Hegemonic Multiculturalism: English Immersion, Ideology, and Subtractive Schooling

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Abstract

This article presents a case study of an elementary school situated within a prestigious school district that has undergone rapid demographic change in recent years. The authors explore how the school has accommodated growing numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse students while at the same time struggling to maintain district standards. In order to further our understanding of the process of subtractive schooling, a critique of an English-immersion program deemed "successful" is provided by examining the discourses that define what success means in an inclusive setting. The authors theorize the concept of *hegemonic multiculturalism* to explain the transitional nature of a school culture defined by dissonance between the ideology of multiculturalism and the school's pervasive assimilation agenda. Within this transitional space, success is defined quite narrowly in terms of immigrant students' level of assimilation, fluency in English, and performance on standardized tests. Although the school community claims to value bilingualism and student diversity, instructional practices inadvertently devalue these qualities in the name of equality for all.

Introduction

Literature on the experiences of minority students in affluent suburban schools is limited. Most researchers interested in the influence of minority status on the educational process have focused their attention on schools heavily populated by students of color or on schools that have undergone desegregation efforts (Lewis, 2001; Mickelson, 2003). As a point of departure from these studies, we present a case study of an elementary school situated within a prestigious school district that primarily serves White, upper- and middle-class youth. However, a cluster of elementary schools in the district

have undergone rapid demographic change due to the influx of immigrant communities into service areas located at the cusp of the metropolis, neighborhoods once considered suburban. Grounded in critical ethnography, we set out to understand how one of these changing elementary schools, which we have named Parkland Elementary, has accommodated growing numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse students, while at the same time endeavored to maintain normativity as previously accustomed.

In general, we were interested in the role that power dynamics play in an all-inclusive, English-immersion school setting. Specifically, we wanted to understand how a school whose student population has become increasingly more multicultural and multilingual in the past 5 years can resolve the contradictory missions of affirming diversity and promoting assimilation. Is it possible for a school to uphold the transformative principles of multicultural education within an English-immersion setting grounded in assimilative pedagogical practices?

Following Michelle Jay's (2003) assertion that "multicultural education gets appropriated as a 'hegemonic device' that secures a continued position of power and leadership for the dominant groups in society" (p. 3), we theorize the concept of *hegemonic multiculturalism* and use this framework to problematize what success means for culturally and linguistically diverse students in an English-immersion school considered "successful." Our intent is to use the tools of ethnography to document the ways in which hegemonic multiculturalism operates through consensus and how English language learners (ELLs) are disciplined to emulate and internalize this ideology. We also illustrate how the knowledge and expertise needed to teach ELLs is often devalued under these conditions or outsourced to language specialists whose status is subordinate to that of general education teachers, despite being duly qualified.

In his recent book, *Racism Without Racists*, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003a) outlines his theoretical framework for understanding the nuanced character of racial ideologies in post-civil rights America. Bonilla-Silva elucidates how the concept of color blindness has co-opted the transformative endeavors of the civil rights movement, by shifting the dialogue on social inequality away from race to culture and by using the rhetoric of post-civil rights leaders in a "hegemonic way" in service of the dominant culture (p. 10). In a short article published in the *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Bonilla-Silva (2003b) briefly defines this new racial order:

> Accordingly, post-civil rights racial ideology reflects the character of the new racial order. Instead of relying on an in-your-face set of beliefs ("Minorities are behind us because they are stupid or biologically inferior."), the new ideology is as indirect, slippery, and apparently non-racial as the new ways of maintaining racial privilege. I label this new ideology *colourblind racism* and argue that it is centrally anchored

> in the abstract extension of egalitarian values to racial minorities and the notion that racial minorities are culturally rather than biologically deficient. (p. 68)

Applying this paradigm to the field of education, minority students and parents are often perceived as dysfunctional due to their different cultural orientations. Therefore, the discourse in schools that serve culturally and linguistically diverse students often revolves around diffused liberal arguments, such as "equality for all," which are used to mask the assimilative practices employed to subtract difference or remedy the deficiencies that are thought to be endemic to minority cultures (Jay, 2003; Urrieta, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999).

Bonilla-Silva (2003b) explains that "despite the fact that the dominant racial ideology crystallizes the interests of the dominant race, that ideology is not fixed but highly interactive. The flexibility of the dominant racial ideology enhances its legitimizing role because it allows for accommodation of contradictions, exceptions, and new information" (p. 66). Therefore, in order to understand how covert racism is intertwined with what educational researchers have termed the hidden curriculum, we must be attuned to how these ideologies play out in the classroom (Jay, 2003). The goal here is not to simply label these discourses, rather to understand what they look like in practice, in the life world where teachers, students, and administrators interact on a daily basis. In order to redirect the course of multiculturalism to the promotion of social justice, the slippery and often paradoxical discourses that compose color-blind ideologies must be elucidated and critiqued.

