Spanish and English according to the teacher. This compartmentalization of languages has been argued to be most effective in maintaining minority languages as well as developing second-language skills (Fishman 1980a, García 1983).

It will be instructive to reflect now on why this curriculum is good for Dade County but not necessarily as good for other cities with less economically developed Hispanic populations.

Quite obviously, Cubans are not in control of Dade County's bilingual education. The administration of the program and, quite significantly, the longest and most important part of the instruction is in the hands of majority teachers. In contrast to many programs in other cities, bilingual education in Dade County is a clear case of *absence* of ethnic control.

The Dade County approach is good for dealing with a Spanish-speaking population that although culturally and linguistically separate from the mainstream has been structurally integrated to the United States economy. Bilingual instruction in the case of Cuban Americans is simply a means of developing English language skills quickly while also promoting literacy in an ethnic language. The Dade County bilingual program is *not* intended as an educational alternative to help children who are failing in school. In fact, the failure rate of Cuban-American children in Dade County's public school is lower than that of non-Hispanics.⁷

But the prevention of educational failure should indeed be, and often is, the goal of many bilingual programs for more depressed Hispanic communities. Thus the Dade County model, characterized by lack of ethnic control, should *not* be duplicated in areas where the Hispanic group is more subordinate and stigmatized. There, the ethnics themselves must take control of the education of their children to directly help them to succeed academically, not just to develop language skills.⁸ In these situations, ethnic bilingual individuals must try to staff and direct the programs themselves.

If, in addition, development of Spanish as well as English were a goal in these other Hispanic communities, it would be beneficial to compartmentalize the use of the two languages, as is done in Dade County. But, unlike Dade County, these communities should make sure that both the teacher who will speak in English and the teacher who will speak in Spanish will be bilingual and ethnic.⁹

The Dade County transitional bilingual education program, then, is characterized by the absence of ethnic control, a pull-out system, the compartmentalization of languages by teachers, and the almost exclusive use of Anglos as main classroom teachers and program administrators, as well as the use of fully certified Spanish monolingual Cubans and other Hispanics as auxiliary teachers.

In addition to its transitional bilingual program for children with limited English, Dade County is unusual in that it offers two other non-transitional, non-remedial Spanish language programs for the enrichment of the ethnic group as well as the majority:

1. A Spanish for Spanish Speakers program that consists of 30 minutes of daily instruction by a specially allocated Hispanic teacher.
2. A Spanish as a Second Language program that consists of 30 minutes of daily instruction by a specially allocated Hispanic teacher.

The existence of these two programs reflects the ambivalence of the majority community toward Hispanics and their language. It is felt on the one hand that there is no longer any need to provide special public support for members of this minority or their language. But, on the other hand, many in the majority group see a need to learn Spanish and to invest public resources in disseminating knowledge of the language beyond the Hispanic community that now has it as a monopoly resource. It is widely recognized, in fact, that the Anglo business community

was responsible for the development of the Spanish as a Second Language program.¹⁰ It has been the wealthy communities of Key Biscayne and Kendall that have clamored for more Spanish for their children.¹¹

Although both programs are voluntary, the rate of participation is extremely high. In the 1981-1982 school year, 85 percent of all eligible children participated in the Spanish for Spanish Speakers program, and 71 percent of all eligible children participated in the Spanish as a Second Language program.

The existence of these two Spanish language programs in Dade County is in itself a success. While most public school systems refuse to develop the Spanish language skills of Hispanic children once they have learned English, Dade County's elementary schools continue offering Spanish language instruction to those who want it. And while no other public school system offers second language instruction countywide to majority children, Dade County's public schools do.

