

EXPANDING THE LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRE: BILINGUAL SPANISH SPEAKERS AS  
THIRD LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

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(Under the Direction of Linda Harklau)

ABSTRACT

This research examines the context of third language learning by Spanish-English bilinguals in a U.S. high school. I entered this study with a perspective viewing language acquisition and use as interrelated with ideologies, power and discourses (see Bourdieu, 1991, Fairclough, 1989, Silverstein, 1996, Foucault, 1969/1972). Using ethnographic methods, I was a participant observer in two French I classes that had high numbers of students learning French as a third language. Focusing on the Spanish-speakers in the classes, I conducted interviews with them and took field notes in order to explore how available their additional language competence was to them in French class and in the general context of the school. I also spoke to teachers and administrators and researched local media in the form of newspapers and websites in order to find out how potential multilinguals were viewed at the state and local levels.

I found in some ways that there was a disconnect in the way that a school viewed itself as international and global on the one hand and how the school actually treated immigrant students from other places on the globe. Students still in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes were still seen as remedial and teachers were sometimes surprised to find out that they were in a French class. The focal students, however, were able to resist this remedial

labeling and to both see their additional languages as a resource in learning French, and express a desire to keep speaking Spanish and French beyond high school. Students in both of the classes were also able to illustrate the non-deterministic nature of language ideologies by playing with language and resisting school monolingualism in spite of the subtle and not-so-subtle English-only atmosphere at the state and local levels of the school administration.

**INDEX WORDS:** third language acquisition, multilingualism, immigrant bilinguals in schools, language ideologies

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*This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my maternal grandparents,*

*Jessie M. Durgin and Lewis F. Durgin.*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Spanish-Speaking Immigrants: Potential Multilinguals or Assimilated Monolinguals?**

*“Children who are raised speaking a language other than English are an untapped reservoir of national strength whose linguistic repertoires must be expanded”* (p. 266) (Zentella, 1997).

It's second period at Walsh High School, and Mme O'Riley's Gifted/Honors French I class is studying some new vocabulary. Christophe, a tall, lanky freshman with slicked-back, light brown hair and neat, yet fashionably baggy teen clothes sounds out the French word, “*bienvenue*” and says “oh, it's just like *bienvenido*”, in English (both words mean “welcome”). Christophe has made a connection between his first language, Spanish and his third language that he is in the process of learning, French. Christophe is from Venezuela and has continued to speak Spanish as well as learn academic English well enough to be placed in gifted classes. At one point in my academic career, my analysis of Christophe's ability to recognize a Romance language cognate would not have gone much further than this. I could have cited some studies done on bilingual and multilingual processing and wrote down some other linguistic observations of him and his bilingual classmates. I could have also administered some tests of French words and grammatical structures to see how much the Spanish-English bilinguals were able to recognize in French, using their knowledge of Spanish. I would have probably interviewed some of them too in order to find out more about their language processing abilities. This is an important perspective and will be discussed further in the review of the literature in the next chapter.

However, I have come to believe that this would have left out a very important part of the story. Christophe's linguistic abilities are easily accessible to him in the school and home

environment in which his language learning has taken place. They are also recognized by most of the adults around him, his teachers and parents especially. His identification as gifted has almost certainly guaranteed him an education in which all of his background knowledge will be put to use and valued. But what about the bilingual and potentially bilingual Spanish-speakers who arrived at Walsh High School only to be immediately tracked into ESOL classes (where until very recently few students are identified as gifted)? There the message is “learn English for academic success.” While this message may have merit, it is accompanied by another tacit message “forget Spanish and don’t worry your head with other languages.” This other story, the one that seems lacking from most additional language literature (although not as much in ESOL and bilingual literature) is the story of the political and social context in which language learning takes place.

Here is a scene I did not observe: an immigrant student, (who chose the name Ulises because his English class had just read *The Odyssey*) recently arrived from Mexico goes to the local public library and checks out French language cassettes to study on his own. The next academic year, he signs up for French I, unbeknownst to his ESOL language arts teacher, who is surprised when she finds this out from me. If I had maintained the previous focus on individual language learning discussed above, I would have missed out on much of Ulises’ story. A purely linguistic, cognitive focus on individual learning would have kept me from seeing something that has become a focus of this dissertation: the multilingual potential of new immigrant students. As they are channeled into ESOL classes without much thought for preserving their first (and sometimes second or even third) language skills, how much is being lost to society? As school districts, government and social service agencies and businesses desperately search for bilingual and multilingual personnel, schools unquestioningly enforce this society’s monolingual standard

by viewing English -language learners as deficient until they have learned English. What I am calling into question here is not the importance of English acquisition: these students will not have any success beyond high school without it. I do not believe, however, that learning English precludes other academic pursuits such as learning additional languages.

Ulises began his odyssey in Mexico just a year before this study began. He immigrated with his family to this rapidly growing suburb of Atlanta. When I met him he had been at Walsh for one year and was still in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes. He preferred to do interviews in Spanish. He was in a French I class, but not the gifted/honors class that Christophe was in. His ESOL social studies teacher, Ms. W., told me the story about the French tapes. At this point I became very interested in knowing more about Ulises' story. Learning another language was obviously important to him. He managed to "sneak" into French class in a way, since at least two ESOL teachers told me that additional languages are not usually recommended for English-language learners.

Why was multilingualism initially more within reach for Christophe than it was for Ulises? Why did being in ESOL classes carry the stigma of being deficient?

### **Background of the Study**

Emigration from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries has created a population in many Georgia public schools that is already bilingual in English and Spanish, or that is fast on the way to becoming bilingual. The quote at the beginning of this chapter from Zentella (1997), "children who are raised speaking a language other than English are an untapped reservoir of national strength whose linguistic repertoires must be expanded" (p. 266), is an eloquent statement of the problem. The focus of the research proposed here is to be found in the word "untapped". Unfortunately, these students are not always recognized as having a linguistic

strength, and are instead seen as having a language deficiency, because their first language happens not to be English (Ruíz, 1984). How can bilingual students best tap into their own linguistic strengths? What discourses in the schools and surrounding communities affect students' ability to see themselves as possessors of useful knowledge, instead of deficient "problems" in need of remediation? Through the combined lenses of postmodern theory (hybridity, fluidity, a rejection of the concept of a unifying language, a rejection of the unified self) and language ideologies (why the "standard" is valorized as a linguistic commodity) I examined language use among Spanish-English bilinguals in an Atlanta high school as they studied a third language, French.

For my master's degree research project I conducted a study of people with some background in Spanish in first-year French classes at the university. At that time my interest was mainly in the cognitive, language-processing possibilities of people transferring one Romance language to another. The sociopolitical factors surrounding language did not enter into this study at all. The literature I was reading at the time was purely linguistic.

This dissertation breaks new ground in that it looks at bilingual/ESOL learners in additional (formerly "foreign") language classrooms, traditionally the domain of elite bilinguals. Is the multilingual status of these students being acknowledged in the school and in the classroom? One manifestation of language ideologies (beliefs that people have about language that influence the way they use and talk about language) is the tendency for people in many societies to advocate for one language serving as a standard for all. For example, in African countries this is often used as a rationale for maintaining a colonial language long after the colonizers have left. In my research I wanted to know if this same dominant ideology of the standard (English) prevented their linguistic skills from being recognized (since their skills are

not always evident in English). Lo Bianco (2000) describes the paradox of a given society's supposed admiration for those who can speak other languages by pointing out that as long as those languages are spoken in distant countries and learned by travelers and students, they are appreciated as a learned skill that does not threaten the status of English. When languages are no longer so foreign and immigrants are actually interested in their maintenance, perception changes. As Lo Bianco (2000) puts it, these languages are "No longer a skill, but sedition" (p. 99).

In the following chapters three main themes concerning Spanish speakers as third language learners are explored: the notion of a global citizen; the academic identities of the focal students; and school language policy. In Chapters 4 through 6, I explore each of these themes in turn, as well addressing the questions below that guided my research.

### **Research Questions**

This study addresses the following questions:

- 1) How are language discourses (see Foucault, 1969/1972) manifested in the local media, and in the institutional structure? What discourses about Spanish-speakers and Spanish are taken up by the teachers and other students?
- 2) How do bilingual (and potentially bilingual) Spanish-English speakers in a French classroom in a US school use their languages? What discourses about languages are taken up by these focal students when they talk about the languages that they use?



3) How do these bilingual (and potentially bilingual) Spanish-English speakers in a French as a foreign language classroom regard their own academic and linguistic competence? How do teachers and administrators regard the academic and linguistic competence of bilingual immigrant students?

In the course of reviewing the data, three main themes concerning Spanish speakers as third language learners at the school began to emerge that served to further illuminate the context of language learning (or not) at Walsh High School. In Chapters 3 through 6, I explore each of these themes in turn, as I also relate them to the above research questions.

A note on terminology: throughout the study of language learning/acquisition, certain terms have been used to describe the languages being learned and the first languages of the learners. Researchers writing primarily about teaching English to speakers of other languages usually refer to the entire field as the study of second language acquisition, or SLA. L1 refers to the first language, L2 to the second language and L3 to the third language. TLA is being used in some of the literature to refer to third language acquisition. I will adopt Lamarre and Dagenais' (2004) view of multilinguals to refer to people who speak more than two languages. The distinction between the learning and acquisition of languages has been of great importance to researchers in the past (see Krashen and Terrell, 1983), but for my purposes here I will use the terms interchangeably.