We propose that prestigious suburban schools may be apt to employ the discourses of color blindness or similar strategies in order to maintain the status quo, or in this case, the privilege of students from the dominant class, in the face of rapid demographic change. The concept of hegemonic multiculturalism, which we are attempting to unpack theoretically in this essay, arose out of our observations of the practices and discourse strategies (enacted both overtly and symbolically) that teachers and administrators employ to cope with the cultural and linguistic diversity of their students. We also show how hegemonic multiculturalism produces various social effects within the school culture that not only manipulate the diverse identities of minority students, but also devalue the work of the language specialists who work with them.

In our estimation, hegemonic multiculturalism is the result of dissonance between a school's desire to promote an inclusive and welcoming learning environment for their culturally and linguistically diverse students and the pervasive, yet persuasive, assimilation agenda that underlies instructional practices and programs designed to educate them. Within this conflicted space, accommodating diversity becomes a function of convincing students, teachers, and parents that "immersion" (which we contend is an analogue for assimilation) can be accomplished without devaluing immigrant students'

native languages and cultures. In this sense, respect for students' cultural and linguistic differences is couched within a position of universalism and "equality for all" that ultimately privileges the dominant groups' conceptualization of what diversity is and how diverse identities should be positioned and expressed within a "fully inclusive" classroom environment.

Discourse as Social Practice

Critical discourse studies are concerned with the ways in which language maintains and reproduces social relations of power through consensus (Price, 1999). Language, as a symbolic system of communication, requires the use of discursive demarcations or models of discourse that construct our understanding of the world. Through the seemingly innocent act of naming, categorizing, and representing through words (spoken or written), social inequalities are created, which are taken for granted as natural. "The purpose of critical discourse analysis is to analyze opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 448).

If hegemony is a function of discourse and social structure, then the value that is attached to various cultural practices, ways of knowing, speaking, and acting will always be defined by those who control discourse and those who delineate the field of normality. As a result, the cultural capital of the dominant group and their related manners of interacting and producing knowledge are the basis from which normality is constructed within the broader society and upon which value is assigned (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991).

Applied to the context of schooling, children are not only evaluated by how well their cultural capital conforms to that of the dominant group, but are disciplined to adopt these status relations through various symbolic and overt practices entrenched within the school culture (Wenger et al., 2004). In this way, cultural difference is always already constructed as a deficit and the focus of schooling culturally and linguistically diverse students often revolves around resolving this deficit. Consensus in this process of homogenization is generated by occluding the real intentions of educational programs designed to serve immigrant students within the rhetoric of multiculturalism.

Researchers exploring the power dynamics of language difference in school settings have discovered that even in situations where minority-language maintenance is encouraged and taught in conjunction with English, such as in dual-immersion classrooms, students' use of English tends to override their use of Spanish (Potowski, 2004; Worthy, Rodríguez-Galindo, Assaf, Martínez, & Cuero, 2003). Therefore, even when schools and families are supportive of bilingualism, sociopolitical conditions that value the cultural capital of the dominant group exert tremendous pressures to speak, read, and write in English-only (Potowski; Worthy et al.). The prevalence of what Angela

Valenzuela (1999) has termed "subtractive schooling" or the process by which immigrant students are stripped of their cultural and linguistic resources is a troubling trend in both bilingual and immersion settings, albeit to different extents.

Ethnographic Setting

Parkland Elementary School[1] is a K–5 (on-site preschool is also available), public elementary serving upwards of 600 students. It is located within a changing suburban community in a western state and settled within the Oakville School District, one of the most prestigious and affluent school districts in the state. Parkland primarily served White, middle-class and upper-middle-class students until recent demographic changes in the surrounding community rapidly diversified the student body. In the fall semester of 2003, when data collection for this project began, 49% of the student population at Parkland spoke languages other than English as a first language and almost 70% of the student body consisted of students from minority backgrounds. Most of the students who were not native speakers of English were native Spanish speakers and were concentrated in the lower grades, especially kindergarten, where 95% of students were of Latino descent. It is also important to note that 60% of Parkland students received free or reduced-priced meals at the school cafeteria. In sharp contrast to the very diverse student population, the faculty and administration were primarily White (95%) and monolingual English speakers (64%).

What brought about this rapid demographic shift in the community surrounding Parkland? Essentially, the increasing diversity within the Parkland service area can be attributed to a steady decrease in property values in the vicinity and the increasing urbanization of the area. Located just on the cusp between suburbia and the inner city, this suburb has progressively become engulfed by an expanding urban center. As the houses aged, property values decreased, thus providing more affordable housing for lower income families. The majority of the immigrant families who have relocated to the community are from Mexico and other parts of Latin America, yet there is a wide variety of nationalities represented. Ethiopian and other African immigrants are also prevalent, as well as Vietnamese and Middle Eastern immigrants. Other schools in the Oakville District have also been impacted by these demographic changes (there are currently 31 designated English as a Second Language [ESL] Center Schools[2]); however, Parkland has the most diverse student population of any elementary school in the Oakville District and has the highest number of language-minority students.