Yet, neither the Spanish for Spanish Speakers nor the Spanish as a Second Language program is completely successful in developing Spanish language skills appropriately. For Spanish-speaking children who are either monolingual in Spanish or bilingual in Spanish and English, the program merely promotes limited biliteracy. Although it does appear that Dade County children in these classes develop more literacy in Spanish than other Spanish-speaking groups in the United States, they do not compare well either to those studying in private ethnic schools or to those in schools in the native homelands.¹²

For the Anglo children success is also quite limited, since the Spanish as a Second Language program does not make them at all bilingual. Success for them means placing in second, rather than first-level high school Spanish. This is a small accomplishment indeed after nine years of language study.¹³

In summary, the response of Dade County school authorities to the growing bilingualism of the area has been a complex one. The county is unusual in its policy of using an ethnic language beyond just a transitional, remedial program for children with limited English. And the county is also unusual in the curriculum of its transitional program. The system has had limited success in developing a measure of Spanish literacy among Hispanics, but not nearly as much as many Hispanic parents want; it has also had some success in increasing Spanish fluency among Hispanic children, but again not as much as many think necessary; and it has had some success in increasing the familiarity of the majority with the Spanish language, but not reaching anything like what many majority parents want.

It is in the context of this innovative but limited and flawed public-school stance toward bilingualism that we must look at the approaches taken in the private schools, to which we now turn.

4. Spanish in Dade County Ethnic Schools

Ethnic communities in the United States have often developed their own social institutions in order to preserve their cultures, traditions, and languages. The number of schools, churches, temples, newspapers, and broadcasting stations that have been established by the ethnolinguistic group can be used as a rough quantitative index of the vitality and cohesiveness of the group (Fishman 1966, 1972, 1985). Ethnic communities interested in preserving their language and identity often organize schools where the language and the traditions of the old country are passed on to children (Fishman and Nahirny 1966, Fishman 1980a, 1980b, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c, Markman and Fishman 1982).

Hispanics have been found to be grossly underrepresented with respect to social institutions of their own when compared to other ethnolinguistic minorities. Of all private ethnic schools

in the United States, only 20 percent are Hispanic (Fishman and Milán 1983). This is an indication that the Hispanic minority in the United States lacks sufficient organizational resources of its own.

Hispanics have been successful in establishing more social institutions of their own in Dade County than in other regions of the United States. The abundance of private Spanish mother-tongue schools in Dade County is an indication of the vitality of the Cuban community.¹⁴

It will be helpful in coming to an understanding of private ethnic schools attended by the children of blue and white collar workers and the middle class to first analyze a very successful elite bilingual school. This will help us distinguish between bilingual educational practices for the well-to-do and those for the general school population, even within ethnic institutions.

In 1961, a man who had owned an elite private school in Cuba opened a school in Little Havana for the children of the very first wave of wealthy Cubans who had just arrived in Miami. As was the case with the public bilingual schools discussed above, it was believed then that the return to Cuba was not long in the making. The school emphasized the native language so that the children's Spanish would resemble that of students back in Cuba. This way the children's soon-to-come reintegration into Cuban schools would not be painful. At the same time the school developed English, as most elite schools had always done in Cuba. As time passed and hopes of a quick return to Cuba began to recede, the character of the student body and of the bilingual curriculum changed.

Today the school is no longer located in a building in Little Havana but sits gracefully in a suburban-looking campus in an integrated (Anglo and Cuban), well-to-do community. Although the school is still owned by a Cuban (not the original owner), run mostly by Cuban administrators, and staffed mostly by Cuban teachers, the student population has changed. Only 35 percent of the students are of Cuban origin. Another 35 percent is made up of Hispanics born in countries other than Cuba, while fully 30 percent of the student body is made up of Anglos. This last group is reported to be growing rapidly.¹⁵

