

The Role of Teacher-Talk in a Dual Language Immersion Third Grade Classroom

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Abstract

While Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs promise success in many aspects for linguistic minority and majority students, the job of teachers in classrooms is complex and challenging. This case study investigates the complex and multifaceted role of teacher-talk in a DLI third-grade classroom. Using ethnographic methodology and discourse analysis, it was identified that the bilingual teacher in this third-grade class utilized her teacher-talk to provide support in sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic areas for her students' learning. These four areas of support were closely interrelated in her teaching. All of these four areas of support were necessary for the success of the DLI program and therefore the academic success of the students.

Introduction

Educating linguistically diverse children is a great concern in a multicultural country like the United States. How do we educate our English learning students without sacrificing the student's native language and culture? How do we teach English to them without sacrificing their academic development? These are some of the questions driving bilingual education.

Bilingual education is the most notable, and controversial at times, program for providing better academic opportunities for non-English-speaking students who come to the United States (Crawford, 1989; Hakuta, 1986; Wong Fillmore, 1991). Many different programs exist under the umbrella of bilingual education in order to accommodate the different needs of students from diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Among them, Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs, in particular, are becoming increasingly popular; (McCargo and Christian, 1998, reported an increase from 30 programs in 1987 to 250 programs in 1998).

DLI programs integrate native English speakers and language-minority students together in a way that both English and minority (or target) languages are used, at separate times, for academic instruction. Normally, starting in kindergarten, the program aims to promote bilingual proficiency, high academic achievement and cross-cultural awareness in all students (Christian, 1996). The benefit of DLI programs is that English-speaking children develop a “foreign language” and non-English-speaking children benefit from having instruction in their mother tongue while each group interacts with peers who speak their target language (Christian, 1996; Lindholm, 1990; Valdés, 1997). In these classrooms, all children learn a second language through a means of academic content area instruction.

Most importantly, DLI programs promote additive bilingualism (Lambert, 1975). In additive bilingualism the individual suffers no loss of the primary language and the associated culture. In societies where linguistic and cultural diversity is not valued and the pressure for assimilation is strong, learning English as a second language often results in the loss of the primary language (Wong Fillmore, 1991), that is, subtractive bilingualism (Lambert, 1975). The implication of losing one’s native language should not be taken lightly. Language is directly related to one’s culture and identity. Gloria Anzaldúa convincingly contends: “Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 59).

Minority students can benefit greatly from additive bilingual environments (Lambert, 1987) fostered by DLI programs, wherein students’ native languages are highly valued and their language knowledge is considered a resource.

While the DLI program potentially promises success in many aspects for the linguistically diverse students, the job of classroom teachers is complex and challenging. When students from two language backgrounds are together for content instruction, teachers always have to consider that some students are learning that content through a language they do not speak natively. This means that the language used by the teacher must be modified somewhat, especially in the early grades, in order to respond to the needs of those children who are in the early stages of acquisition (Valdés, 1997).

What makes the task of the DLI teacher distinct is that at all times, regardless of the language of instruction, they are asked to deliver instruction to integrated groups of native speakers and second language learners. Therefore, they must always be mindful of ways to make the content comprehensible to the non native speakers, while still making sure that the lessons are stimulating and challenging to the native speakers (Howard & Loeb, 1998). The teachers have to be competent classroom teachers with a thorough knowledge of the second language learning process. They must also be aware of the sociocultural issues involving the education of minority

children. Furthermore, those teachers who instruct in both languages are required to have highly sophisticated language skills in the two languages. (Christian, 1996; Howard & Loeb, 1998; Lindholm, 1990; Valdés, 1997).

Although we know theoretically what the role of teachers in DLI classrooms should be, there is little study about what this complex task of DLI teacher, looks like as practiced in the real classroom. This study looks into the practice of an experienced classroom teacher in a DLI program in order to describe and analyze how she operates in this unique and demanding program.

Methodology

The Community

The elementary school where the study was conducted is located in one of the oldest communities in central New Mexico. The community has been for several centuries a significant home site for the Hispanic people. Until the late 1980s, this community consisted of native Hispanic New Mexicans (*nuevomexicanos*) who had been living in the area for many generations. The school, therefore, mostly served the children who were bilinguals with English as the official language and Spanish as the vernacular home language. The school, although valuing the students' home language, mostly used Spanish in oral form whereas most of the academic and literacy language was English (Ortiz & Engelbrecht, 1986). The community demographics started to change when a noticeable number of immigrants from Mexico began and continued to arrive in the late 1980s.

Now, the community has a mixed population of *nuevomexicanos* and Mexicans (*mexicanos*) who have settled into the area during recent years. As a consequence, there are three different groups of children in terms of their first language when they start school: (a) English-dominant *nuevomexicano* children whose families have lived in the area for generations who no longer speak Spanish as the home language, (b) Spanish dominant *mexicano* children whose families migrated to the United States from Mexico in recent years, and (c) bilingual children who grew up speaking or hearing both English and Spanish.