To extend our context to a broader national scope, Parkland can be envisioned as a model for the nation since many historically prestigious suburban schools throughout the country will be experiencing similar

demographic changes as the numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students rise. As the result of increased immigration and hundreds of years of cultural continuity between Mexico and the western United States, Hispanics are the fastest growing minority population in the country, estimated at 37.4 million in 2002 (Therrien & Ramírez, 2001). Therefore, the majority of non-English-speaking students entering the public school systems around the nation (including suburban schools) will be Spanish speakers of Latino descent; such is the case at Parkland and other public schools in the West.

Parkland's Vision of Success

In light of the fact that Parkland is located within a school district that has historically served the upper echelon of society, there is heightened pressure to meet the district's performance standards. A message from the Oakville Board of Education, published in a monthly newsletter[3], included the statement, "We are proud of our record of academic achievement and the fact that that [our] district has an outstanding reputation is recognized throughout the nation." The superintendent's message reiterated this sentiment asserting that "because of our unrelenting dedication to excellence in the [Oakville] School District, we have set a goal to close the achievement gap. Students and schools continue to show substantial academic growth each year, the clearest measure of a school's performance." Inherently, Parkland also defines its success in terms of students' performance on state-mandated standardized tests and is duly invested in maintaining a respectable accountability rating.

Students at Parkland participate in the statewide achievement test administered every year to students in Grades 3 through 10. Testing is also available in Spanish for third and fourth graders, but all students test in English. Similar to most states across the nation, individual schools are evaluated according to how their students perform on the state test and are assigned a rating. For the past 3 years, Parkland has maintained a rating of "Average" and has increased the number of students scoring at the proficient level in third-grade reading and fourth-grade writing, even as the number of ELLs taking the test has risen dramatically. According to the school principal, Parkland is the only school in the district that has remained on a course of steady growth as far as test scores are concerned.

Overall, Parkland's image within the district and the community it serves is quite positive. In recent Oakville School District publications, various articles have highlighted Parkland's successful English-immersion program, commending the school for its ability to maintain a stable accountability rating, while at the same time including ELLs in schoolwide testing. In general, Parkland enjoys high morale due to its successful image, and the word has spread fast within immigrant communities. One teacher asserted that, "Parkland is so good that our reputation gets around, which immigrant parents have told me when I ask them how they ended up coming here." Although Parkland receives

praise for its accomplishments, underlying insecurities concerning the widening achievement gap between minority students and their peers, and the possibility of the deterioration of the school's, and by extension, the district's prestigious status are evident.

An Adaptive English-Immersion Model

Parkland's English-immersion model is premised upon the idea that ELLs will be "fully included" in the general education classroom and will receive the same opportunity to learn as their native English-speaking peers in this setting. Even students who come to Parkland without any knowledge of English are promptly assigned to a general education, English-speaking classroom upon arrival, sometimes before any language or academic assessment is given. It also is interesting to note that classrooms at Parkland are intentionally "balanced" by ethnicity, and more recently, by English-language ability, at the beginning of the school year.

Parkland Principal Donald Hill emphasized the fact that Parkland's English Language Acquisition (ELA) program is continually being restructured to meet the specific needs of the student population. He stated:

> ELA [in the Oakville District] for a long time has been all about fluency in English and you can't use the native language because we have 15 different languages. But, in our case, where the population is predominately Mexican, why not use the native language? Use it in pieces to develop background knowledge, not bilingual, but use it strategically. I've always believed in engaging the community. If the community feels welcome, then the kids are going to be getting more out of education, so it really depends on who your community is and how you serve them.

Nonetheless, strategic use of native language is minimized: The strategy is to transition language-minority students to English as quickly as possible through an adaptive English-immersion model that includes both *pull-out* and *push-in* support. Students identified as limited English proficient are pulled out of their regular classrooms for supplemental ESL instruction for 30–45 minutes each day. Children are grouped together in ELA pull-out sessions by level of English-language proficiency and are usually at about the same grade level. The teacher to student ratio in pull-out sessions is usually 10–15 students to one certified ELA teacher and one Spanish-speaking paraprofessional.

The ELA resource teachers also work with small groups of ELLs inside the general education classroom when they are not teaching self-contained pull-out sessions. The support they provide to ELLs inside the regular classroom are termed push-in sessions and are usually conducted at tables set apart from the rest of the students or in the hallway outside the students' home classrooms. The ELA staff consists of three full-time teachers, one part-time teacher, and three paraprofessionals.

Generally speaking, the faculty at Parkland is well trained in ESL instructional strategies. At the beginning of the 2003–2004 school year, Parkland teachers and support staff were asked to complete a brief demographic survey (*N* = 38). Teacher responses indicated that 42% of the faculty had taken at least one professional development course in ESL teaching strategies offered by the State Department of Education. A perusal of the manual used for this training showed that this professional development was centered on sheltered English instruction. To our surprise, all but one teacher surveyed claimed having had some kind of training or college coursework related to teaching second-language learners; furthermore, teachers reported an average of 2.3 years of experience working with children from diverse language backgrounds.