It is ironic to note that the parents of the 35 percent of the students who are from other Latin American countries are the ones most interested in Spanish development. These recently arrived elites from Latin America want (as the Cuban elites also wanted 25 years ago) to make sure that their children can function in their countries of origin when they return, an event believed, of course, to be not long in the making. The Anglo elite too is willing to pay high tuition rates in order to make their children bilingual, a skill they perceive to be absolutely necessary for future businessmen, corporate executives, and entrepreneurs in the Miami area. Thus the importance of Spanish in the school is considerable, thanks to the residue of Cuban interest in Spanish, but mostly due to the presence in the school of other Hispanics and of Anglos who, each for different reasons, place a high value on knowing Spanish.¹⁶

All children are taught Spanish for an hour and a half daily by a special language teacher. The textbooks used are those followed in Spanish-speaking countries by children of the same grade level. We were told that Spanish was taught as a *first* language, in contrast to the approach of the public school's Spanish for Spanish Speakers program, which regards Spanish as a second language even for Hispanic children. The approach to the use of language in this school resembles that followed previously by elite schools in Havana, where it was common to have a mostly Spanish program with a strong English component. The school has simply reversed the Havana pattern, providing now in Miami a mostly English program with a strong Spanish component.

The social language of the school (as opposed to the predominant language of the classroom) is Spanish. When out of the classrooms, children are reported to talk among themselves in Spanish at least up until the fourth grade. The Cuban administrative staff appear to always use Spanish among themselves and in communicating with parents and children.

The social and cultural atmosphere in the school is also Hispanic. Important Latin American cultural holidays are celebrated. In this clearly Latin American ambiance, children are interested in learning Spanish for what becomes to them a perfectly clear and tangible social value. The results are excellent. Children who arrive with either limited English skills or limited Spanish skills are given a two year remediation course in either language. Most Hispanic and Anglo children are able to join the regular language classroom after two years. Spanish, as well as English, continues being successfully developed through their school years.

The academic and linguistic achievement of the elite children of this school is not an isolated phenomenon in the United States. For example, in New York City, Le Lycée Français, another elite private bilingual school, succeeds in promoting English/French bilingualism among its students. Yet, the success of the Cuban school in Dade County lies in the fact that whereas in Le Lycée Français the language added is a prestigious foreign language, here the language added is an ethnic language spoken extensively by Hispanics in Dade County and throughout South Florida.

In the United States, middle class and poor children rarely have the opportunity to attend schools that aim seriously at bilingualism such as the one just described. In public schools, monolingual poor children are often even excluded from foreign language instruction programs.¹⁷ Poor children from ethnolinguistic minorities have also been denied the opportunity to develop literacy in the ethnic language.¹⁸

As majority institutions, public schools are most often interested in imposing the values and language of the dominant majority. Even in the case of an economically viable minority such as Dade County's Hispanics, we have seen that after the 1960s a change became visible in the attitude of the public schools. The system that had originally developed bilingual schools to help the Cubans started to turn hostile. The number of bilingual schools decreased sharply. The curriculum designed to maintain Spanish in Cuban children was weakened.

But the distrust, it appears, was richly corresponded. The general public in the newly arrived Cuban middle and working classes was suspicious of the American public school system as a place of low academic standards, poor discipline, racial tensions, and unacceptable permissiveness toward adolescents, particularly girls.

The abundance of Cuban educators coupled with the suspicions of the Cuban middle and working classes toward the public school system led to the establishment in the late 1960s and the early 1970s of many private Cuban schools. These schools are the ones we will analyze in this section.

An outsider coming upon these schools is most taken, first, by the fact that they are bilingual, that they make *very* extensive use of Spanish. This was certainly our impression. But it did not take us long to learn that these private Cuban schools most definitely do not exist because of an interest in Spanish per se. We, it turned out, were interested in their bilingualism, but they are not.

By asking the same question independently of every parent, teacher, and administrator we met in these schools, we developed a very clear sense of the reasons why these schools attract students. They are, in order of importance, and beginning with traditional Cuban-style discipline, the following:

1. The traditional discipline that they observe.
2. The belief that Cuban educators care for Cuban children more than Anglos.
3. The prestige that was attached to a private education over a public education in Cuba.
4. The extended hours that make it possible for parents to work.
5. The teaching of Spanish.