## CHAPTER 2

### FROM L1 TO L2 TO L3: A NEED FOR CONTEXTUALIZED STUDIES BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

When I began thinking about doing a study involving the rapidly increasing population of students in U.S. schools whose home language is other than English, I found little in the way of research regarding third language acquisition; that is bilingual, or potentially bilingual students learning a third language, either while they were still learning English or as simultaneous bilinguals adding a third language to their repertoires in the context of U.S. schools. As will be discussed below, most of the literature on additional language learning in the U.S. focuses either on the difficulties potentially elite bilinguals have with “foreign” languages or on the “second” language (i.e. English) learning of immigrants. I wanted my research to fill in some of the gaps that I found in this literature, and to reflect the changing demographic in the “foreign” language classroom. I also wanted to look closely at research that takes on the context of the language learner, not only in the classroom but also in the sociopolitical context of the school and the place of immigrants and the languages they speak in U.S. society.

My review of the research relevant to my study at Walsh High School took me in several different directions. First I examined traditional approaches to the study of second/foreign language learning in schools to reveal ways in which language learning has **not** been studied. These traditional studies have also provided the model for many of the third language studies, thus highlighting the need for more varied approaches to research in this area. I reviewed third language acquisition studies, which have taken place mostly in European contexts. However, they are valuable because they are at the vanguard of this nascent field. Other relevant research

includes contextual studies of high schools with high numbers of immigrant students, showing how languages are used and taught at the schools. Articles on the specific political context of Georgia (USA) highlight the situation of ESOL programs and Spanish-speaking immigrants.

### **Focus on the Mind of the Individual in Second Language Acquisition Research**

Traditionally, research in SLA has focused on the individual learner in the classroom and how she or he processes the new language system. This focus on *langue* instead of *parole* (in Saussurean terms, 1960) or competence instead of performance (in Chomskyan terms, 1965) has a tendency to leave out any information that is perceived as not being relevant to the language learner's mental processes. This perspective on language sees it as a system to be acquired or learned by genetically predisposed subjects who will then plug in the new knowledge and begin creating original, innovative sentences in the target language. This will theoretically occur as long as they are the correct age, not overburdened by interference, negative transfer and fossilization resulting from an over reliance on an imperfect interlanguage. This view of language learning or acquisition has its principal origins the ideas of Chomsky (1965). Although other factors that influence language acquisition and learning (those that fall into the realm of *parole*, or performance—whether they be associated with first, simultaneous, or additional language learning—are to be the focus of the research cited in this chapter as models for my own work in the sociopolitical realm of language learning, it must be stated here that Chomsky's almost exclusive focus on competence was never meant to be socially irresponsible and is in fact a way of advocating for the linguistic intelligence of all peoples, regardless of how their performances with language are judged by prescriptive grammarians.

Chomsky's influence in SLA is pervasive even though he never writes specifically about SLA, being more concerned with first language acquisition. Chomsky (1988) asked these questions about language,

1. What is the system of knowledge? What is in the mind/brain of the speaker of English or Spanish or Japanese?
2. How does this system of knowledge arise in the mind/brain?
3. How is this knowledge put to use in speech (or secondary systems such as writing)?
4. What are the physical mechanisms that serve as the material basis for this system of knowledge and for the use of this knowledge? (p. 3).

These are questions that, for the most part, still guide much of SLA research and L3 acquisition research as well, as will be shown in the review to follow. Researchers who work in this tradition are concerned with the cognitive functioning of the ideal individual speaker/listener, or in the case of SLA or L3 acquisition, language learner. This tradition continues into the new millennium. Even as recently as 2001, Lightbown and Spada (2001) maintained their focus on factors such as language learners' individual "personalities, their general and specific intellectual abilities and their age" (p. 28). Lightbown (2000) published an article in which she stated that "SLA research in areas such as order of acquisition, cross-linguistic transfer effects, and age factors could potentially explain why some things were so difficult, in spite of effort and good will on the part of teachers and learners" (p. 431). While Lightbown usually writes about Canadian French-speaking children learning English, she has rarely addressed the position of English in Canadian society, relative to French. Some of the difficulty could be that students from linguistic minorities will sometimes resist learning the language of a linguistic majority (see for example Canagarajah, 2001).

Conflict between French and English speakers in Canada has been a feature of Canadian life for at least two centuries, so effects from this political situation are likely present in some way in the classroom.

Research methods in traditional SLA studies have tended to either be case studies of individual learners whose output is analyzed according to a cognitive, psycholinguistic view of language, or classroom-administered tests targeting the acquisition/learning of the particular language feature that the researchers are interested in. Attitudinal surveys have also been used, as well as questionnaires designed to elicit strategies learners use in the decoding process. Thus, quantitative methods have been most prevalent in SLA classroom research.

### **The Complexity of Learning Languages: A Reason to Focus on Context**

In contrast with the study of second language acquisition in North America as described above, there is a long tradition in research on bilingualism and bilinguals to consider the social context of the bilingual in society. Baetens Beardsmore (1982), writing about the effects of bilingualism on an individual's development, notes that there are varying ways in which bilingualism is viewed in the world,

in cases where bilingualism has come about by force of circumstances among groups of people who suffer from social disadvantages, as is often the case with minority migrant populations, problems associated with minority status may well be compounded by the bilingual factor (p. 126).

This awareness of the lower social status of certain kinds of bilinguals was also noted a decade earlier by Haugen (1972),

this is the fact that for many people "bilingual" is a euphemism for "linguistically handicapped." It is a nice way of referring to children whose parents have handicapped

them in the race for success by teaching them their mother tongue, which happens not to be the dominant tongue in the country they now inhabit...Even the Bilingual Education Program...suggests by its wording that it grew out of concern with the children's inadequate English and not out of tenderness toward their native language (p. 308).

The above concern for the sociopolitical situation of the language learner is a perspective that I bring into my research as well. The fact that this perspective is sometimes lacking in foreign and second language acquisition literature does not mean that the researchers are not concerned with students' sociopolitical situations, it simply reflects a different choice of perspective.

Writing about the focus on program models in the literature on language education of English-language learners in the U.S., McKay (2000) describes a situation analogous to the focus on individual, linguistic processes in additional language learning, "although such an approach clearly has its benefits, the danger of focusing on program models is that the complexity of the learning experiences of English language learners may be overlooked" (p. 416). Since program models do not usually focus on factors outside the classroom and are usually based on research done on individual, linguistic processes, this is most likely the case.

Recently, however researchers such as Reagan and Osborn (2002) have filled a gap in the study of foreign language learning in the United States by focusing on issues outside the minds of the learners, "we must ... address the social, cultural, political and ideological contexts in which we teach and in which languages are used" (p. 138). Along these same lines, in a critique of the previous research on Spanish-English code switching, Zentella (1997) noted that "the methodology has been disparate, with little unity between qualitative and quantitative approaches [ . . . ] and the bulk has been at the sentence level, ignoring the larger discourse and social context" (p. 5). My research will take on that larger social context. Following Heller (1999),

who researched language ideologies in a Canadian school my study was a “sociolinguistic ethnography, that is a close look at language practices in a specific setting” (p. 15).

Some SLA research has begun to move from a strictly cognitive, psycholinguistic perspective into one that recognizes that factors outside of the mind also influence language. Hall and Verplaetse (2000), in a critique of traditional SLA research succinctly sum up this view of “language as discrete grammar points, as has been the case in much traditional work on SLA”(p. 11). The socioculturally based view of language found in Hall and Verplaetse views language as “fundamentally communicative, defined by and organized around the linguistic means used by individuals to engage in activities particular to their sociocultural worlds” (p. 11). Hall and Verplaetse, drawing on the work of Leontiev (1981), pointed out that “the inherited biological characteristics of language constitute only the necessary preconditions for the capacity and ability to learn. The fundamental core of what gets learned and the shape it takes are defined by the environment” (p. 8). The environment, in the case of language learning research, can either be limited to the social context of the classroom, such as in the work of Breen (2001), who argues that the classroom should be seen as a specific culture in his review of recent developments in classroom language learning, or expand outside of the school and into the sociopolitical situation. Breen’s work exemplifies the social interaction perspective, that of those who seek to explore “how the external situation of the classroom relates to the internal psychological states of the learner” (p. 125).

Just as a study of language use should not be isolated to individually generated decontextualized sentences, neither can a discussion of language practices in the classroom be isolated to what goes on in an individual learner’s head. Rampton (1995) stated “Language education obviously involves a lot more than technical pedagogic issues” (p.13). Rymes (1997)

expanded on this idea, “Indeed, the best classroom research looks to what students bring to the classroom with them and how their local knowledge relates to classroom activity” (p. 24).

This difference in focus makes it seem as if researchers like Lightbown (as quoted above) are apparently overlooking the work of researchers such as Peirce (1995) and McKay and Wong (1996) who go into great detail in their work as to why some second language learners might or might not be acquiring their second languages. McKay and Wong (1996) asked why it is that some language learners “seem to act counter-productively, using strategies that subvert or oppose the language performance expectations of the situation rather than fulfill them” (p. 578). In order to answer this question, McKay and Wong stated that scrupulous attention must be paid “to the social context of language learning” and established a “contextualist perspective” for their study (p. 578). Thus the sociocultural and sociohistorical/political and anthropological theoretical frameworks with their focus on the larger contexts of learning both in and out of the classroom serve as a way to critique the previous studies and serve as a model on which to base future studies of multilingualism and L3 learning and acquisition. The individual-focused concerns mentioned above in Lightbown, though valuable for the important information about language learning and acquisition that they do provide, cannot account for all aspects of language acquisition (or non-acquisition).