Method

The overarching ethnographic approach and analytical perspective employed in this case study was critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996; Villenas & Foley, 2002). Following Villenas and Foley's conceptualization, critical ethnography utilizes traditional anthropological methods of data collection and analysis to discover how oppressive relations of power operate in a particular social system or institution. Critical ethnographers aspire to produce knowledge that reveals the unrecognized or misrecognized trajectories of power that maintain and reproduce social inequality. The ultimate goal of critical ethnography is to utilize this knowledge in collaboration with research participants to redirect the current social order in a more positive, egalitarian direction.

With these criteria in mind, the lead author collected data on a biweekly basis at Parkland for a period of 6 months, primarily during the fall school semester and during 2 months in the spring semester. Ethnographic field notes were recorded during observations inside the ELA classrooms and general education classrooms where ELLs were present, as well as common gathering spaces outside the classroom (i.e., cafeteria, playground, main office, library, gym, and faculty lounge, etc.).

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) was used to evaluate general education teachers' use of instructional practices that promote language and content learning for students with limited English proficiency (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). Classroom observations and structured interviews were conducted with 19 of the 25 general education teachers, and one media specialist. The structured interviews focused entirely on teachers' level of use of instructional practices that enhance the academic success of ELLs in the general education classroom. These interviews were used to supplement the data derived from classroom observations of the same teachers using the SIOP. Other topics outside of instructional practices were also

discussed within the natural flow of conversation during the interview process. Two separate evaluative observations of the teachers were conducted and scored individually.

Semi-structured ethnographic interviews were also conducted with all of the ELA teachers and paraprofessionals, as well as with the district ELA coordinator, school principal, bilingual secretary and school psychologist. Initial data analysis was accomplished through open coding of field notes in order to derive major themes. Identical coding procedures were applied to interview data. The themes derived from field notes were combined or matched with those resulting from the analysis of interviews. Contextual data such as newsletters, flyers, report cards, language surveys, and other primary sources were also included in the coding process and reconstructive analysis.

Results and Discussion

One of the remarkable themes that emerged repeatedly throughout the analysis of interview data and field notes was disjuncture between the school community's official discourse about full inclusion and respect for student diversity and the pervasive assimilation agenda that underlies instructional practices and programs designed to educate ELLs. Although many examples of dissonance between ideology and practice were observed, we focus this section on two exemplary cases that best illustrate this theme and provide a strong ethnographic platform for demonstrating how our theory of hegemonic multiculturalism operates in the life world. The first case concerns the unequal status of ELA teachers compared with general education teachers. The second case reveals how language-minority students are actually excluded in the full-inclusion general education classroom and how their native languages and cultures tend to be devalued within the adaptive English-immersion model designed to serve their educational needs.

The Position of ELA Teachers Within the School Culture

Although an overtly antagonistic relationship between language specialists (ELA teachers) and general education teachers was not observed and both groups of teachers share ideas, strategies, and resources quite openly and effectively, the position of the language specialists within the school culture is relatively unequal. For example, language specialists at Parkland are positioned primarily as adjunct instructors or as resource personnel who provide ELLs with supplemental instruction. Therefore, ELA teachers are perceived primarily as facilitator, which ultimately reduces their status as qualified teachers. The underlying assumption is that essential learning occurs in the general education classroom, whereas ELA teachers simply provide students with the "language support" that they need to

accomplish the work assigned in their regular classrooms. The diminished status of the language specialist is acknowledged in the following comment from an ELA teacher who works with kindergartners:

> I don't know, regular classroom teachers want you to take them and fix them [ELLs]. It's like, just take them someplace and bring them back reading and writing and speaking. I don't know. I have often wanted to go back to the classroom because I don't feel valued as a teacher. I don't really know how to put it or even how to put my finger on it necessarily. They treat you like a TA [teacher's assistant]. They want you to be in there basically to be a translator.

The expertise of ELA teachers at Parkland not only includes knowledge of language acquisition theories and related pedagogies, but also a deeper understanding of the cultures and languages of the students whom they are specifically trained to serve. This knowledge is often not utilized effectively or regarded as highly as the work of general education teachers. For instance, when asked if ELA teachers are treated with the same professional respect and priority as general education teachers, the majority of ELA teachers responded in the negative or qualified a positive response with a complicating negative factor. One ELA paraprofessional lamented that "if there is something going on, the second-language learners can't be included. They [general education teachers] view us as a babysitting service."

Similarly, the ELA teacher who works with Spanish-speaking kindergarten students suggested that some general education teachers perceived her ability to speak Spanish and relate to the cultural experiences of immigrant students as a threat to their authority as teachers:

> I think parents, as a whole, they [immigrant parents] feel a connection with their own, you know. White people, I mean, they don't feel comfortable with them. The parents don't feel comfortable with them. The teachers kind of resent that . . . that you have a different rapport with the parents.