Although the Spanish language plays an important role in these schools, it is universally believed by all involved that the establishment of these bilingual schools responded not to a

linguistic but to an educational need. It is felt that these schools succeed in doing what the public schools have failed to do. That is, these schools provide continuity between the home and the school by recognizing and respecting not only the child's language but also, most importantly, the parent's culture and behavioral norms.

What these schools "sell" to parents, then, is a sound and *familiar* education. Middle-class and working-class parents send their children here not because they are interested in maintaining Spanish among their children (although that is indeed a positive by-product of these educational practices), but because the sociocultural values that these schools promote are those which most closely resemble theirs.

These private ethnic schools share characteristics that accentuate their working class as well as their ethnic character. Most have extended hours to help working parents. They open as early as 6:30 A.M. and close as late as 6:00 P.M. Their modest tuition rates range from \$600 to \$900 yearly. They are also located in predominantly Cuban working and middle-class neighborhoods such as Little Havana and Hialeah. The Cuban character of the neighborhood and the Spanish language permeate the schools. The principals, owners, teachers, and secretaries in the schools are all Cubans and all spoke to us exclusively in Spanish.

These private, ethnic, non-elite schools represent the continuation in Dade County of an approach to education with deep roots in pre-revolutionary Cuba, where public schools were of low prestige and perceived to be only for the poor and where, consequently, private schools for working and middle-class children were commonplace.

In the schools we visited none of the principals, except for one, has ever had any experience with schools in the United States. In fact, most have either taught or owned schools (often with the same name) in Cuba. Most of these schools were not in Havana but in the provinces. And back in the Cuban provinces they were attended by the same class of people (indeed sometimes by the *very same people*) who now attend in Miami.

The teachers of the ethnic schools in Dade County are mostly Cuban born and educated, although there is an increasing number of young Cuban-American teachers who have been educated in the United States. Although in the elite bilingual private school discussed above 90 percent of the Cuban teachers were trained in the United States, the opposite is true in these ethnic schools. Teachers trained in Cuba are seen as rare assets, for it is felt that they are better educated and prepared than the younger, more inexperienced and—a frequently mentioned point—less reliable Cuban-American teachers. Cuban teachers born in Cuba come to work on Monday, so to speak.¹⁹

Again, these schools are concerned about providing a quality education to the ethnic children. Their hiring practices reflect the search for a quality teacher and not for one who can speak unaccented English. In this they differ from the public schools, where the classroom teacher is most often an Anglo monolingual English speaker.

The receptionists, the secretarial help, and the maintenance personnel in these ethnic schools are exclusively Hispanic, usually Cuban. Most telephone receptionists did not speak any English. In a telling reversal of the usual American cliché, one receptionist told us that the few Anglo children who attended the school spoke Spanish because they had to compete, they wanted to make it, which meant, it turned out, that they had to communicate with *her*. She told us that Anglo children often call the school themselves in the event of an absence because she could not communicate with their parents.

The student body of these schools is also at least 80 percent Cuban. Again in contrast to the elite bilingual private school that was analyzed, most have less than 5 percent Anglo students and also a small (though growing) Latin American population. In the elite bilingual private school the Cuban students were almost exclusively second generation. But that is not the case in these ethnic schools. In general, children born in Cuba as opposed to children of Cuban origin

born in the United States comprise between 20 and 50 percent of the Cuban children in these schools. Thus, there is still a marked Cubanness in the schools because of the more recent arrival of students and staff.

The social and cultural values and traditions of the children's parents are carefully, but most naturally and unassumedly, present and promoted in these schools. The halls of the schools portray Cuban flags, Cuban emblems, faded Cuban photographs of the predecessor school back in Cuba, and statues and busts of Cuban patriots. The Cuban national holidays are observed and celebrated. Although the schools are emphatically nonreligious, most have optional instruction in Roman Catholicism, and most students opt in. (And many of them have school-arranged First Holy Communion ceremonies for their seven-year-olds.) The Cuban anthem is sung, along with the United States anthem, at the weekly assemblies.