Responding to the change in demographics in the community, the school started the Spanish/English DLI program about six years ago to better serve the children of this particular community. Before implementation, the possibility and feasibility of the program was studied carefully by three teachers and the principal, all of whom came to the conclusion that a DLI program would be beneficial to their community's children. In this particular school, the DLI program encourages Spanish-dominant speakers who are mostly recent immigrants from Mexico learn English and maintain their Spanish, while

English-dominant speakers who are mostly the native New Mexican Hispanics learn and revitalize their heritage language and maintain their English. For bilingual speakers, the program maintains and develops their bilingual ability.

The program began initially with one kindergarten class and two first-grade classes with 50/50 model. In DLI programs, there are two major patterns of language allocation: 90/10 models, in which 90% of the instruction is carried out in the non-English language and 10% is carried out in English for kindergarten and first grade, followed by gradual increase in instruction in English, until the ratio is 50/50 by grade 4 or 5; and 50/50 models, in which the percentage of instruction in each language is roughly equal (Christian, 1996). The school currently implements the 50/50 model with the modification of kindergarten grade implementing the 90/10 model.

The Classroom

The study is based on a third-grade DLI class. As part of a longitudinal research project on the DLI program study led by a professor in the university, (in which I have been working as a research assistant), I have had for the past two years the opportunity to observe this third grade teacher. In this classroom, Spanish was used exclusively in the mornings and English in the afternoons. The bilingual teacher, Teresa Martín, taught in both languages. Teresa, a native of New Mexico, is an experienced elementary school teacher of 17 years with six years of teaching experience in a DLI program. She is also one of the teachers who initiated the program in the school. In addition to her extensive experience in teaching at the elementary level, she has an extensive knowledge of second language learning and bilingual education, having studied at the post-masters level.

Data Collection

Ethnographic methods were used for data collection. Observation of the classroom was conducted in a naturalistic setting. I was in the classroom once a week (except for special events such as standardized exam week, field trips, parents conference weeks) to observe. The notes taken during and after the observations included the classroom setting, descriptions of the activities, interaction between teacher and students, and interaction among students. I made audio tape recordings of the classroom while observing. Then the recordings of classroom discourse were transcribed. For this particular study, the transcriptions focused on teacher-talk, in order to investigate the role of the teacher in the DLI program.

Data Analysis

The teacher-talk in this third-grade classroom was analyzed in terms of the role that the teacher-talk assumed for the students' learning. Although Teresa's teacher-talk was somewhat directed by the curriculum and other

requirements of the program, I agree with Gee, Michaels, and O'Connor (1992) that "discourse reflects human experience and, at the same time, constitutes important parts of that experience. Thus, discourse analysis may be concerned with any part of human experience touched on or constituted by discourse" (p. 228). The discourse of the teacher who is a New Mexican Hispanic person teaching in a DLI classroom with a mix of Spanish-dominant students and English-dominant students in a community of predominantly Hispanic population may involve multifaceted, complex messages. The discourse of this particular teacher reflects her pedagogical, socio-historical, cultural, political, and personal beliefs.

Findings

Conceptual Model

The role of teacher-talk in this third-grade DLI classroom demonstrated different types of support for the students' learning. In this study, these different types of support were organized using "the Prism Model" developed by Thomas and Collier (1997). The model shows the interrelationship among the four components that influence language acquisition in a school context for bilingual children. The four components are: sociocultural processes, linguistic (language) development, academic development, and cognitive development. Thomas and Collier (1997) suggest that these components are interdependent and complex.

Sociocultural Support

In the Prism Model, sociocultural processes are in a central position for the second language learning student's development. Sociocultural patterns, such as prejudice and discrimination expressed toward groups of individuals, as well as societal patterns such as subordinate status or assimilation forces at work, can influence students' achievement in school (Thomas & Collier, 1997). The instructional environment in a classroom or a program such as DLI, can provide a supportive environment for students to succeed in school.

Teresa provided support for her students by valuing their sociocultural backgrounds, incorporating their own experiences and knowledge into her teaching. At the same time, she encouraged her students to critically think about their position as Hispanics in the larger society. Teresa's teaching resonates with what Ladson-Billing (1994) calls "culturally relevant teaching." Culturally relevant teaching is:

A pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not

merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right. It is about questioning (and preparing students to question) the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society. (p. 18)

The following describes what Teresa does in her classroom to provide sociocultural support for her students.