This ELA teacher's bilingual resources and status as a cultural "insider" allow her increased facility in establishing rapport with Spanish-speaking students and parents: skills that are not easily attainable for the majority of monolingual, White, general education teachers.

Analysis of interview data suggests that classroom teachers view ELA pull-out and push-in sessions as a way to "double-dip" their students who need extra help. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that some general education teachers having little experience teaching ELLs rely heavily on the ELA pull-outs to bring their students up to grade level: an ineffective strategy considering that ELA pull-outs only provide 30–45 minutes of English enrichment per day. Consequently, some of the inexperienced teachers observed depended on their bilingual students to translate lectures and written assignments for their

more Spanish-dominant peers. When asked about her use of sheltered instructional practices, one fourth-grade teacher indicated that bilingual students were paramount, “One of the strategies, the big strategy I use is that I use other students. For example, I always use bilingual students to help me with monolingual students.” Although bilingual peer tutoring can be a very effective practice, overreliance on bilingual students for translation can create a situation of dependency.

For example, Myra, a beginning-level ELL student from Mexico, never addressed her teacher directly, preferring to speak to her through her bilingual translator, Andrea, who was assigned to be her peer tutor early in the school year. Even after 5 months of school at Parkland, Myra refused to speak to her teacher directly in English or Spanish and rarely completed assignments without Andrea’s help. This limited access to direct instruction from the teacher also illustrates the unequal power differential between students who master English and those who do not. Furthermore, the student translator is burdened with an extra workload which is rarely delegated to students who are English monolinguals.

Evidently, the majority of general education teachers at Parkland are still learning about how to work with ELLs, while at the same time attending to the diverse needs of all their students: a situation that complicates the role of ELA teachers within the general education classroom. Consequently, language specialists are caught in a double-bind: they can be perceived as a much needed resource and be utilized as such; or on the other side of the spectrum, they may also be seen as a threat to the general education teachers’ authority. Emblematic of this tension is the general confusion that surrounds the working relationship between ELA teachers and general education teachers with regards to their educational roles. This ambiguity is most apparent in the operation of push-in sessions, when the language specialist or a paraprofessional works inside the general education classroom with ELLs.

According to ELA teachers, the push-in aspect of ELA services ideally consists of a collaborative effort between the general education teacher and the language specialist where both teachers work together to develop lessons that would capture all the students in the classroom, including those who are limited English proficient. However, when asked how they work together with the ELA staff, general education teachers overwhelmingly talked about sharing ideas with ELA teachers informally about how to work with individual students who are having problems. Classroom observations confirmed that collaborative teaching and lesson planning primarily occurs within grade-level teams with little input from ELA teachers. Certainly, ELA teachers are accessed as needed, but not as regular contributors in the lesson planning process.

The inferior status of language specialists seems to be a function of how their expertise is put to use and how general education teachers understand the purpose of ELA instruction. One ELA teacher explains how her expertise is not being utilized effectively in the following comment:

> I have found that teachers are very territorial. They feel very uncomfortable letting you teach with them or giving them suggestions. They feel maybe like it is a reflection on their lack of ability to teach these kids, so they feel a little bit intimidated by having you being [*sic*] in there. They don't like the idea of you team-teaching with them. They want you to take these little brown faces and stick them into a corner. That's what they think push-in is. They want us to take these little ESL kids and push them in a corner and do something else with them instead of bringing them all into the classroom.

This unequal status relation between general education teachers and ELA teachers with regards to their educational roles relates back to the discourse of hegemonic multiculturalism and how it plays out in practice. The lower status position of culturally and linguistically diverse students within the school culture extends to the teachers who are experts in identifying and serving their educational needs. In other words, the value of the knowledge that ELA teachers possess is defined directly against the value of the students they serve. Consequently, ELA teachers tend to be shoved into the margins of the classroom along with the "little brown faces."

Furthermore, ELA teachers are expected to accomplish the work of the general education teachers in a shorter time period in isolation from the rest of the class. This situation calls into question the entire concept of the full-inclusion classroom. In this case, full-inclusion is not possible without the help of language specialists who make up for the knowledge that regular teachers may lack and the individualized instruction that they are not able to provide in a whole group English-medium setting. Although language specialists serve more students than general education teachers, the surplus value of their work is not compensated for in terms of money or prestige. Therefore, we can conclude that the idea of full-inclusion privileges English-speaking students who are essentially the only student population fully included.

The Symbolic Devaluation of Native Language

According to the Oakville School District's policy statement on multicultural education programs, one of the central missions of ELA is "to value and respect the home culture and language and to encourage and promote its maintenance, legacy, and worth to a student's self-esteem, heritage, and achievement." However, essential differences exist between the messages conveyed to ELLs in the kindergarten ELA pull-out sessions and those relayed within the general education context about native language use. Even though Parkland is an English-immersion school and the Principal does not believe in bilingual education, he does support "strategic use of native language in the classroom," but expects that students are learning English, not Spanish or any other language besides.