Students are especially filled with the spirit of José Martí, the famous Cuban patriot and writer, through the constant emphasis on his literary works in the curriculum. (There we were, in the middle of the United States, when we asked a nine-year-old Miami-born child to read to us in Spanish. He did not hesitate to pull out a volume of Martí's poetry, hand it to us to choose a poem, and read—indeed declaim—out loud with great confidence in the naturalness of what he was doing.)

Most of these schools offer Cuban history and geography as part of the curriculum. Significantly, Cuban history and geography are often taught from a pre-Castro perspective. For example, the Cuban map that they study displays a territorial division of the island that is grossly inaccurate and anachronistic, since it corresponds to long-since changed provincial divisions of the pre-Castro era.

But in the map hangs a tale. The map is an anachronism only if one thinks of Cubans in Cuba, not if one thinks of Cubans in Dade County. For the latter, the pre-Castro map *is* the Cuban map, and it is the map they want taught to their children. These private ethnic schools, then, reflect community values quite directly, as they embody the approach to education that is preferred, and paid for through considerable sacrifice, by an American ethnic minority.

Besides common social class and ethnic characteristics, these schools share the academic achievement that they have been successful in promoting.²⁰ Whereas most working class ethnic minority children are failing in the public schools, these ethnic schools are successful in teaching their own. Children here are learning mathematics, science, and social studies. They have good English skills. (And sound, of course, like all other American children when they speak in English, which the older ones often do with each other.) At the same time, regardless of innate intelligence, they are literate in Spanish as well.

The success at academic achievement and the bilingualism and biliteracy of these children is not due to any one method, or to any one bilingual education approach, or to any specified curriculum, guidelines, or standards. (These schools show an astonishing variety of approaches to subject matter, to distribution and use of the languages, and to curriculum in general; yet they all obtain results.) Rather, success stems from believing in the children, from the lack of bias and prejudice in ethnic educators teaching ethnic children, from the correspondence and similarity of the social and ethnic background of the children and that of the school. Ethnic minority children in ethnic minority schools are not in any way alien or different, as they are (regardless of attitudes) in majority schools.

Transitional bilingual education in majority schools is considered suspect and guilty of breeding disloyalty to the United States. But in these ethnic schools the use of both languages is considered the only natural—indeed the only conceivable—way of educating the children. Whereas educators in the public school system are conflicted about methods and approaches of teaching in both languages, educators in the ethnic schools are certain that what they are doing is right, even when practices vary greatly among them.

The research literature about transitional bilingual education in the United States is full of problems. What do we do for the Limited English Proficient (LEP) students? When do we put them in or transfer them out of the bilingual classroom? How is language dominance determined? Should reading be introduced in the native language or in the second language? When should reading in the second language start, before, after, or simultaneous to reading in the native language? How much time should be devoted to one language and how much time to the other? What tests should be used? Is bilingual education effective?

None of these questions was *ever* raised by any of the educators or parents in our discussions in Miami's ethnic schools. When we raised them, they seemed odd and out of context. And nobody knew what exactly we were asking them. The very heart of bilingual education discourse simply made no sense here in the midst of a most successful instance of bilingual education! Only when the minority language is foreign and suspect are efforts made to clinically analyze its effect as if it were a strange wart, perhaps even diseased, that either has to be eradicated or at the very best "lived with," and about which a lot of questions have to be asked. When the minority language belongs in a school and when the majority language is naturally added in order to make children bilingual, none of these problems ever comes up, none of those questions is ever asked.

These schools have no "special" classes for children who lack English skills. Newly arrived children are placed in the same classes as those who are fluent English speakers but who are also, we must remember, fluent Spanish speakers. The fact that children and teachers are bilingual allows for the use of Spanish as a resource to communicate with those lacking English skills when classes are taught in English.