Cultural sensitivity

Teresa managed to create a unique atmosphere in her classroom. The class was normally quiet except when the students were working in small groups. Student behavior was under strict control, legislated by the teacher and the class rules. The students followed the rules and listened to the teacher, yet, if someone acted outside the boundary of the rules, Teresa made sure that the individual student followed the rules the next time. In spite of this strict control, the classroom environment was not at all authoritarian. Laughter from the students was often heard, and the students seemed to be genuinely happy in the class. There was a “family-like” atmosphere. Each of the students had his or her own special nickname, given by Teresa. She often offered humorous anecdotes, evoking laughter from the students.

The classroom culture that Teresa and her students created showed congruence with the home-culture of Mexican-origin families described in Valdés’ study (1996). Valdés describes:

Respeto for the mother’s role was very much in evidence in what the children did not do. . . . Even children under 2 years old did not interrupt conversations between their mother and other adults. They did not demand attention, act up, or otherwise disturb her. At most, they sat quietly by her side and listened to the conversation. When a directive was given, it was followed promptly. . . . Out of *respeto*, children were expected to wait until their mother was finished with whatever activity she was involved in before they asked for her attention. Adults were considered to be more important than the children, and children did not expect to control either their mother’s attention or her interaction with others. (p. 120)

Teresa demanded from her students the same *respeto* their parents demanded. She considered her class a family and treated her students as her family. She expected from them what a family member would expect. She even made it explicit to the students that they were a family, as in the following excerpt of her teaching during the pre-reading discussion of the book on Martin Luther King Jr. When a student mentioned that he thought that the book was going to be about a family:

Teresa: (showing the cover of the book) *¿Tú crees que todos estos tal vez son su familia? ¿Hay más que un tipo de familia? Qué tipos de familia—* (Do you think that perhaps all these [people] are his family? There are more than one kind of family? What kind of family—)

Students: *Noooo.* (No.)

Teresa: *Hay familia, por ejemplo de mi hija, de mi esposo, y mis hermanos y mis hermanas y mis padres. Esos son mi familia, ¿verdad?* (There are family, for example, of my daughter, of my husband, and of my brothers and sisters and parents. They are my family, right?)

Students: *Si.* (Yes.)

Teresa: *Y luego también en este salón tengo otra familia, ¿no? Ustedes son mi familia.* (And then, also in this classroom I have another family, right? You are my family.)

Social distance

Teresa used a significant number of directives in her teacher-talk (30% of all utterances during the two hours of her teaching). Frequent use of directives is also a characteristic of the teacher-talk register (Cazden, 1988). However, among all the directives, the imperative form was used more often than the indirect directive. The main function of the use of directives was to instruct the students what to do, but they were also used to get attention of the students.

The use of directives was analyzed using the Brown and Levinson Model (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Cazden, 1988) in order to understand better the socio-cultural context of the teacher-talk in this particular classroom. This sociolinguistic model is based on the following idea: Teachers inevitably engage in face-threatening acts. They constrain students' freedom and criticize their behavior and their work, often in public. Teachers can soften the effects of such acts by utilizing various politeness strategies. Two important strategies are intimacy ('positive politeness') and respect ('negative politeness') (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Perception of social distance between the teacher and students could be seen through how teachers use these strategies.

In her class, Teresa did in fact engage in many face-threatening acts in order to constrain her students' activities and monitor their behaviors. Many of the directives served to constrain their activities in the classroom, as the questions were used in different ways to monitor their behaviors. The frequent use of the imperative form suggests that with the case of Teresa, all the face-threatening acts were softened by the use of positive politeness (intimacy). This shows that the teacher maintained an intimate relationship with the students.

The social distance between the teacher and the students can be seen also from other aspects of the teacher-talk such as use of humor and expression of *cariño* (affection) by the teacher. The intimate social distance between the teacher and the students implies that the teacher showed her students she belonged to their community and to their culture. There was a sense of solidarity among Teresa and her students.

In addition to the frequent use of imperatives, Teresa quite effectively used humor in her teaching, inviting giggles and laughter from the students. For example, at the beginning of the math activity, she forgot to distribute the calculators to a group. As soon as she discovered her mistake, she apologized and also said; *“Es que no les quiero para nada”* (The thing is, I don’t care a bit about you). It worked effectively to make the group members understand that she did not mean to forget about them and that she did indeed care about each of them. In fact, the group members did not seem to be offended by this comment. On the contrary they seemed to appreciate the special affection.

The use of diminutives and nicknames were quite apparent in her teacher-talk as well. The diminutives did not change the meaning but rather the function. She called on her students using affectionate words like *“mi amor”* (my love). She also called the students by nicknames, such as “bubbles,” “Michael Jordan,” *“el profe”* (the professor), *“ojitos verdes”* (little green eyes), *“girasol”* (sun flower), *“preciosa”* (beautiful), “beautiful dreamer,” “happy heart,” “curly top,” and more.