Going beyond the classroom to identify the historical and political forces that shape what the students bring with them into the classroom, which in turn shapes students’ language use and ability to learn new languages is what the work of anthropological and sociohistorical/political researchers such as the above-mentioned Peirce (1995) and McKay and Wong (1996) address. Peirce (1995), for example, pointed out that “SLA theorists have not adequately addressed how relations of power affect interaction between language learners and target language speakers”



(p. 9). Peirce based her study on the “poststructuralist conception of social identity as multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change” (p. 9). Her study participants’ status as immigrant women in Canada greatly affected their learning of English at different times and in different ways. Peirce (1995) showed that one woman’s struggle with her landlord led her to perform complicated linguistic tasks that she might not have been able to reproduce in a classroom, while she was positioned as ESOL “student”.

Canagarajah (2001) could not ignore the sociopolitical situation of his students in Sri Lanka. Writing about the complex relationship his students have to English (they need it for socioeconomic mobility, yet they resist the cultural dominance represented by their American textbook), he used a poststructuralist, critical ethnography perspective to illuminate how sociopolitical factors affected his students’ language acquisition. This perspective allowed him to go beyond whatever individual and cognitive factors affected his students’ language learning to see their complicated struggles with what learning and (not learning) English means in this particular context.

Pavlenko (2002) wrote about how poststructural approaches to SLA, allow[.] us to examine how linguistic, social, cultural, gender and ethnic identities of L2 users, on the one hand, structure access to linguistic resources, and interactional opportunities and, on the other, are constituted and reconstituted in the process of L2 learning and use (p. 283).

While Pavlenko offers many of the same critiques of traditional SLA research mentioned above, she also points out “poststructuralist approaches did build on previous research” (p. 277). This is an important point to make in my research as well: if I am critical of the L3 studies outlined below it is only because there is so much more to be done, especially in the area of context.

Without these early L3 studies, however, there would be nothing from which to build upon. Pavlenko's rationale for poststructural methods in additional language research, that they "represent a more theoretically advanced way of looking at social contexts of L2 learning and use" (p. 298) is close to my own rationale for using these methods, as will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

As will be evident below, poststructuralist thinking has not been a feature of much L3 research. This is something that should change in the coming years, however, as more researchers realize that poststructural theoretical perspectives along with an examination of contextual sociopolitical factors offer an illuminating framework in which to explore the multiple factors affecting the language use and language learning of multilingual students.

Other studies that examine closely the sociopolitical contexts of speakers of a language include the work of Sniad (2002), whose non-"standard" English-speaking participants included adult students and their trainers in a life skills job preparation program. Sniad looked specifically at the preparation for interviews (observing classroom interactions and transcribing and analyzing the students' and teacher's comments), as she felt that they would be a rich source for data, given the gate keeping function of job interviews in society. Sniad (2002) views ideologies as "categories through which members of a group come to interpret social practices and, at the same time, influence the ways members participate in interactions" (p. 1). However, she is careful not to fall into a categorization trap, reiterating the fact that "while they do tend to be rather enduring within a society, ideologies are by no means fixed. Rather, language ideologies are seen as a social process, which adjusts over time in response to challenges made by group members" (p. 2). Sniad's work is significant for its use of language ideologies in a non-"standard" speaking community, and for her honest account of how the trainers did not

always perform the “correct”-English-spouting role she expected. Her research is relevant to my work because of the fluid way that she sees language ideologies, as beliefs that, even though they are not fixed and monolithic, can still have an effect on how successful students can be, either in adapting themselves to the “correct” register for hospitality job training or seeing their additional languages as assets to be drawn upon at school.

Urciuoli (1996) studied a Puerto Rican Spanish-speaking community in New York. Here she described how these prejudices are apparent by how people talk about languages, “they generally start by objectifying the languages in question, talking and thinking about them as if they were concrete and sharply defined, even though languages are not always clearly bounded from each other” (p. 2). She also found that the Puerto Ricans in her study were pointedly aware of power relationships in terms of who they could and could not speak Spanish to and how Spanish was censored in the larger English-speaking culture of power. Her close examination of how “English and Spanish feel to people” (p. 164) make this relevant to my work with Spanish speakers in Georgia.

Zentella (1997) also studied a Puerto Rican Spanish-speaking community in New York. In particular, she studied children and their language use, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, providing a good balance and rationale for the utility of both perspectives (lest those language researchers who feel strongly either way feel tempted to completely discount either method), “each community’s use of language is part of a coherent whole, and both quantitative and qualitative methods are needed to adequately analyze linguistic rules in relation to the whole” (p. 6). She analyzed the language the children used in order to describe “the community life revealed in language” (p. 15). Her study is doubly important to mine: she both provided the title for this work (expanding the linguistic repertoire) and made a strong argument for the

inclusion of political factors in language use studies. Echoing Hymes' (1969) call for "confronting the powerful" (p. 52), she states, "the act of supplying or omitting socio-political facts are both political" (p. 14).

Beck and Alleksaht-Snider's (2002) work detailing the political context of Spanish-speakers in Georgia describes in case-study fashion the history and language and state school policy, many of whose effects are seen at Walsh High School, such as the status of the ESOL and foreign language programs within the school. This article clarified the educational context of Spanish-speaking immigrants at the state level, adding depth to the context of my study at the school level.

Heller (1999) studied minority French-speaking students at a French language high school in Toronto. She looked at the way the school implemented linguistic norms and how the students resisted or accepted these norms. Language ideologies came into play in an interesting way here: students were held to monolingual ideals for each of their languages. It was as if the cultural capital they gained from being French speakers in a mostly English-speaking milieu had value only if was "authentic" (Parisian) and not the regional vernacular of the Québécois. Since this study took place outside of Québec, language ideologies of the majority English-speaking population influence how and which languages are used at the school. Heller's rationale for basing her study of language at a school mirrors my own, "schools are important sites of social and cultural reproduction...they have often been sites of struggle over state versus local control... for linguistic minorities, this has often taken the form of struggles over policies concerning language of instruction" (p. 18). These are the same kinds of struggles I found at the state level in Georgia, as the state educational system adjusts to the rapidly growing Spanish-speaking population.

Valdés (2001) studied Mexican and Honduran immigrant English-language learners at a middle school in California. Her close examination of the context in which language learning did (or did not) take place for her four focal students effectively exposed some of the constraints which ESOL students face in U.S. schools, even in areas in which large numbers of Spanish speakers have been present for quite some time. Similar to my study, she examined structural limitations on this population, such as tracking, using qualitative, ethnographic methods.

### **Third Language Acquisition Research**

The field of third language (L3) acquisition is relatively new. The international L3 conference is only in its third year and there are no journals devoted exclusively to it. Research, accordingly, is still in its infancy and has tended to follow the model of the related field of SLA (second language acquisition) rather closely.

In an illustration of how closely most L3 research follows traditional SLA research, these questions asked by Cenoz and Genesee (1998) demonstrate the psycholinguistic, positivist, and quantitative focus favored by many L3 researchers:

Many specific questions remain to be answered. Is multilingual acquisition facilitated by the simultaneous acquisition of several languages or by consecutive acquisition? Is there an optimal age for the introduction of third and additional languages? Is transfer more likely at different stages of multilingual acquisition? Are the effects different or more pronounced in formal versus naturalistic contexts? Does level of proficiency in the first and second languages play a role in facilitating multilingual acquisition? Why does bilingualism positively affect the acquisition of additional languages? (p. 23).

In an update to these same questions, Cenoz, Hufeisen, and Jessner (2001) added two questions that reflect perhaps a developing recognition of the importance of non psycholinguistic factors of

language acquisition, “How does the status of the L1 affect the acquisition of additional languages? What are the children’s attitudes to the different languages?” (p. 2). These are questions that are very important for researchers to ask themselves as they begin to fill in the gaps in traditional language acquisition studies (especially in terms of the context of additional language learning). These are gaps that I hope to illuminate with my research. The fact that the above researchers asked them is encouraging.

All of the above questions from the psycholinguistic perspective do have value, and in fact I asked similar questions of my study participants (see Table 6.2), but I also believe that additional questions should be asked, questions that look more closely at the context of language learning. I believe that Cenoz, Hufeisen, and Jessner’s (2001) questions about status and attitudes do provide part of the answer. I would propose that structural constraints on language use and additional language learning at the societal level (see Bourdieu, 1990, 1991, Fairclough, 1989, Foucault, 1969/1972) provide a good share of an explanation as to why bilingualism and multilingualism can be such difficult goals to achieve in U.S. schools, even when they are goals stated by administrators, teachers, and parents.