This very natural arrangement eliminates the need for specialized English as a Second Language classes taught by a different teacher. The development of English is not compartmentalized in a special period of the day. Rather, English is developed precisely because of the bilingual character of the teachers and students (and not because of their monolingual English-only skills).

The need to identify children's language dominance is also absent when the school considers proficiency in both languages to be equally important. In bilingual education circles in American public schools, a child who is said to be Spanish-dominant is considered inferior (and in need of "remediation") to one who is labeled English dominant. (The notion of remediation was also alien to these schools, thus the quotation marks.) Since the emphasis in the ethnic schools is to make children naturally bilingual, language dominance does not enter the picture, and the question is never discussed.

Perhaps most telling, and most surprising to us, is that the people who run these ethnic schools told us that they are *not* bilingual schools. Their assertion is, in some sense, quite accurate. Content is most often taught in English (by Cuban teachers) and only Spanish language arts is taught in Spanish (also by Cuban teachers).

The period for Spanish language arts averages from forty-five minutes to two hours daily, taught mostly by a special Spanish language teacher. Those ethnic schools that do use Spanish as the language of instruction use it mostly to teach social studies and Cuban history and geography. Two of the schools use Spanish to teach religion. One of the two schools hopes that in this way the children will bring home messages and books that their non-practicing Catholic parents can understand.

Certainly, Spanish *seems* less present in the curriculum than in most transitional bilingual education programs in public schools. There is an apparent paradox here. The ethnic schools explicitly claim that their graduates will be bilingual and biliterate, and they are. But there is not much Spanish in their curriculum and, moreover, they refuse to describe the schools as bilingual. On the other hand, the transitional bilingual programs in the public schools explicitly

claim that their graduates will learn English, leaving their Spanish behind. But Spanish is very present in their curriculum. What is going on? Where does the difference lie, then?

Although in the ethnic school Spanish is said mostly to be taught formally only during Spanish language arts, Spanish has an important and prestigious place in the school. It is not simply the language of disadvantaged students. It is the language of the community, of the principal, of the teachers, of all the bright students as well as the slow ones. And of that all-powerful secretary. Spanish is taught as a first language, that is, the texts followed are in most cases those that were used in Cuba. Spanish literacy closely resembling that of monolingual students is required of all. The result is that schools are successful in teaching Spanish literacy. Furthermore, children are interested in and enthusiastic about instruction in Spanish.

In addition to the power and attitude factors just described, we believe that the success these ethnic schools have in developing literacy in the ethnic language is due to the compartmentalized nature of most curricula. Having Spanish taught by a different teacher assures that communication will be strictly in Spanish during that period.

Thus the ethnic schools seem to intuitively know what the majority public institutions constantly forget. The longer one lives in the United States, the more English one speaks. English acquisition is an integral part of any Hispanic child's natural development. Although 90 percent of the kindergarten children coming into these ethnic schools are Spanish monolingual, by the time they are in the second grade they speak English perfectly. Although younger children communicate mostly in Spanish during recess and playtime, by the time they get to the fifth grade they are communicating among themselves exclusively in English. Even in ethnic institutions where the ethnic language is prestigious, minority children in the United States shift to English to communicate and socialize among themselves. English is acquired naturally and surely just by living in the United States. Spanish has to be taught formally precisely because the children live in an English-speaking context. Thus, ethnic schools, in an effort to protect Spanish and prevent the children's natural shift to English monolingualism, give Spanish a specially privileged place in the curriculum.

Bilingual education, then, is not simply a matter of using the ethnic language as the language of instruction. Bilingualism in these schools usually means teaching content in English (although Spanish is, we repeat, frequently used in the English classroom for social and communicative purposes between the teacher and the children and among the children themselves), while at the same time developing Spanish literacy by giving it a special structural place in the curriculum. Bilingualism is attained precisely by developing English naturally in a bilingual (not English only) context, while protecting Spanish from the oncoming English avalanche.