All these special qualities that Teresa incorporated in her teacher-talk contributed to an environment that was very close to the students’ home culture. The teacher played the role of *“una maestra”* (teacher), but also of a family member. She showed a lot of *“cariño”* for the students. In return, the students showed a lot of *“respeto”* for Teresa (Valdés, 1996).

Making connection and building onto the students’ experiences

It was noticeable that Teresa, in her teacher-talk, connected various subjects to something that was relevant to the students. For example, when Teresa was talking to the students about the style of the 1950s, she asked them to remember scenes from the movie “Grease,” as many of the students had seen the movie.

When explaining complex concepts to the students, she introduced examples that were connected to the students’ lives. When talking about discrimination and racism, she connected the story of Rosa Parks to what they now know:

Teresa: Rosa Parks y otros lo ayudaron en su lucha. Hoy cualquier persona puede ocupar el asiento que desee. Entonces, sabemos que ahora Ustedes, yo, Sra. Takahashi, todo el mundo puede entrar a

cualquier lugar y sentarse donde ellos quieren. (Rosa Parks and others, helped him in his fight. Today, any person can sit in any seat that he wants. Then, we know that now you, I, Ms. Takahashi, everybody in the world can go in to any place and sit down where they want to.)

Students: *Si.* (Yes.)

Teresa: *Sólamente, ¿qué cosa nos separa ahora? Si vas a un restaurante y alguien fuma mucho y quiere fumar después de comer su hamburguesa, ¿puede sentarse donde ella quiera?* (Only thing, what separated us now? If you go to a restaurant and somebody smokes a lot and wants to smoke after eating her hamburger, can she sit anywhere she wants?)

Students: *No.* (No.)

Later when the discussion focused on racism, she explained this complex concept by providing a hypothetical scenario:

Teresa: *Vamos a decir que esta fuente de agua que tenemos aquí fuera del salón. ¿Saben cuál?* (Let's say that this water fountain we have here outside of the classroom, do you know which one?)

Students: *Si.* (Yes.)

Teresa: *Vamos a decir que todos los niños quienes apellidos empiecen con M no pueden tomar de esa fuente. Si tienen el apellido que empieza con M no se permite tomar de allí. Antonio torció la cara. Qué extraño, ¿verdad, Antonio? Es cierto que no puede tomar nadie quien el apellido empieza con M, agua de esta fuente? Entonces, yo no puedo tomar agua de allí. Soy Martín. ¿No puedo?* (Let's say that all the children whose last names start with M cannot drink from that fountain. If you have the last name that starts with an M is not allowed to drink from there. Antonio turned his head. How strange, right, Antonio? Is it right that no one whose last name starts with an M cannot drink water from this fountain? Then, I can't drink water from there. I'm Martín. Can't I?)

Students: *Si, puede.* (Yes, you can.)

Teresa: *Pero acabo de decir que la ley dice que no puedo. Entonces, yo no puedo. Qué extraña es esa ley.* (But, I just said that the law says that I cannot. So, I can't. How strange this law is.)

Students: *Si.* (Yes.)

She then went back to the discrimination against African-American people in the book about Martin Luther King Jr. The students thought for a while and then started to argue that it would not be fair or right.

Creating multicultural awareness

In addition to the two different languages and cultures the students deal with on a daily bases, Teresa introduced many other languages and cultures in her classroom. When somebody sneezed in the class, they have learned the German saying, “*Gesundheit*” (bless you), and the student who sneezed says “*Dankeschön*” (thank you). When I came to the class to observe, they knew to say, “*Ohayou-gozaimasu, sensei*” (good morning, teacher) in Japanese. Many children were interested or curious to know Japanese words. In this classroom the students appeared to have become more interested in other languages and cultures.

When the class was discussing different race groups, she shared her own opinion about wanting to have many different groups of people in the school:

Teresa: No tenemos mucha gente afroamericana en nuestra escuela y sería muy bonito si tuvieramos más, ¿verdad? Y mucha gente indígena, mucha gente anglo americana, mucha gente de países asiáticos, todo eso sería muy bonito. Pero esa gente no vive en esta comunidad. Por eso no vienen aquí. Pueden venir si quieren, ¿verdad? Todos pueden venir. (We don't have many African Americans in our school and it would be very nice if we had more, right? And many indigenous people, many Anglo Americans, many people from Asian countries. All of these would be nice. But, those people don't live in this community. That's why they don't come here. They can come if they wanted to, right? Everybody can come.