Researchers only began asking questions about third language acquisition in the latter half of the twentieth century. The first published research articles on L3 acquisition were case studies of multilingual children, usually children of the researchers themselves. The studies detailed here, even though they are separated by almost twenty years, share the same theoretical view of language as a system, composed of discrete parts to be analyzed. Murrell’s (1966) case study was based on data gathered on his daughter Sandra from birth to about three years of age, as she acquired first a Southern Finnish dialect of Swedish (her mother’s L1), then Finnish (from a Finnish babysitter and through attendance at a Finnish nursery), and finally English. Murrell

himself spoke to his daughter in Swedish and English. The data that Murrell analyzed are first presented as comparisons of words known by the child in three lists that correspond with each of the languages that she speaks. The next sections present a psycholinguistic description of the child's use of language from tape recordings made by the author. Her command of the syntax and morphology of all three of her languages is presented as evidence of the difficulty she had with keeping all three of her languages straight. For Murrell, research methods (a linguistic analysis of his daughter's output) reflected his views, common at the time, that language is first and foremost a system, and multilingualism is therefore fraught with problems, such as those caused by interference. Murrell added that some of these problems include hybrid forms and fusion, as well as inter-sentential code switching which he calls "language mixing" (p. 12).

From the overall tone of the article, it is clear that Murrell has a rather negative view of multilingualism. For example in the first section of the article Murrell characterizes "Multilingual cases of this kind, as **deviations** from the norm . . ." (emphasis mine, p. 10). Murrell continued "Despite their added complexity and the larger number of **difficulties**, . . ." (emphasis mine, p. 10). Thus Murrell focuses on what he identifies as the problems inherent in trying to maintain multiple languages, and the supposed incapacity of the human brain (or at least his daughter's) to do so.

Hoffmann (1985) presents multilingualism in a much more positive light, citing her own childhood bilingualism and strong desire to maintain a bilingual environment at home (German and Spanish) while her children acquired English in England, their home country. She compared the language abilities of her two children over an eight-year period using notes, diary entries, recordings and vocabulary recall tests. Like Murrell, she views language as a system and approaches it from a psycholinguistic, individual learner-centered perspective. She titles an

entire section “Interference”(p. 486). However, although she wrote about language in the way that was the norm for the time (and still is sometimes), she mentioned that their “wrong” replies “revealed linguistic awareness, inventiveness and flexibility” (p. 488). She also acknowledged the social and psychological factors that influenced the children’s acquisition of German, English, and Spanish, reporting that the rich quality of the interactions that the children had in each language contributed to their positive associations.

The above two studies present valuable detailed analyses through use of case studies of how young children can process and make use of three linguistic systems and manage to communicate (more or less) successfully. Of course, the limitations of doing studies on one’s own children are clear: a tendency to see what they do with language as the norm, and as Hoffmann herself put it (using the criteria of a quantitative approach) “the research is constantly in danger of becoming impressionistic, anecdotal, unreliable” (p. 481). Another criticism not from the quantitative tradition, but rather from a sociopolitical perspective would be to note that children like Murrell’s and Hoffmann’s are the privileged children of the culturally elite (university professors) and are thus not subject to the constraints that other less privileged language learners are in society at large. For example, how might the Spanish spoken by Spanish immigrant children in England whose parents work as domestic servants be perceived differently in the same context?

Oksaar (1977) also studied the L3 acquisition of a child, although he was not her own. She followed the language acquisition process of a toddler in Germany as he became proficient in his first two languages, Estonian and Swedish, and then added German, the language used outside the home. Oksaar’s study stands out for this time period as she stated that her “theoretical frame . . . takes into consideration the verbal elements and the cognitive and the



social system”(p. 298). Thus, she was interested in L3 acquisition in “the total frame of action in which the speech activity occurs” (p. 298). Further, she stated that “a purely linguistic analysis would not suffice to explain the choice of items” (p. 299). Although she does not expand on this observation, it offers promise for future L3 studies that look outside the learner.

In another study involving a single learner, Williams and Hammarberg (1998) take a psycholinguistic look at the L3 learning experience of the first author of the paper. They propose a model of L3 production that posits the L2 as the "default supplier" and proceed to analyze Williams' speech in recorded conversations. This article makes a fascinating contribution to L3 studies, even though it is purely cognitive, since it investigates a phenomenon that I have noted in my own acquisition of an L3. This phenomenon is one that seems to support the presence of an additional language "box" in the minds of L3 learners, one that is distinct from the L1 "box" that polyglots might turn to for help when L3 information is unavailable. This article concludes with a positive statement on the potential of monolinguals to become multilinguals, and thus supports the overall goal of promoting multilingualism. It situates L3 acquisition squarely inside the learner, however. No mention of context is made.

In addition to case studies, classroom-based studies of multilingual development have followed a wide range of age groups from children to university level students. Most have relied almost exclusively on quantitative methods and have taken a psycholinguistic, cognitive view of L3 acquisition and learning. Gulutsan (1976), for example, analyzed the attitudes of bilingual and trilingual junior and senior school students enrolled in a French-English bilingual school in an English-language dominant area of Canada (Alberta) to see which students were more satisfied with the French program at the school. Using Gardner and Lambert's theoretical framework regarding language learning motivation, he found that overall, the trilingual students

were more satisfied and more motivated to study French, even when he looked at other variables, such as sex, grade, residency in a French community and socioeconomic status. Using this data as springboard, Gulutsan described other bilingual and trilingual school programs and concluded with a useful articulation of a rationale for the study of L3s. He provides evidence of positive attitudes toward language study in general among L3 students, and evidence that they themselves are positively affected by L3 study.

Gulutsan argues that these are both good reasons to promote additional language study among bilinguals. One weakness of the study was that student attitudes were not linked to students' actual attained proficiency in their languages. The study also could have been improved if Gulutsan had reported the students' linguistic backgrounds. He only noted that English or French was their L3. Gulutsan did allude slightly to the sociopolitical context by stating that "Canada . . . has a policy of official bilingualism and multiculturalism" (p. 311) from which it can be inferred that there is state support for multilingualism at some level.

Mägiste (1984) presents a synthesis of three studies she conducted on L2/L3 learners in Sweden and Germany. The first two studies, both done in Sweden, compared the results of performances on standardized tests of bilingual immigrant students in Sweden learning English with monolingual Swedish students learning English. A third study done in Germany compared bilingual and monolingual German speakers as learners of English as an L2/L3. Mägiste's main research question was whether or not L3 acquisition was easier for the immigrant students, as they had already acquired an additional language (p. 415). The first study showed no major differences for bilinguals and monolinguals learning third a language as a whole. However, when Mägiste analyzed different groups separately, passive bilinguals (immigrants who did not use their home language daily) did better on the standardized tests than other immigrants (those

that did use their first language at home on a daily basis) and slightly better than monolingual Swedish students. Mägiste attributes this result to interference, reasoning that “a potential for interference increases with the number of languages a student knows” (p. 420). The passive bilinguals thus avoid the problem of interference by “mainly concentrating on one language and knowing the other language latently . . . a strategy that maximizes positive transfer effects” (p. 420). Mägiste’s results, however, may have been affected by the fact that over half of the immigrant students had Finnish as their first language. Their results on the tests were the lowest out of all of the groups.

Because researchers such as Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) have documented the low social status and unequal treatment of Finns in Sweden, it is quite possible that sociocultural factors had a strong confounding influence on the findings. Mägiste’s report on a second study in Sweden included bilingual and trilingual students at an immersion school which features instruction in German and Swedish. Students were given a Stroop color and picture test in order to determine interference from L1 or L2. Mägiste explained the Stroop test, “In the Stroop color-word interference task the time it takes to name colors printed in semantically incongruent color words is compared with the time it takes to name colored Xs in a control condition” (1984, p. 417). She found that her 15 trilingual participants needed more time to perform the tasks in their second and third languages than the 15 bilingual students needed to perform the tasks in their first and second languages. She also reported the results of a German study of immigrant students who use more than two languages daily (Jung, 1981). While Mägiste reported that her results with Swedish students confirmed the German findings, this assertion is problematic since the methods used in the German study were not explained. Thus the tasks given to the students were arguably artificial and a more complete picture of the

bilinguals and trilinguals' communicative competence might have supplemented these measures with interviews, for example.

Thomas' (1992) quantitative study of the metalinguistic awareness of second and third language learners utilizes Bialystok's (1991) influential ideas on language processing and metalinguistic awareness in bilinguals. Thomas clarifies Bialystok's thorough but dense definition, defining metalinguistic awareness as "an individual's ability to focus attention on language as an object in and of itself, to reflect upon language, and to evaluate it" (p. 531). Thomas summarizes previous studies by Bialystok showing that bilinguals have more control of cognitive processing than monolinguals do not have due to the increased practice that bilinguals have had with attending to the language itself, rather than exclusively to meaning (p. 534). Thomas' study examined the attitudes of monolingual (English) and bilingual (Spanish-English) students in university level French classes regarding language learning strategies. While Thomas' initial purpose was to link the use of strategies by students to their metalinguistic awareness, however, her results only reported strategies used by multilinguals and do not make the link to metalinguistic awareness.

Like Mägiste, Abunuwara (1992) also made use of the Stroop color test. He used a word-picture naming paradigm to measure L1, L2, and L3 lexical proficiency and to find out in which language (L1, L2, or L3) students at a university in Israel would respond. All of the students had English and Hebrew as either their L2 or L3 and Arabic as their L1. Abunuwara conducted a traditional, quantitative study, in accordance with his interest in "the compound-coordinate distinction" (compound bilinguals learn their languages in a traditional school setting, after L1 acquisition, and coordinate bilinguals learn their languages simultaneously as small children) and "the developmental interdependence-independence hypothesis" of bilinguals. He designed his

research to test this on trilinguals (p. 311). He found that responses were fastest in Arabic (their L1).