Another interesting difference between these ethnic schools and public institutions where the ethnic language is used for instruction is in their approach to reading. UNESCO, in protecting the educational rights of minority children, has upheld that initial reading must be taught in the student's native language. Although in theory this principle is supported by public transitional bilingual programs in the United States, in reality the opposite is the practice. That is, public education in the United States, in its maddening quest for quantitatively defined excellence, has been plagued by standardized tests that are administered in English. Thus, in public bilingual education classrooms, reading in English is emphasized at the expense of reading in Spanish. More time is spent teaching children how to read in English than in Spanish, since the majority society and the public schools only value, and thus test, reading in English.

The ethnic schools that we studied vary greatly in their approach to reading in the second language. We were surprised to learn that *none* of the schools followed the UNESCO principle of teaching reading initially only in the mother tongue. Most schools taught reading in English and Spanish simultaneously. Again, we repeat, they are successful at teaching reading in English, a language not yet fluently spoken by the children, precisely because they have at their disposal

bilingual teachers able to give *meaning* to the language that is presented in the reading. None of the schools reported that children encountered any difficulties learning to read in two languages. The fact that reading in English is mostly taught phonetically and reading in Spanish is mostly taught syllabically does not confuse the children in any way. Again, the availability of a different teacher for reading in Spanish guarantees that reading skills in Spanish are developed fully as an integral and important component of the total school curriculum.

We even found some schools where teaching reading in Spanish and formal instruction in Spanish was postponed until the second and even the fourth grade. Again, we repeat, this does not represent the absence of Spanish from these classrooms and these schools during this time. In those same schools, Anglo children in the early grades learn oral Spanish fully without any formal instruction. Spanish is the language used in all the younger children's interactions, and oral skills in Spanish are developed in a natural and positive context. It is only Spanish literacy that is postponed. But since literacy skills are always easily transferred from one language to the other, Spanish-speaking children literate in English attain Spanish literacy at grade level after a year of study.

Ethnic schools in Dade County offer a positive alternative to public education of children of ethnolinguistic minorities. They not only provide a sound and caring education, but in addition they develop Spanish in order to preserve the language resource that the children bring and that will serve them well in the future.

5. Conclusion

The more fortunate situation of Spanish in Dade County public and private schools reflects the greater economic power of the Spanish-speaking community in Dade County when compared to other American cities. We have shown that Spanish in Dade County has become the resource of an economically viable ethnic community. It is this socioeconomic standing that has forced the public schools to establish a program of Spanish language instruction for both minority and majority children.

We have shown that the Dade County system is more successful than most American public school systems in developing literacy skills in minority children in both the ethnic language and in English, although it does not do very well developing the minority language in majority Anglo children.

The Dade County bilingual program is notable because of the absence of ethnic control. We have argued that this is appropriate for a Hispanic community not plagued by educational failure which simply wants the public school to develop literacy in the ethnic language. But it would not be appropriate for other Hispanic communities where the goals of the public school bilingual program must center around the amelioration or elimination of educational failure.

Despite their success in developing literacy in English and the native language in minority children when compared to public schools in other cities with high concentrations of Hispanics, the Dade County public schools fall short when compared to the private ethnic schools attended by working and middle-class Hispanics. The ethnic schools are successful in making Hispanic children truly biliterate to a remarkably higher degree than the public schools, and, in addition, they succeed in making Anglo children truly bilingual.

We have shown that the success of the ethnic school is due to factors relating to empowerment and practical need for a language and not to technical curricular virtuosity. We have seen that bilingualism and biliteracy are achieved precisely because the speech community both outside and inside the school uses Spanish and values it as an asset. At the same time, these ethnic schools provide minority children with the cultural and linguistic continuity between home and

school that is necessary in order to succeed academically. Spanish and Hispanic values are used as the main resource for a meaningful and successful education.