Creating social awareness

In the same lesson on Martin Luther King Jr. discussed before, after explaining what discrimination and racism are, she went further to discuss the students' and her own race:

Teresa: Si eres de descendencia mexicana o indígena tampoco podías tomar de la fuente de blanco. Esto es algo que el libro no habla porque sólo está hablando de blancos y negros. Pero el mundo no consiste solo de blancos y negros, ¿verdad? Hay muchas razas, y aquí en esta ciudad había restaurantes donde mis hermanos no podían entrar porque son de descendencia mexicana, o hispana, lo que quieras llamarlo. Y ahí, decía el rótulo, 'no se permite negros, mexicanos y perros'. (If you are of Mexican or indigeneous origin,

you could not drink from the white's fountain either. This is something that the book does not tell because it is only talking about the whites and blacks. But, the world is not consisted of only whites and blacks, right? There are many races, and here in this city there were restaurants where my brothers could not get in because they are of Mexican or Hispanic origin, whatever you want to call it. And there the sign said 'blacks, Mexicans, and dogs not allowed'.)

She continued:

Teresa: *Si vivían en los tiempos de cuando mi hermano era joven como edad de high school, Ustedes no podían entrar a McDonald's si McDonald's decía que no se permitía ese tipo de gente, que solo se permitía gente blanca. . . . Es importante que traten de entender. Ya no es así, ¿verdad?* (If you lived during the times of when my brother was young like high school age, you could not get in to McDonald's if McDonald's said that they didn't allow that kind of people, that only allowed white people. . . . It is important that you try to understand. It's not like that any more, right?)

Students: *Si.* (Yes.)

Teresa: *Bueno, también había una ley que no permitía a los niños negros y blancos asistir a la misma escuela. Es así hoy?* (Well, there was also a law that did not allow black and white children go to the same school. Is it like that now?)

Students: *No.* (No.)

Teresa: *No, no es. Cualquier niño puede venir a esta escuela.* (No, it's not. Any child can come to this school.)

Teresa also cited the example of her own brothers when they were young of not being able to get in to a movie theater because they were of Mexican origin. The students knew of the particular theater because it is located not too far from the community.

Linguistic support

Linguistic processes, another component of the Prism Model, consist of subconscious aspects of language development, as well as the metalinguistic, conscious, formal teaching of language and acquisition of the written system of language (Thomas & Collier, 1997). In a DLI program in the early grades of elementary school years, the linguistic support for the students' first and second language development is essential for academic success. Teresa provides linguistic support to her students in various ways.

Teacher-talk as input for second language learning

Some of the characteristics of teacher-talk, such as shorter and simpler sentences, and slower and clearer speech, also resemble the talk provided to second language learners. Speech that promotes comprehensibility for the second language learners includes clarification requests, comprehension checks, repetitions, and rephrasing of their own and the learners' utterances (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Long, 1981; Wong Fillmore, 1985). Since the language used by the teacher is an important source of linguistic input for second language learning students, whether the teacher is able to modify her language use in ways that make it work as language input affects a student's second language learning in the classroom setting (Wong Fillmore, 1982).

Teresa always appeared to be conscious of having second language learners in the classroom. She spoke clearly and relatively slowly, especially when she was talking to the entire class. She modified her teacher-talk in order to provide the students with comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982). Questions were used very effectively for confirmation, where questions were utilized to check the students' comprehension, and for clarification, where questions were utilized to clarify students' responses or teacher's instruction. Here are some examples:

For confirmation (comprehension check), she asked:

Teresa: *¿Entonces el papel que tomó fue uno de los ayudantes? ¿Podríamos decir?* (Then, the role that he took was one of the helpers? Could we say?)

For clarification, Teresa was explaining to the class that they were going to be like marionettes hanging by the strings:

Teresa: *Hay una liga. ¿Saben lo que es una liga? Una liga aquí metida en su cabeza y hay como un ganchito deteniendo la liga. ¿Pueden demostrar eso?* (There is a suspender. Do you know what is a suspender? A suspender is in your head and there is something like a hook holding the suspender. Can you demonstrate that?)

During her talk she provided concrete examples to explain the subject content. For example, when she was talking about how people dressed differently depending on the period, she explained:

Teresa: *¿Qué tal si me quiero vestir como de siglo dieciocho? Quiero poner el vestido que es largo bien amplio y quiero ponerme guantes y cargar un parasol y sombrero grande.* (What if I want to dress up like in the eighteenth century? I want to put a dress that is long and wide and I want to put gloves on and carry a parasol and a big hat.)

When Teresa had to explain an activity, she explained the process the students should take, step by step, confirming their comprehension along the way. Reading aloud while writing on the board also provided students extra help in order to understand what she wrote.

All these efforts made by the teacher to accommodate second language learners contribute creating comprehensible input for the students. These adaptations and accommodations made for second language learners increase the comprehensibility of the instruction and foster continued language and cognitive development. Wong Fillmore (1985) asserts that language learning occurs when students try to figure out what their teachers and classmates are saying and when teachers, through their efforts to communicate with learners, provide them with enough extra-linguistic cues to allow them to figure out what is being said.