What I find most fascinating about this research, however is neither Abunuwara's results nor his research design. It is the fact that he made no mention of the highly charged sociopolitical context (that of being a native speaker of Arabic in Israel) in which these language learners were learning or using English and Hebrew. These are clearly languages of the hegemony in that part of the world, and their acquisition must be affected in no small part by this situation.

In an example of an L3 study that is clearly in the Chomskyan tradition with no consideration of societal factors, Klein (1995) analyzed the acceptability judgments from a Universal Grammar perspective. Looking specifically at preposition stranding, she elicited the responses of junior high and high school students in New York City (ages 12-19) who were L2 or L3 learners of English. She hypothesized that L3 learners of English would demonstrate a higher degree of verbal preposition knowledge than the learners of English as an L2, but that both groups would go through a stage of no preposition use with the verbs that require them. Using a traditional, quantitative design with control and experimental groups, Klein concludes that there are specific tasks that bilingual L3 learners can do better than monolinguals learning L2 (such as correct preposition use with verbs). Her statement of bilingual cognitive superiority in linguistic processing is stronger than Bialystok's (1991), and thus provides additional support for the encouragement of multilingualism. The population that she studied, speakers of Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Italian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu in New York City, represented a rich potential resource for an analysis of the sociocultural and contextual issues that these groups might face but one that remained unexplored.

Another L3 study in a politically charged area was conducted by Valencia and Cenoz (1992) in the Basque region of Spain. They explored the role of bilingualism in L3 acquisition among monolingual (Spanish) and bilingual (Spanish and Basque) learners of English. They tested students through oral interviews and written compositions in English, and analyzed the results using qualitative and quantitative methods. They found that bilingualism had a positive effect on L3 achievement. Valencia and Cenoz (1992) note the significance of social context in L3 acquisition. They remarked, "When one of the languages the bilingual knows (Basque in our study) is a minority language, bilinguals obtain better results in English (the L3) when their Basque is valued and used in the family and in education" (p. 445). This finding has strong implications for those who wish to promote the study of additional languages for bilinguals. It suggests that the sociocultural context is very important and could effect whether or not bilinguals make use of their metalinguistic knowledge to aid acquisition of L3. The study's attention to sociocultural factors, such as the positive climate for Basque use in the community, makes it especially valuable for the avenues it opens for ethnographic study of L3 acquisition. It also has echoes of the bilingual research work of Haugen (1972) and Baetens Beardsmore (1982) cited above. The researchers seem to be approaching a sociocultural perspective as they consider the context of the learners. Nevertheless, they still use the terminology that aligns them with a psycholinguistic approach.

In a further study, Cenoz and Valencia (1994) revisit their 1992 study in an article on additive trilingualism among the same population as the above study. Because of their emphasis on the role of social context, they ground their analysis in a review of the history of the Basque language in Spain, and of the sociohistorical/political context of its use. Due to political events of the past fifty years, Basque has come to be increasingly valued by its speakers, due to its

earlier repression. According to Cenoz and Valencia (1994), it “is an important symbol of ethnic identity” (p. 197). There is an assumption by the authors that all Basque speakers are bilingual, since according to Etxeberria (2004), Spanish is still the “dominant tongue” (p. 185), even though Basque is the official language of the region. The researchers expected to find that bilingualism would be associated with higher levels of achievement in English. It is interesting that this study focuses so narrowly on bilingualism, as the researchers state that they wanted to partial out the effects of “cognitive, sociostructural, social psychological, and educational variables” (p. 198). Their quantitatively analyzed results do show that bilingualism has a positive effect on learning English. The researchers’ discussion of the status of Basque at the beginning of the article, and statements such as “These attitudes [Basque speakers’ attitudes toward their language], and the increasing institutional support of the Basque language, could create an additive cultural and social context that helps to explain our results” (p. 205) indicate some consideration of sociocultural issues in trilingualism. “Institutional support” is a manifestation of power, and of how the increased political power of the Basque people certainly affects how the language is viewed in that society.

Several more recent school-based L3 studies appear to step away from the shadow of traditional SLA influenced studies. Rolstad (1997) looked at L3 learners in a Los Angeles, California elementary school two-way immersion programs (English-Korean and English-Spanish). The L3 students in the programs were either speakers of Spanish or Tagalog for the bilingual Korean program, or speakers of Korean or Tagalog for the bilingual Spanish program. She measured students’ views of their own and others’ ethnic identity and compared their views based on whether they were L3 students in the two way immersion program, bilingual students in two way immersion, or speakers of other languages in English mainstream classes. She found

that overall, students in the L3 program had higher levels of positive ethnic identity than students in English mainstream classes.

Rolstad points out that many students in her sample frequently rated whites higher than their own ethnic groups. However she does not discuss power relationships and discourses in the school and community that might have led to such a result (see e.g., McKay and Wong ,1996; Peirce, 1995). This study is particularly important in that it occurred in the context of a U.S. school with a large immigrant population and also that it did not focus on elite bilinguals.

An even more contextual, sociopolitically based study of school-based L3 acquisition is presented by Dagenais and Day (1998). They take a qualitative look at the L3 experiences of three immigrant students in French immersion programs in three Vancouver, Canada elementary schools. The children's L1s were Polish, Vietnamese, and Spanish. Based on the work of Wells (1986) and Ochs (1993), they view language learning "as a socialization process involving the negotiation of meanings and identities" (p. 379). This view represents a new perspective in L3 studies and a shift away from a cognitive orientation. In keeping with this view, the authors employed ethnographic methodology, following the children for five months and relying on data consisting of classroom observations, interviews, fieldnotes, and the children's schoolwork. Their analysis revealed three main themes: the language learning contexts of the children, their language awareness (analogous to metalinguistic awareness as described in Thomas, 1988), privileged classroom processes, literacy practices and teachers' attitudes on the students as trilinguals and trilingualism. The authors provide a rich depiction of the linguistic environments of the children at school and at home. In a further study, Lamarre and Dagenais (2004) continue to use qualitative approaches to third language learning in Canada, this time focusing on how multilingual immigrant youth view their multilingualism as a resource.



Mondada and Gajo (2001) studied immigrant children at a school in Switzerland. In this study they asked important questions about the linguistic resources of these students. Although they included linguistic analyses of multilingual students acquiring an L2 (French) and an L3 (German), they also focused intently on the sociopolitical context of the school. Similar to my examination of trilingualism at Walsh High School, these researchers looked for “the different ways in which schools acknowledge yet simultaneously reject the rich and diverse cultural and linguistic resources of their migrant students” (p. 238). They concluded that recognition of the students’ multilingual potential depended greatly on the context of each situation and how teachers and bilingual students interpreted them. For example, if a teacher chose not to acknowledge a bilingual student’s contribution in a context in which the first language knowledge would be useful, then, in that context, no matter what the overall philosophy of the school toward other languages is, that multilingual potential is not going to be developed.

In this chapter I described some of the very important work in language learning and acquisition studies that have led to research on the multiple factors involved in multilingualism, be they from the perspective of immigrant bilinguals in society, monolinguals acquiring a second language, or multilinguals acquiring additional languages in a variety of contexts. In all, work on third language acquisition, paralleling work on second language acquisition, began with a strict psycholinguistic and cognitive perspective but has been expanding in recent years to include examination of sociocultural and political factors.

As immigration increases, the reality of multilingual learners in language classrooms increases. More research is necessary so that we can both understand and facilitate L3 (and beyond) acquisition and learning. More qualitative studies are needed that acknowledge the sociocultural nature of what goes on in the language classroom and how what goes on outside of

it influences learning as well. All of the studies cited here have made contributions to the nascent field of third language acquisition. There is much work to be done, and as I hope I have made clear, the study of multiple language acquisition requires multiple perspectives. Expanding research methodology to include more qualitative methods and poststructural theories of language is one way to add these needed perspectives.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

In this study I address French as a third language learning by bilingual immigrant students at one Georgia high school. Research questions include:

- 1) How are language discourses (see Foucault, 1969/1972) manifested in the local media, and in the institutional structure? What discourses about Spanish-speakers and Spanish are taken up by the teachers and other students?
- 2) How do bilingual (and potentially bilingual) Spanish-English speakers in a French classroom in a US school use their languages? What discourses about languages are taken up by these focal students when they talk about the languages that they use?
- 3) How do these bilingual (and potentially bilingual) Spanish-English speakers in a French as a foreign language classroom regard their own academic and linguistic competence? How do teachers and administrators regard the academic and linguistic competence of bilingual immigrant students?

#### **Theoretical Perspectives**

As a language teacher and researcher, I entered this study with a strong belief in the worth of multilingualism and a desire to change the monolingual orientation of most schooling. Postmodernism<sup>1</sup> is the macro theory that informs my work. This is a problematic statement to make, as “postmodernism” is many things, but two specific features of postmodern theory make this framework particularly attractive for my work. One of these features is the focus on the fluid, hybrid nature of language (see Deleuze and Guattari 1980/1987). Like Gebhard (1999) I

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<sup>1</sup> Like Pavlenko (2002), I agree that “poststructuralism, postmodernism or critical inquiry [...] hav[e] a common focus on language as the locus of social organisation, power and individual consciousness” (p. 282). In this chapter I use the term “postmodernism” to discuss my overall theoretical perspective.

believe that “most users of a language [. . .] regardless of whether they are using their first, second or third language, are members of multiple, often hybrid discourse communities that construct multiple hybrid identities that cannot be reduced to a set of predetermined traits” (p. 547). The other aspect is the focus on power and language, which is enacted through what Foucault (1969/1972) and other theorists refer to as discourses.