THE CITY COLLEGE OF CUNY

Notes

¹We follow here the categorization of the Cuban migration into three waves as proposed by Llanes (1982). The first wave includes those who arrived between January 1, 1959, and the Missile Crisis of October 1962. The second wave arrived between 1965 and 1973 during the airbridge from Camarioca, Cuba. The third wave includes those who left between April 1980 and September 1980.

²Lieberson and Curry (1971) report that the size of the language community is a definite factor in language maintenance and use.

³Interview with Renee Betancourt, Assistant to the Vice-President of the New World Center Campus, Miami Dade Community College.

⁴An office worker in a school offered the following example of how bilingualism is a resource of the Spanish-speaking community. His wife, he said, worked with an Anglo who did not want to learn Spanish. The Anglo employee was fired when the employer started to do business with Latin America and bilingual employees were needed. Interview with Rafael Elorrieta.

⁵Interview with Dr. Ralph Robinett, Director of Bilingual/Foreign Language Education, Dade County Public Schools.

⁶For a historical account of language policy in the United States, see especially Grant (1980) and Kloss (1977).

⁷See Bilingual/Foreign Language Education, July 1982 Status Report, Dade County Public Schools, p. 5.

⁸View expressed by Ofelia García and Ricardo Otheguy, in "Tending your own garden: An ethnic perspective on bilingual education" (unpublished ms.), 1984.

⁹This is the model used in the most successful bilingual schools in Europe. See, for example Hugo Baetens Beardsmore, Bilingual Education for Highly Mobile Children, in *Language Problems and Language Planning*, Vol. 3 (1979), 138-155.

¹⁰The three people whom we interviewed at the Board of Dade County Public Schools, Wally Lyshkov, Ralph Robinett, and Luis Vázquez, all mentioned the interest of the Anglo business community in the Spanish as a Second Language Program.

¹¹Wally Lyshkov, Director of the Spa-S program, informed us that there have been four lawsuits against the Board by Anglo parents who have demanded that their children be included in the Spanish-S Program and who have charged the Board with discrimination. The School Board has responded by stating that placement in the Spanish-S program instead of the Spanish as a Second Language program is not based on Hispanic national origin but on Spanish language proficiency.

¹²Wally Lyshkov informed us that Spanish tests standardized in other parts of the United States such as the Southwest cannot be used in the Dade County public schools because students run off the curve. In other words, they are more proficient in Spanish than other Hispanic students in the United States. However, all interviewees in the private ethnic schools claimed that their Hispanic students were more proficient in Spanish than those who attended public schools.

¹³Interview with Wally Lyshkov.

¹⁴Data gathered by Language Resources in the United States (Yeshiva University) under the direction of Joshua A. Fishman. See report entitled *Language-Related Ethnic Community Schools in the USA: A Catalog of School-in-Society Language Resources*, in *Non-English Language Resources of the United States*, report to Dept. of Ed., p. 4.

¹⁵Interview with Emma Ventura, Principal, Loyola School.

¹⁶The decreased interest in Spanish among the Cuban elite can be seen in the negative attitude toward Spanish language maintenance expressed by administrators in Belen, the Jesuit school to which most Cuban elites send their children.

¹⁷For an explanation of the elite character of foreign language instruction, see especially Brod (1983), Galloway (1983), and Hubbard (1980).

¹⁸The transitional nature of bilingual education in the United States has been well documented. See, for example, Fishman (1976).

¹⁹Interview with Aida Yarini, Assistant Principal of Edison School.

²⁰The non-problematic nature of biliteracy in ethnic mother-tongue schools and the English and academic achievement of ethnic children in these schools have been well documented by Joshua A. Fishman in his studies of ethnic mother-

tongue schools (see bibliography). The authors wish to express their intellectual debt in the treatment of this topic to Joshua A. Fishman.

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