Teacher-talk as a language model

Teresa was conscious of being the language model for both the second language learning students and native speakers. She often repeated what she said and what a student said, for the entire class—sometimes with the exact words and sometimes by rephrasing it using different words. She repeated students' one-word answers in full sentences, and sometimes in correct forms, as in the examples below:

Repeating a student's speech with a complete sentence:

Teresa: *Cuatro. Y luego multiplicamos cuatro por dos centavos. Y sacamos este producto. ¿Cuánto cuesta?* (Four. And then we multiply four by two cents. And we get the result. How much?)

Student: *Ocho.* (Eight.)

Teresa: *Ocho centavos para comprar esos b's.* (Eight cents to buy those b's.)

Repeating students' speech in correct form/language:

Student: *Ella, era, luego se ha,* seat empty. (She, was, then she has, seat empty.)

Teresa: *Había un asiento vacío.* (There was an empty seat.)

Student: Ah hah, *en el frente y ella se esntó allí y bus driver dijo hm* (Ah hah, in the front and she sat there and bus driver said hm)

Teresa: *El conductor dijo.* (The bus driver said.)

Student: *El conductor dijo no puede sentar ahí y dijo . . .* (The bus driver said she cannot sit there and said . . .)

Teresa's teacher-talk played the role of the language model in both Spanish and English for both native speakers and second language learners. Throughout her teaching, she facilitated her students' language development in both Spanish and English, introducing new vocabulary and developing academic language in the content areas. She spoke clearly and slowly most of the time, and often spent extra time for the second language learners by either making them repeat after her or by waiting patiently for them to speak in their learning language.

Language separation

The two languages in Teresa's class were kept strictly separate (Spanish during mornings and English in the afternoons). She never used translation, and she insisted the students speak the designated language. Whenever she found the students speaking the non-designated language, she guided them to say it in the designated language by telling them that she did not understand what the students said:

Teresa: *¿Cómo te sentiste, Diana?* (How did you feel, Diana?)

Diana: *Bien.* (Good.)

Teresa: *¿Bien? ¿Cómo?* (Good? How?)

Diana: *Estaba* a little nervous. (I was a little nervous.)

Teresa: *No entiendo.* (I don't understand.)

Diana: *Nerviosa.* (Nervous.)

Keeping the two languages separate promotes second language learning among students and has long been a crucial element of immersion classes (Cohen & Swain, 1976; Lambert, 1984). According to Lindholm's (1990) list of criteria for successful implementation of the programs, keeping the two languages separate is an important criteria for DLI programs to succeed.

Activities promoting second language learning

Teresa implemented activities that involved Total Physical Response (TPR) (Asher, 1982) in a variety of subjects. In the activity called the "literacy drama," pairs of students acted out what they read with the class. Each member of the pair took a different role. As the teacher called out different scenes, they acted the scenes out in silence. This activity promoted both language learning and reading comprehension. Often in other occasions, she asked her students both individually and in small groups to help her with certain jobs. These jobs varied in the level of complexity from asking them to bring a piece of paper to sending a complex message to another teacher in the school. She would send a student who is an English learner to take a message

to another teacher who is a monolingual speaker of English. When asking this kind of job, she was careful to provide adequate and clear directions so that the student would succeed in completing the job.

In activities involving TPR, students listened to the teacher's command and responded only through actions. They did not have to speak. As the students' language ability improved, the teacher's commands got increasingly complex. This teaching strategy agrees with the natural approach (Krashen & Terrel, 1983), which indicates that second language acquisition follows the stages of natural first language acquisition by children. This approach focuses first on concrete and relevant listening and reading activities to build comprehension, allowing listeners a silent period before they are ready to speak. Teresa created many listening opportunities for the students by providing them with periods of just her talking.

Teresa also used many songs to make learning fun for many different subjects. In one example, she used a song about a rancher in Mexico purchasing different animals for teaching a math subject. On another occasion, she used the song of a New Mexican songwriter to prompt the students to write a critique of the song in order to send it to the songwriter.

Second language learning through content area

Second language learners in schools often go through classes just for conversational or basic language skills before moving on to content area instruction in their second language. They then have difficulties when they are seemingly fluent in the second language in conversational uses, but they lack the academic language proficiency required for reading academic texts and performing academic tasks (Cummins, 1981; Ovando & Collier, 1998). In Teresa's classroom, where the students were learning their second language through the content areas, they acquired conversational language skills and academic language skills simultaneously. Teresa did not wait for the students to learn conversational skills to teach them the language needed for their content areas. The teacher's job in this classroom was to teach the same academic materials to all students including native speakers and second language learners, like in content-based second language classes. Second language instruction that is integrated with instruction in academic content subjects is a more effective approach to teaching second languages than methods that teach the second language in isolation (Genesee, 1994). The goal of learning a language is not grammatical perfection, but meaningful communication among students and teachers.