The hybridity and fluidity of what has been traditionally called the individual (in the humanist tradition), allows for the multiple identities of the language speaker, which extends to the language learner. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980/1987) view of language also recognizes the fluidity and hybridity of language. Just as there is no one fixed, core self, there is no one essential language, “there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages” (p. 7). For example, linguists LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985), while not specifically aligning themselves with postmodern theory, wrote about language variation in the Caribbean in a way that presages postmodern views of language, seeing language as something in which variation among users should naturally be expected and in which idiosyncrasy is the norm when dealing with groups of speakers. They explain that concepts such as “ ‘a language’ and ‘a group or community’ come into being through the acts of identity which people make within themselves and each other” (LePage and Tabouret-Keller, 1985, pp. 1-2). These multiple “acts of identity” that speakers perform correspond to the fluidity and hybridity of the subject, who has no “mother tongue” as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) pointed out. In the context of the study I undertook among Spanish speakers at Walsh High School, for example, the students’ multiple linguistic identities throughout the day (at home and at school) illustrate the above theories. Sophie, for example, as a Venezuelan background Spanish and English speaker raised in the U.S. was a Spanish speaker

at home and at church with her mother. At school, in her classes with monolingual English speakers and monolingual English speaking boyfriend, she spoke English. Of course, within what we might call “Spanish” or “English” exist a myriad of registers and varieties as Deleuze and Guattari noted.

Postmodernism, with its astute examination of power relations and language provides a framework (specifically the Foucaultian notion of discourses) from which to question dominant societal views on language use, and access to language at the institutional level. Pavlenko (2002) expands on this, “poststructuralist inquiry underscores the idea that unlimited access to linguistic resources and interactional opportunities should not be taken for granted in the study of SLA” (p. 287). Language ideologies are one way that discussions of language and power relations have been framed.

A final note on why the theoretical frame of postmodernism is particularly appealing: “Postmodernism doubts the possibility of any totalizing or exhaustive theories or explanations” (Gubrium, 1997, p. 75). I do not expect this research to provide a definitive answer for addressing language diversity in schools. I hope rather that it will become one illuminating portrait of a school in a community in the midst of a linguistic, cultural and demographic transition.

### *Language Ideologies, Power, and Discourse*

At a more specific level, I entered this study with a perspective viewing language acquisition and use as interrelated with ideologies, power and discourses (see Bourdieu, 1991, Fairclough, 1989, Silverstein, 1996, Foucault, 1969/1972). Language ideologies and discourses have provided theorists with rubrics from which to discuss power. Language ideologies, power, and discourses are complex, interrelated concepts that I believe can illuminate issues and

conflicts related to language use in institutions such as schools. There are varying definitions of language ideology (see Woolard, 1998). As stated in Chapter 1, one manifestation of language ideologies (beliefs that people have about language that influence the way they use and talk about language) is the tendency for people in many societies to advocate for there being just one language that serves as a standard for all. For example, in African countries this is often used as a rationale for maintaining a colonial language long after the colonists have left. My own definition of language ideology is that it is this kind of belief that starts out as a desire for practicality and efficiency, in order to assure cohesion and unity, and then serves to discourage linguistic pluralism by appealing for the need for the standard, unifying language. How this is manifested in Georgia will be discussed further in Chapter 6. This study also drew from the work of Silverstein (1979) who defined language ideology as “sets of belief about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p. 193). What my participants tell me about the languages that they use is among my most significant sources of data, along with stated official district statewide educational policy (on websites and in the media, for example).

In order to approach the institutional aspect of this study, I turned to the macro theories of authors who wrote not only about language, but of power and the state as well. Since state-run schools serve as microcosms of a nation, power, ideology and discourses interact within the schools to reproduce the nation’s idealized portrait of itself. An example of this would be the frequency with which American schools (and other institutions as well) displayed messages alluding to the unity of the school and of the nation as a whole after September 11, 2001 (e.g., “United We Stand”). This was a way for the government to appear to be in control of state-run institutions at a time when events had gotten completely out of control. In a discussion of

hegemonic relations implicit in language ideology, Philips (1998), starts with Gramsci's use of hegemony to describe state control through both force and ideology, then goes through the theories of Bourdieu and Foucault and to what degree each of them believed in the implicit nature of ideology:

In Foucault's writings (e.g. 1972, 1980), he is clear that the dominant interpretive perspective of an epoch is experienced as a lived reality, a "will to truth," a discourse that spreads across institutional contexts over time through and in actual specific discourse practices (p. 216).

The "unity" discourse, so prevalent in the past several years, is an example of this will to truth. Foucault (1969/1972) located this in the school in his essay on discourses, as "pedagogy" is his first example:

But this will to truth, like other systems of exclusion, relies on institutional support: it is both reinforced and accompanied by a whole strata of practices such as pedagogy — naturally —the book system, publishing, libraries, such as the learned societies in the past, and laboratories today (p. 219).

Unity, and support of the troops in Iraq are ideas that I saw reinforced at Walsh as I observed during the 2002-2003 school year. The discourse of unity was reinforced through the message of unity through diversity, a theme the school often reiterated in programs such as the international dance presentation. A bulletin board showing support for the U.S. troops in Iraq was prominently displayed in the same wing as the ESOL classes (coincidentally or not).

This study also drew upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Norman Fairclough regarding languages and language use in institutions such as schools. As Fairclough (1989) noted, "nobody who has an interest in relationships of power in modern society can afford to ignore

language” (pp. 2-3). Language use at Walsh was illuminating to my study both in the ways it was and was **not** used. English was everywhere; Spanish had very specific uses. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Schools not only enforce through language, they enforce the language to be used. Bourdieu (1991) articulates how schools and other institutions perpetuate the power code through officially sanctioned or legitimate language and its reproduction in society:

through its grammarians, who fix and codify legitimate usage, and its teachers who impose and inculcate it through innumerable acts of correction, the educational system tends, in this area as elsewhere, to produce the need for its own services and its own products, i.e. the labor and instruments of correction (p. 60).

English at Walsh (the “standard” American variety) was the officially sanctioned language. There was much “correction” to be done in this area, too, as some of the “non-standard” varieties of English that were spoken at the school included Southern English and African-American English as well as the learner English of the immigrant population.

Mondada and Gajo (2001) have asked questions relevant to the writings of Bourdieu and postmodern theorists that provide a partial framework for any study involving school, languages and immigrants. In their study they asked “what makes a school impose a normative vision of language as an object of study within a fixed curriculum?” (p. 236). They further state that their classroom research allows them to work with “identities that are negotiated rather than defined in an essentialist or rigid manner” (p. 236). Spanish-speaking students in the two French classes at Walsh were constantly negotiating the identities of immigrant, ESOL student, gifted, honors, or International Baccalaureate student.



Additionally the work of Silverstein provides a micro level view of language ideology in schools. The presence of multilinguals in U.S. schools is in conflict with what Silverstein calls the “culture of monoglot standardization.” “A culture of monoglot standardization (or Standard) can be demonstrated by showing the ways that this ideal underlies people’s understanding of linguistic usage in their community” (Silverstein, 1996, p. 285). As part of my research at the school and in the sociopolitical context of the school at large, I looked for evidence in the school of the discourse of the monoglot ideal, such as the official ESOL policy for the state that permits only English to be used as the language of instruction.

### **Place of the Researcher**

Postmodern theoretical frameworks (i.e. Rosaldo, 1989) acknowledge that researcher subjectivity inevitably and inextricably affects what is found and what is reported. I approached this study as a privileged, white, female graduate student. I have benefited from the considerable cultural capital that has come my way due to spending a large part of my childhood and adolescence around college campuses and around adults who were engaged in lifelong learning (my mother took thirty years to get her B.A.). That being said, I did not exactly grow up upper middle class. There were times in my life when my single mother received food stamps and I was eligible for reduced lunch at school. Although I did not grow up as a member of a linguistic or cultural minority, I feel that my class background increases my sensitivity to “othering” that occurs in our society, since my social status growing up confined me to the status of economic “other.”

When I graduated from high school, I received no coaching on going to college, and since my SAT scores were dismal, I was not courted by any of the more reputable institutions of higher learning in my area. My aunt gave me a blank check the semester after I graduated and

sent me to community college. It was there that I discovered my talent for French. After two years, I was able to transfer to the University of Texas at Austin, where I majored in French and minored in Spanish. It was at this time that my own interest in trilingualism developed.

After college I joined the Peace Corps and served for two years in Guinea, West Africa. I taught English as a foreign language to high school students who did all of their state-sponsored education through the medium of the colonial language, French. It was not at all uncommon for my students to speak two or three additional languages at home and in their communities.

Multilingualism for Guineans was a given, something necessitated by the trading history in that region. If a Malinké married a Peul, the children learned the languages of both groups (Maninka and Pulaar, respectively). No one worried that children would grow up confused or hindered by knowing more than one language. It happened naturally because people needed to communicate.