Nonetheless, ELA teacher, Margie Espinoza, who was trained in bilingual education, gives her students full liberty to speak Spanish in her kindergarten pull-out sessions, above and beyond what would be considered "strategic use" as dictated by the official English-immersion policy. One day, Margie pulled the lead researcher out into the hall and explained that she had been "reprimanded" by the district and her colleagues for her extensive use of Spanish in her ELA pull-out sessions with kindergartners. Margie went on to say that in response to this reprimand, she now uses less Spanish and relies more heavily on her bilingual students to translate or help explain concepts to other students who are Spanish-dominant.

Although Margie may believe that she has reduced her use of Spanish, observations of her instructional practices revealed the contrary. During Margie's kindergarten ELA pull-out sessions, students are often asked questions bilingually and their Spanish responses are validated. In fact, she encourages the students to answer in Spanish if they cannot respond in English. Then she provides the students with the English equivalent of what was said, and they are directed to repeat and practice the English version. Therefore, although the children are not taught to read or write in Spanish, they are allowed to speak their native language for clarification and to respond to evaluative questions. The messages that ELLs receive about native language use in Margie's ELA classroom are permissive and validating even though learning English is the goal of the instruction.

Margie uses Spanish as a bridge to teach her students English. However, this bridge is not always available or encouraged to the same extent in the general education kindergarten classroom and often children are completely ignored when they respond to questions in their native language in this full-inclusion setting. Such was the case for Benny, a Spanish-speaking kindergartner from Chile, upon returning to the whole group setting in the library after his ELA pull-out session. The storytelling was almost finished when the ELLs joined the rest of the class on the semicircular steps where they gather for story time in the library. The entire flow of the lesson changed when the ELLs joined the circle. All of a sudden, things became awkward.

Mrs. Short, their kindergarten teacher, singled out the ELLs by telling Mr. Blea, the librarian, to address them in Spanish, which he was not comfortable to do. She then informed him that they were all "monolinguals" except for Ronaldo who was close to testing out of ELA. She then pointed out the other bilingual children in the class who had tested out of ELA, commending one little girl for her knowledge of both Spanish and English. Some of the other kids tried to draw out some accolades from Mrs. Short by saying that they also spoke Spanish, but in reality, they were native English speakers.

Mr. Blea then brought out two carts of books for the students to check out. He told the students, "If your parents speak English, choose from the cart with English books, but if your parents speak Spanish, choose from the Spanish

book cart." The two carts were rolled out into the center of the story circle. Mr. Blea then asked the class where they were supposed to go to check out their selections. Benny shouted out his answer in Spanish as he had become accustomed to doing a few minutes beforehand during his ELA pull-out session with Margie, but was completely ignored by everyone. The room remained silent as Mr. Blea waited for the correct response.

Actually, Benny's answer was correct. He said, "*Llevar el libro a la mesa*" [Take the book to the checkout table]. Unfortunately, this answer was not valid in the English-only environment of the regular classroom. This was quite a shock for Benny, who had just been in an ELA pull-out session, where *all* his responses were attended by Margie. Benny dropped his chin to his chest in apparent embarrassment. He lowered his eyes to the ground and shuffled his little body uncomfortably in his seat, placing his hands under his legs and rocking a little. There was an obvious contrast of messages conveyed within the kindergarten ELA sessions and the general classroom setting, resulting in confusion and frustration on Benny's part.

In ELA kindergarten pull-out sessions, answers in Spanish and English are legitimate, but in the whole-group setting, English is the only language that is deemed "correct." This sets up an obvious power differential between the two languages and also between those students who are fluent English speakers and those who are not. In fact, when asked to contrast the ELA classroom and the general education classroom, one ELA teacher concluded that, "They [ELLs] can understand what we are doing, because we are doing it at their level and maybe challenging them a little bit beyond that, so it's maybe the one time during the day where they feel smart." Because the Spanish bridge is collapsed within the general education classroom, ELLs tend to be silenced, albeit unintentionally, by the manner in which power operates in this context.

This situation is paramount in conveying the idea that English is more valuable than Spanish, and is illustrative of one of the many ways in which native language use is symbolically devalued within the school culture. Although ELLs are encouraged to participate in classroom discussions in the general education setting, they must do so in English in order to be understood by the teacher and to establish themselves as active participants in the community of learners. As students progress to the higher grades, the use of Spanish in ELA becomes evermore restrictive to ensure that ELLs effectively transit to English. However, it is often difficult for bilingual students to truly separate the two languages in their interactions with other bilingual students and teachers; therefore, more overt methods of discipline are employed, including peer pressure, in order to reinforce their use of English.