Cognitive Support

The cognitive dimension of the Prism Model is a natural subconscious process that occurs developmentally from birth to the end of schooling and beyond. It is important for educators of linguistically diverse students not to focus too much on the language learning, neglecting the cognitive development aspect, especially at the elementary school level (Thomas & Collier, 1997). Teresa used her teacher-talk effectively to support her students' cognitive development by providing opportunities for them to think beyond just acquiring subject content knowledge.

Use of questions to enhance thinking

One of the characteristics of teacher-talk is the use of known-answer teacher questions (questions to which the teacher already knows the answer) and the immediate evaluation of the student response (Cazden, 1988; Edwards & Westgate, 1994; Heath, 1983). This pattern of teacher-student interaction is known as "teacher Initiation," "student Response", "teacher Evaluation" (I-R-E), and it is sometimes characterized as a feature of the classroom culture. Teresa employed this pattern of I-R-E in her classroom in a different way than simply to induce a student's reply, as in the following examples:

Teresa: *Niños, díganme, por favor, ¿de qué piensa se trata este libro?* (she calls on a student) *Angela.* (Children, tell me, please, what do you think this book is about? Angela.)

Angela: *De Martin Luther King.* (About Martin Luther King.)

Teresa: *Bueno. ¿Por qué piensas eso?* (Good. Why do you think so?)

In this example, Teresa asked known-answer questions to the students and provided an evaluation to the answer, but she did not stop there. She often asked why they came up with those particular answers. She provided her students an opportunity to think further about their answers.

In another example, Teresa again used the I-R-E pattern but used the structure to explain a new concept to the students, rather than to test them on what they already knew. Teresa utilized the I-R-E structure to elicit the students' thinking and introduced to them new knowledge.

Teresa: *¿Cuál es otra palabra que quiere decir no-ficción?* *Marco.* (What is another word for non-fiction? Marco.)

Marco: *¿Ficción?* (Fiction?)

Teresa: *No. ¿Qué quiere decir no-ficción?* *Elena.* (No. What does non-fiction mean? Elena.)

Elena: *Que eso no pasó.* (That it didn't happen.)

Teresa: *No. Eso es ficción. Rodolfo.* (That is fiction. Rodolfo.)

Rodolfo: *¿Pasó?* (It happened?)

Teresa: *Que si pasó, ¿verdad? Muy bien Rodolfo. Que si pasó.*
(Yes, that happened, right? Very good, Rodolfo. That it happened.)

Scaffolding

A great deal of Teresa's teacher-talk involved the use of interrogatives. The frequent use of interrogatives kept the students' attention and involvement during the classroom discourse. In addition to the functions of confirmation and clarification mentioned in the previous section, the use of questions provided guidance to the students. Teresa used her teacher-talk effectively for scaffolding students' cognitive development by constantly interacting with her students and using questions as guidance.

Scaffolding is a metaphor for gradual assistance provided to the learner by the more experienced individual (Bruner, 1986). According to Bruner, for learning to take place, children must have opportunities for interaction with adults. These adult-child interactions are initially scripted and performed by adults, but then children take an increasingly bigger role in creating and performing the joint task. Teresa used the interrogatives to help students move on to the next step of a task or move on to the next level of learning. For example, when the students were introduced to calculators for the first time during math, she guided them step by step how to use them:

Teresa: *Aprieten el uno. Aprieten el tres. ¿Qué ven en la pantalla?*
(Press one. Press three. What do you see on the screen?)

Student: *Trece.* (Thirteen.)

Teresa: *Muy bien. Ahora esperen. ¿Qué vamos a hacer? ¿Vamos a sumar o multiplicar?* (Very good. Now wait. What are we doing? Are we going to add or multiply?)

Student: *Multiplicar.* (Multiply.)

Teresa: *Multiplicar. ¿Ven una X en su calculadora?* (Multiply. Do you see an X on your calculator?)

Student: *Si.* (Yes.)

Teresa: *Apriétenlo. Ahora, cuidadito. ¿Tenemos decimales?*
(Press it. Now, be careful. Do we have decimals?)

Student: *Si.* (Yes.)

Teresa: *Busquen ese decimal. Apriétenlo.* (Find that decimal. Press it.)

Her teaching mirrored the concept of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development to explain the process of learning and development among children. The zone of proximal development is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined through independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Teresa provided the students assistance through her teacher-talk so that they could reach the next developmental level.