In terms of language ideologies, some key incidents shaped my perspective. While I did my student teaching at a high school in Texas, I worked occasionally with the Spanish teacher (even though I was getting certified in French). She was a European-American woman who had spent time in Spain with her military family. She would often tell the heritage Spanish speakers in her class from Mexico that their Spanish was deficient. This was my first conscious moment of realizing that a linguistic ideology was in play, although at the time I did not think of it in those terms. I just remember thinking it wrong and odd that Spanish speakers were not being given their due in a language they had grown up speaking, just because of the predominance of the peninsular variety of Spanish.

When I taught middle school French and ESOL in Texas after getting my teacher certification, I encouraged my Spanish speaking students to use whatever linguistic knowledge they had in order to make French or English easier for them. I tried to get them to value their

bilingualism and maintain their Spanish. This is the goal I still have as I pursue this research.

### **Setting and Participants**

Walsh High School is in the metropolitan Atlanta area. Nicholas County, bordering the eastern side of the city, is known for having one of the highest beginning teacher salaries in the area. Middle class to upper-middle class commuters seek respite from city traffic in the county's countless subdivisions, condominiums and luxury apartment complexes. Two of the area's major shopping malls are located in the county. The town of Walsh has a history tied to the railroad station located in the center of the older part of the town. Trains still run on the tracks through the town, but the station has been converted into a suburban style, family-friendly restaurant. The old downtown seems to be striving for small-town quaintness, with antique shops and locally owned restaurants lining the main street.

Nicholas County has, along with the entire state, seen a dramatic increase in its population of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, with the largest percentage being from Mexico. A local newspaper article on the demographic changes documented in the 2000 census stated that, "[Nicholas]'s Hispanic population grew from fewer than 9,000 residents [in 1990] to 64,000 or more" (Badie, 2002). Yet evidence of the area's changing demographic are barely visible in the few blocks of historic Old Walsh. A few clues do exist, though: a white, wooden, picket-fenced church offers "clases de inglés gratis" and the city hall building has a sign leading to the courtrooms that reads "sala de corte." Inside the city hall, various English-language brochures and newsletters promote "Historic Walsh" and Nicholas County. The only printed information available here for Spanish-speaking residents is a local bus schedule.

The picture changes dramatically less than a quarter-mile away. Along a major highway billboards in Spanish predominate, advertising mobile phone service, food, beer, etc. Strip mall

centers line this highway on both sides. They are occupied primarily by shops catering to a Spanish-speaking clientele, although a few Korean-language businesses are also visible. The quaint, small-town Southern feel of Old Walsh is nowhere to be found.

The Walsh High School building itself was less than two years old at the time of the study, although the institution itself had existed before that. Visitors to the school sign in at the main office, to the left of the main entryway that leads straight to a large cafeteria. Student art lines the wide entryway hall, encased in glass. On the left side of the entryway, a framed calendar announces school events for the month. A small, café-style table and chair along with some artificial plants near the calendar and against the wall seem oddly out of place in the large space, but contribute to the overall feeling that this is a comfortable, well-cared for school. Although the building is still very new, it does not feel sterile. Skylights in several atrium-like common areas throughout the school supplement the harsh, institutional lighting associated with large school buildings. For the first half of the year of this study, visitors had merely to sign in at the office and then wear a visitor sticker that they themselves could fill out. After the winter break, a staff member was assigned to a table placed outside the office to check in visitors and issue them a sticker. I am not aware of any event that would account for this change. It is possible that county security concerns were a factor. While visiting other schools in the same county system, I had been stopped before and asked to show my visitor pass. At Walsh I was never stopped.

The school's enrollment for the 2001-2002 school year was 2,438 (Walsh High School, 2002), making it one of the smaller high schools in a district with school enrollments as large as 4,000. The school's official accountability report (Walsh High School, 2002) listed its "student diversity" as follows: Asian 11.8%, African-American 26.6%, Hispanic 18.4%, White 42%, and

Multi-racial 1.1%. In another chart labeled “Student Data” in the same publication, average daily attendance (94%) is listed with two other features of the school population apparently considered to be of some note: percentage of ESOL students (10.6%) and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch (27.2%).

A particular point of pride for the school is the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The fact that Walsh participates in this elite program is mentioned prominently on the school website. Walsh’s accountability report also mentions the IB program and the scores that students get on their IB exams.

I chose Walsh High School for a variety of personal and research-oriented reasons. Because of my work as a graduate teaching assistant in the university’s college of education, I have worked with many area teachers at different stages in their careers. Mme O’Riley, the focal teacher in this study, became a friend when we were both graduate assistants in charge of teaching and supervising foreign language student teachers. When she graduated with her master’s degree and took a job at Walsh High School, I asked her about the possibility of doing research in her classroom and she enthusiastically agreed. I knew that Walsh High School probably would meet the research criteria I had in mind as well. I also knew that Nicholas County schools had high numbers of immigrants and that Spanish speakers made up the largest group. In fact over the course of this research I found out just how fortunate it was that I was able to do research in a Nicholas County school. According to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, suburban Nicholas County had the highest percentage of foreign-born residents in Atlanta (nearly 17%) and was called “a mini Ellis Island” by a Washington-based immigration think tank (Badie, 2004).

Another aspect of doing this study in this particular place and time in Georgia is that the Spanish-speaking immigrant population is largely first generation, especially the immigrants from Mexico. Unlike the states along the Mexican border (California, New Mexico, Arizona, and my own state, Texas) there is no large, established population of Mexican-Americans. Most Mexicans in the area are recent arrivals. The sociohistorical context that can weigh heavily on minority groups as they negotiate their way through state institutions such as schools (as it did in Texas, see Valenzuela, 1999) was still in the process of being shaped here.

The semester before I began the research, my department placed a student teacher with Mme O'Riley and I supervised her. Thus I was able to observe first-hand several French classes and I concluded that there would be enough Spanish speakers taking French at Walsh in order for me to do the study.

The two classes I worked in were both French I, most often taken by ninth-graders as the first in a two-year sequence to fulfill a college-entrance language requirement, but also including 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. These two classes were not equal, though they were supposedly at the same level. Walsh High School has a system of tracking in place, common in many schools throughout the state. The three tracks at Walsh are technical prep, college prep, and gifted/honors/Advanced Placement. The second period class was designated as a gifted/honors/IB class and was the smaller of the two. There were eleven students in the class throughout the year with a student who left after the first semester and was replaced by another student during the spring semester. At the beginning of the school year, all but one of these students (the one who left at the end of the semester) described themselves as bilingual (their other languages besides English were Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese).

The third period class was designated as college prep. There were usually between fifteen to twenty students in this class. The students in this class were much more transient, much more likely to change schedules throughout the school year and to have attendance problems. Four students in this class described themselves as Spanish-English bilinguals, only two of them remained at the end of the school year to complete the study.

### *Participants*

My focal students were selected on the basis of their answers to a language use questionnaire (see Appendix) distributed at the beginning of the school year. If the students described themselves as being bilingual in English and Spanish, I asked them to participate by granting me a number of interviews on language use throughout the year and by allowing me access to some of their school work in French class. Although there is a wealth of research concerning the distinctions and continua among various types of bilingualism and biliteracy (for a summary see de Mejía, 2002) for the purposes of this study, I am only concerned with students' self-reporting of their language use. If they reported being bilingual in Spanish and English, I took that at face value. Eight students were initially selected as focal students for the study (Ulises, Christophe, Brigitte, Karen, Marie, Mike, Anne-Marie, Gracy). During the year, three of them withdrew for attendance or discipline problems (Karen, Marie, Mike). In the middle of the year, an additional bilingual student transferred into one of the classes (Sophie), and she agreed to join my study. At the end of the school year, I had complete data from six focal students (Sophie, Ulises, Christophe, Brigitte, Anne-Marie, Gracy) and partial data from Mike and Karen. I was never able to get an interview with Marie due to her infrequent attendance (see Table 5.1 for more information on focal students).

Mme O’Riley, as the focal teacher, was also a participant in the study. Throughout the year, we discussed the progress of the focal students and the contrast between the two classes.

### **Data Collection**

This was an ethnographic study in which I participated as an unofficial auxiliary French teacher/ classroom assistant over one academic year, 2002-2003. I visited the school for observations from August until May once or twice a week, weather and transportation permitting for a total of forty-two observations. I also spent ten additional days at the school for interviews or administrative tasks such as collecting permission forms. Most days I sat in class and took field notes. In the French classes that I observed at Walsh, the students knew they could ask me content questions if Mme O’Riley was busy with other students. If Mme O’Riley needed to be away from the room for a moment, I was left with the classes. She introduced me to both of the classes at the beginning of the year as her very good friend (*très bonne amie*) in French. They also knew that I was asking them to participate in my study and that I had asked to be allowed to videotape them and to interview some of them for my study.

I shadowed two of my focal students, following them around as they went through the school day. I attended some special programs presented at the school, such as the international dance presentation that focused on the cultural backgrounds of many of the students at the school and the “scared straight”-type pageant, *Ghost Out* (complete with real ambulances, fire trucks, police cars and the Life Flight Helicopter landing and taking off at the school) presented to discourage drunk driving on prom night.