By the time ELLs reach the third grade, they are already keenly aware that speaking Spanish to teachers and other students in ELA pull-outs and in the general education classroom is not appropriate. Therefore, they begin to

censure their own use of Spanish in the presence of teachers. For example, before a third- and fourth-grade combined ELA pull-out session, two students who had arrived early observed a tiny frog located in an aquarium in one corner of the classroom. The students excitedly talked about the camouflaged amphibian in Spanish. Once the door of the portable swung open and Kelly Walker, their ELA teacher, entered the classroom, the students looked at each other, abruptly ended their Spanish conversation, paused for a second, and resumed their conversation in English.

Later that day, a few minutes into a group activity, Natalia, a bright Puerto Rican girl, asked Martin Leyba, an ELA paraprofessional from Mexico, for some crayons in Spanish. Ms. Walker reacted quickly to Natalia's use of Spanish by reminding her bluntly that she should be practicing her English. "You know how to say all that in English, Natalia, practice your English," she prodded. Natalia dipped her head to the side as if embarrassed and waited for the crayons. Ms. Walker then went on to remind the rest of the students seated at the workstation that, "This is an English zone." In response, Ixchel, a beautiful Mexican girl with long wavy black hair, said, "What's a zone?" Ms. Walker said, "A zone is a place, like this classroom can be a zone." Ixchel responded, "Oh, like Auto Zone. My dad goes there." Ms. Walker chuckled and said, "Yes, like Auto Zone is a place where they have car stuff, this is an English area."

A few minutes after this exchange, Natalia again broke into Spanish with Martin. Martin always answers students who address him in Spanish in English. Later, when we asked Martin about ELL students addressing him in Spanish, he explained that it is just natural for them to talk to him in Spanish because they know that Spanish is his language. This time, Natalia was reminded in a playful manner by her fellow bilingual peers sitting next to her at the table. "Speak English!" they teased. However, a few minutes later, she again addressed Martin in Spanish. This time she stopped mid-sentence by covering her mouth abruptly as if she had just blurted out an expletive. She then switched back to English and repeated her comment.

This example shows how teachers, and sometimes peers, discipline bilingual students to stifle their use of Spanish and communicate in English in the public realm of the fully included classroom and in ELA pull-out sessions, where they are expected to practice their English. Of course, it is also indicative of subtle resistive efforts asserted by bilingual students within the "English zone" or immersion setting. Although students are not scolded for speaking Spanish or ridiculed abusively for using their bilingual resources, they tend to internalize the idea that speaking their native language is wrong. This perspective is supported by third-grade teacher, Elena Valdez:

> Some of the Spanish-speaking kids are already exhibiting not feeling quite comfortable about speaking Spanish as if there is something

wrong with it. I try very hard to get them to understand that I think personally that learning both languages makes you a better learner and a stronger person.

Superficially at least, native language maintenance is encouraged and promoted by teachers and administrators alike as endorsed by the public script of the ELA mission statement cited at the beginning of this section. The majority of teachers at Parkland value bilingualism in rhetoric, yet because Parkland's philosophy of English-language acquisition rests upon English-medium instruction, native language maintenance is delegated to the private space. For instance, the limited selection of bilingual books housed in the library is made readily available to ELLs to read at home with their parents and older siblings, or during free reading time. During class visits to the library, ELLs are directly instructed to choose books from the small cart containing Spanish-language books and take them home to read with a family member.

The underlying subtext here is that native language belongs at home and not at school. Because many immigrant parents are not literate in their native language or have limited formal education experiences, it is doubtful that parents will be able to effectively foster the development of school knowledge in the native language at home. Although, ELLs may retain their ability to converse socially in their native language, English will become their dominant language in the long run. ELA paraprofessional, Martin Leyba, offered his version of the process:

> Well, I don't think you ever lose it [Spanish]. What I think is that the kids' perception of the world is in English. They feel more comfortable; they learn how to count in English, how to read and write in English. I'm talking about the kids who were brought here, who speak Spanish at home and speak English at school. I don't think you ever lose it, but what I think is that they feel more comfortable in English, which is normal.

Evidently, the unavoidable result of English-immersion is subtractive bilingualism, especially in the context where native language and culture is often devalued. In light of the above comment, however, native language loss is not conceived as a result of subtractive schooling, rather a "natural" consequence of the process of acculturation. ELA teacher, Kelly Walker, laments the fact that Parkland's English-immersion program tends towards subtractive bilingualism:

> I really wish there was a way, maybe if we had a supplementary program to the ELA pull-out, some kind of pull-out where kids' native language is being supported and where they are learning to read and write in their native language, if they don't already have those skills, so that they can keep their language and also so it makes the transferring to English better. I don't know how that would work here, but I guess that would be pretty idealistic.

Consistent with the general ambivalence that is at the foundation of hegemonic multiculturalism, Ms. Walker laments the fact that English immersion is a detriment to native language development; however, she considers attempts to remedy this situation as "idealistic" or impractical. Therefore, although she is cognizant of the negative aspects of English immersion, she is disinclined to effectuate changes in the flawed system of which she is a participant. This complacency is actually supported by the positive image that Parkland enjoys in light of its "success" in educating culturally and linguistically diverse students through the assimilative process of English immersion. Because subtractive acculturation is deemed favorable in this context, the loss of native language is considered a natural outcome of schooling and a necessary precondition for equal opportunity, full-inclusion, and educational success at Parkland.