Teresa also maintained constant interaction through dialogue with the students during her teaching. Vygotsky, in his social interaction approach, suggested that language is a socioculturally mediated product and that children's cognitive skills developed through social interactions, therefore language, with more mature members of society (Vygotsky, 1978). When applying the social interaction approach to a classroom context, learning can be achieved through constructive dialogue between teacher and student and when the teacher fully understands the student's needs and assists his/her internalization of the content (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Teresa, in her teaching, allowed the students to progress at their own pace by having the students take turns to see her individually.

Interactive classroom

Teresa kept her classroom highly interactive. Frequent use of group work created opportunities for students to interact among themselves and helped the process of collaboration with peers, which enhanced students' learning. Many activities were student centered, as she did not just lecture, but let students take part in the activities. In small groups, the students interacted with each other and played the roles of learner and the more experienced member of the group, depending on the task. When talking to the entire class, she interacted with the students by asking questions. And when they worked individually, she created a certain setting in which she could interact with each of the individual students.

As Ovando and Collier (1998) point out, creating an interactive classrooms is not a simple job because the teacher needs to understand the interwoven relationship among language learning students' linguistic, sociocultural, and cognitive processes. The nature of the teacher-student interaction is especially important for the academic success of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Teachers who understand the linguistic and sociocultural issues can develop communicative competence in response to meaningful situations in the classroom. This means that these teachers are better prepared to provide equal opportunities to all students (Minami & Ovando, 1995).

Academic support

Academic processes in the model include all schoolwork in language arts, mathematics, sciences, and social studies for each grade level (K–12 and beyond) (Thomas & Collier, 1997). Teresa provided academic support to her third-grade DLI students. She was able to provide linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural support through the academic content instruction. In spite of having second language learning students in all times of her instruction, Teresa did not compromise her instructional content equivalent of any regular third-grade classroom.

Conclusion

Teresa's multifaceted role as a teacher in the DLI program demonstrated support for her students' learning, in many different yet interrelated dimensions. While the program promises success in many different aspects, the job of the teacher is indeed complex. The support she provided in her teacher-talk in sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive and academic areas is all necessary for the students' success in school, and for the successful implementation of a DLI program. As Thomas and Collier (1997) note, the four components are interdependent, and if one is developed to the neglect of another, this may be detrimental to a student's overall growth and future success.

The study reinforces what Valdés (1997) emphasized in her article, that when we look into programs like DLI we need to remember that “while language is important, it is only one of many factors that influence school achievement for language-minority and majority children” (p. 395). In fact, all teachers can learn from DLI classroom teachers as the teacher-talk modified for second language learning students, which also helps scaffold students' academic learning. And all second language educators can learn from this classroom, where the conditions for second language learning were optimal. The students learned their second language through meaningful contexts of learning their content areas.

When we consider the school failure problem among minority children, Teresa's teaching practice deserves special attention. Specifically, Hispanic (or Mexican origin) students have experienced a long history of educational problems, including below-grade enrollment, high attrition rates, high rates of illiteracy, and under-representation in higher education (García, 1995; Valdés, 1997). What Teresa achieves in her classroom is quite extraordinary for the quality of education that she provides for her students, who are considered to be culturally and linguistically at a disadvantage in this society. The students' home culture and language are valued and supported within the learning environment of the classroom; therefore, there is no miscommunication between her and her students. No student in her class should feel that she/he

is marginalized in the classroom community. She creates an optimal environment for these students to learn. Her students get what García (1991) calls the elements for academic success, “the respect and integration of the students’ values, beliefs, histories, and experiences, and recognize the active role that students must play in the learning process” (p. 383). The supportive environment of the school and community toward the DLI program allows Teresa to be effective with her students. It is not a coincidence that the teachers and the principal had initiated this successful DLI program in this school. As one of the initiators, Teresa understands how the program should be implemented. Most importantly, she believes in it.

In this school, actual members of the school initiated this innovative program, which is, unfortunately, quite rare. Proposals to introduce innovative programs aiming for changing the cycle of reproduction tend to be made by people outside of the local school. The effort for change raised by these external reformers is not always matched by the people working within the culture of the school. Top-down proposals, imposed on the school from outside, are not likely to be successful. Proposals that are initiated from within the culture of the school, which take into account the working life of teachers, have a greater chance of success (Mehan, 1991).

We live in a society that English, therefore the mainstream American culture, is perceived as the language/culture of power (Macedo, 1994, 2000). Teresa’s teaching refutes this powerful social norm, making Spanish, and therefore the Hispanic culture, the language/culture of prestige within her classroom and school. We live in a society that is also committed to maintain the dominant/dominated relationships (Cummins, 1986; Macedo, 1994; Villegas, 1988). Cummins (1986) calls for educators to “redefine institutional goals so that the schools transform society of empowering minority students rather than reflect society by disabling them” (Cummins, 1986, p. 34), what Teresa and the school is slowly but steadily accomplishing.

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