Conclusions and Implications

In conclusion, the issues emerging from our analysis of Parkland Elementary provide some insights into the complex ways in which school communities respond to the changing demographics within the student body. At Parkland, these responses, adaptations and accommodations, can be envisioned as an ongoing experiment as administrators, teachers, and staff members attempt to better understand how to serve immigrant students and their families. Consequently, the school's assimilation agenda is held in conflict with the official script that claims to "value and respect home culture and language and to encourage and promote its maintenance, legacy, and worth to a student's self-esteem, heritage and achievement." Our findings reveal that in practice, native language maintenance and the validation of diverse identities are not active components of the English-immersion curriculum and are therefore not significant elements of Parkland's recipe for success.

The dissonance between ideology and practice elucidated in the ethnographic evidence presented here supports our claim that multiculturalism is being used as a hegemonic device providing a mask that hides the enforcement of sameness as the requisite for success (Jay, 2003, p. 3). As a result, an atmosphere of ambiguity and ambivalence towards the full-inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse students resides within the school culture.

Parkland's vision of success is presented to teachers, students, and parents as an inclusive vision that is centered on affirming the diversity of all learners. However, this affirmation of diversity is realized within the discourse of color-blind ideologies, so as to be palatable to teachers who mainly come from White, middle-class backgrounds and to remain in step with Oakville District's accountability standards. The implementation of the English-immersion model with accompanying ELA pull-out and push-in components was both a practical

and politically informed decision. First, it allowed for minimal disruption of the system that was in place before the arrival of ELLs, thereby reducing the impact on instructional practices within the general education classroom and the school culture at large.

Besides, sheltered English instructional strategies, if applied correctly, benefit all students, not just ELLs by increasing contextual clues through the use of visuals, manipulatives, and other modifications while at the same time, incorporating focused grammar instruction into content area instruction (Echevarria et al., 2004). However, this minimal disruption strategy is only productive as long as the distribution of ELLs per classroom remains relatively even and the total number of ELLs is small. Although this accommodation was "successful" in the initial stages of implementation, as the number of ELLs expands, it is likely that the adapted English-immersion model currently in place at Parkland will become less effective.

As far as the ongoing commitment to educating culturally and linguistically diverse students is concerned, Parkland teachers and administrators are in the process of learning how to best serve these students and their families and are invested in the academic success of these students. However, within this transitional space, success is defined quite narrowly; it is measured in terms of immigrant students' level of assimilation and fluency in English, as well as their scores on standardized tests. Other aspects of student development, specifically the affirmation of the diverse identities present in the classroom through culturally responsive pedagogy, are not a central concern in the reform efforts at Parkland.

At Parkland, diversity is managed, but not affirmed (Nieto, 1991). In other words, the school community actively promotes a hegemonic version of multiculturalism and inclusion, and instructional practices tend to reflect this value orientation. As far as subtractive schooling is concerned, the data suggest that Parkland's English-immersion program promotes the devaluation of immigrant students' native languages and cultures through symbolic and overt practices that discipline students to speak English and conform to the mainstream. This process works by silencing children who use their native language in full-inclusion spaces and in ELA pull-outs where students are expected to practice their English. As a consequence, students tend to internalize the idea that speaking their native language is wrong and begin to censor their use of the native language.

We do concede to the reality that ELLs must become proficient in English in order to be successful academically and English immersion does support this goal. However, learning English does not necessarily require the subtraction of native language and the devaluation of diverse cultural identities. The central problem with English-immersion revolves around the assumption that students must give up their diversity in exchange for full participation and membership in the classroom and society at large.

In order to offset the subtractive undertone of English-immersion models, teachers working in such settings need to break out of the trappings of hegemonic multiculturalism and actively endorse culturally responsive pedagogy and other transformative practices that not only affirm the diverse cultural identities of students, but also support the resources they need to remain vital members of their native communities. Often bilingual children are called upon by their parents, relatives and friends to act as cultural brokers and translators within their homes and communities. This much needed capacity is not developed in English-immersion settings that often ignore the importance of biliteracy (Manyak, 2002).

Furthermore, teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse students, especially those from White, middle-class backgrounds, with little previous experiences or contact with students of color, need to reflect critically on their practices. Denial of the existence of discrimination based on race, justified through the discourses of color-blind ideologies, does not bring us any closer to confronting these destructive forces in schooling and the broader body politic. Teachers need to be aware of the political and cultural nature of their work and be clear about how the hidden curriculum operates in school settings.

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Endnotes

[1] The names of people and places have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect the identity of the research participants.

[2] An ESL Center School is defined as a school that is equipped with an English Language Acquisition Program. Students who are limited English proficient are encouraged to attend these designated schools that are equipped to serve them.

[3] The citation for this newsletter was not included in order to protect the anonymity of participants.