I conducted a teacher interview with Mme O’Riley and recorded her impressions of various data excerpts during the study. She has also provided me with memos from relevant meetings at the school, such as a library committee meeting concerning the purchase of books in



Spanish. When I was not able to travel to the school, we corresponded through email. She provided data on focal students, such as parents' first languages (not all of the focal students had parents who both spoke Spanish as a first language). She has read and commented on previous drafts of this research, adding invaluable insight to my data analysis. She also carefully read an additional draft of the chapter on the two French I classes, adding her interpretations of my portraits of the students and the classes.

In addition to our informal interactions during participant observation, I conducted brief, formal, audiotaped interviews with students during French class, usually in the teachers' lounge. Each focal student was interviewed three times throughout the year. I interviewed the students in their preferred languages. Karen, Mike and Ulises were all interviewed in Spanish. The rest of the interviews were in English. Translations of excerpts of these interviews are my own. The first interview lasted between three and five minutes and the second and third interviews were longer, lasting between ten and fifteen minutes each. I have a total of eight first interviews (with Ulises, Christophe, Karen, Mike, Brigitte, Anne-Marie, Gracy, and Sophie), seven second interviews (with Ulises, Christophe, Karen, Brigitte, Anne-Marie, Gracy, and Sophie) and six third interviews (with Ulises, Christophe, Brigitte, Anne-Marie, Gracy, and Sophie).

Although I initially wanted to take as little instructional time as possible from the students, my attempts at lunchtime interviews ended when one of my focal students was deprived of lunch altogether because he had spent time with me. I went into each interview with a set of questions, but I modified these questions as the situation dictated.

I also interviewed the principal, the International Baccalaureate program director, the ESOL department head, Ulises' ESOL teachers, the Foreign Language department head and one of the Spanish teachers. Since they were interviewed only once (except for Mme O'Riley and

one of Ulises' ESOL teachers, Ms. Smith), these interviews were much longer and much more in-depth than the interviews with the students. I did interview the staff with guidelines for the questions, but I found that they were usually quite willing to continue talking as long as I was willing to listen.

I videotaped the two classes a total of six times throughout the year. I had planned on gathering extensive video data, but as the study unfolded I found that it was disruptive. Students were quite vocal in complaining about it and it had a pronounced silencing effect on them. I did videotape debriefing sessions with both classes at the end of May.

I used the internet (Lexis-Nexis) to conduct systematic searches of the local newspaper, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, throughout the time period of this study (August 2002-May 2003), using the search terms immigration, Spanish, bilingual, education, Hispanic, Mexican, and Latino. I also researched the Georgia Department of Education's web pages for curriculum guides to ESOL, gifted education, and modern languages. Additionally, I conducted a survey of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* editorial section for the time period in which this study took place in order to find out more about local attitudes on bilingual education.

### **Data Analysis**

I reviewed field notes and interview transcripts as I typed them up during the study. In order to confirm aspects of the study that became research themes (such as the students' language use with each other) I triangulated my observations with additional interview questions and input from other students and teachers. When researching school academic programs, such as the gifted program or the International Baccalaureate program, I relied on student interviews, faculty interviews and web sites at the state, county and international levels (in the case of the International Baccalaureate program, based in Switzerland) in order to get a complete as picture

as possible of how these programs were seen and experienced by the school and the surrounding community.

As categories were established, further data collection centered on elaborating on and confirming or disconfirming their salience or significance, and ascertaining how they worked with other data to create whole for the context of the potential for multilingualism at Walsh.

In the course of reviewing the data, three main themes concerning Spanish speakers as third language learners at the school began to emerge: language discourses about the “global citizen”, an ideal of the school and community at large that turned out to have tacit connotations that had little to do with level of international experience; the academic identities of the focal students as they were tracked and categorized in the school’s “diploma” system; and school language policy including how the languages spoken at Walsh were sanctioned or not sanctioned and how the departments that taught additional languages (ESOL and foreign languages) were kept apart, physically and ideologically (in the minds of the students and staff) at the school. In the following chapters, I explore each of these themes in turn.

## CHAPTER 4

### SOME ARE MORE “GLOBAL” THAN OTHERS: INTERNATIONAL PRIDE AND GLOBAL CITIZENS AT WALSH

This chapter examines language discourses (see Foucault, 1969/1972) at Walsh High School and how these discourses are manifested in the local media, and in the institutional structure. What discourses about Spanish-speakers and Spanish are taken up by the teachers and other students? In answering these questions, I suggest that there was an underlying ideal of how Walsh should be as an “international” school and quite a different way that Walsh actually was in terms of dealing with students from other countries. In this chapter I begin with comments from two key administrators at the school regarding the benefits of being international. I then discuss a high-status academic program and how this program reinforced elite bilingualism. I address structural constraints that limit the multilingual potential of bilingual and potentially bilingual students.

#### **The Global Citizen**

While interviewing principal Jean Roxbury and International Baccalaureate Program director Mickey Harper, I was struck by a term that they both used, “global citizen.” This sounded good on first listen. After all, being a citizen of a world larger than one’s hometown, state or country was something I was interested in promoting as well. Anyone using the phrase “global citizen” was surely committed to the ideas of multilingualism, multiculturalism, and would be interested in the education and welfare of the already bilingual or potentially bilingual immigrant population of the school. Since my study focused specifically on the Spanish-speaking population at Walsh, I wanted to find out if the school community of Walsh (faculty

and students) saw these Spanish-speakers as the kind of global citizens that they wanted their students to be.

Where did this “global citizen” idea come from? In 1996, Atlanta, the closest large metropolitan area to Walsh, hosted the Summer Olympic Games. The city focused on bolstering its image as it prepared to welcome the world. The image that the city seemed to want to project was one of a well-rounded, sophisticated, world-class city, home to the international broadcasting network CNN and to large sports franchises like the Atlanta Braves and the Falcons. This was also a city that wanted it to be known that it had managed to leave its racial conflicts in the past, using slogans like, ‘The City Too Busy to Hate’ (Ambrose, 2003).

This progressive image competed with another image, that of a southern capital city that had had its most interesting architecture destroyed in the Civil War. While the city hosted the games, and for several years afterwards, the Atlanta press documented these local and international image conflicts. While most Atlantans were proud of the Games, the international press sent home stories that added little to Atlanta’s view of itself as sophisticated. In one BBC story, then-governor Zell Miller replied when asked why a person would need a gun, “you might as well ask why should a person have an automobile or a bat or a knife?” (“Atlanta games; Day 7,” 1996).

Around this time, in a sudden show of increased sensitivity to those for whom English might not be the first language, the state legislature amended a bill declaring English the official language of Georgia in order to make exceptions for international visitors. “(a) The English language is designated as the official language of the State of Georgia . . . (d) The provisions of subsection (a) of this Code section shall not apply: (5) To the promotion of international commerce, tourism, sporting events, or cultural events” (“ Official language,” 1996).

Six years after the Olympic Games the city still prided itself on its international flavor. A 2003 editorial in the local newspaper began with this line, “for more than a generation, Atlanta has sought the mantle of ‘the world’s next great international city’” (Beck, 2003). This pride extended to Walsh High School. Perhaps not coincidentally, the International Baccalaureate Program at Walsh also began in 1996.

Hosting the Olympic Games and receiving tourists from all over the world is one thing; welcoming immigrants who wish to stay is quite another. Nicholas County, on the outskirts of Atlanta would fit anyone’s definition of international. The results of a study by the Center for Immigration Studies showed that between 1990 and 1998, Nicholas County’s immigrant population grew by 50 percent or more (Badie, 2002).

While most of the local media coverage (such as the city’s main newspaper, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*) presents a fairly positive view of immigrants, articles are usually “balanced” by quotes from organizations like Georgians for Immigration Reduction. Feature articles tend to present sympathetic portrayals of individual immigrants who defied many odds to succeed in their new homes (such as a recent article on a Nicholas County Mexican couple who opened a tortilla factory, Badie, 2003), but then go on to cite the “problems” that immigration brings, such as gang violence and higher taxes. A 2003 article on Nicholas County illustrates this,

Advocates say the newcomers work jobs Americans shun, such as cutting grass, washing cars and busing tables. They also credit Latinos with giving the community some international flavor. Critics, though, contend that most of the Latino newcomers are illegal immigrants; that they broke the law to get here, and thus should be sent back home (Badie, 2003).

There seems to be in the imagination of most European-Americans in the upper and middle classes a romanticized notion of immigration, so positive stories about struggling and surviving immigrants are not that uncommon in an area in which immigrants also experience hostility. This sort of contradiction is also illustrated in language policies and attitudes as well. Speaking other languages is exotic and makes one more “international” and “global”, but new immigrants need to assimilate and abandon their native tongues as quickly as possible. This includes learning English in public schools from teachers who may not have any first-hand experience with learning a new language. According to the Georgia Department of Education’s “official ESOL myths” website “if it was required to know the first language of your students, each ESOL teacher would have to know approximately 1000 languages” (*Common myths and questions regarding ESOL*, 2003).

The idea of the global citizen at Walsh was influenced by and reflected in the larger sociopolitical context of Georgia, a state in which the Spanish-speaking immigrant population has increased dramatically in little more than a decade. In 1990 the total Hispanic or Latino population was listed as 108, 922. In the 2000 Census, that number jumped almost 200% to 435, 227 (*Difference in Population by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, for Georgia: 1990 to 2000*, 2002). This was a city that desperately longed to be seen as “worldly” and “international” but did not know what to make of the new arrivals who insisted on using the languages of their countries of origin. In two communities in suburban Atlanta (including Walsh), proposed local ordinances prohibiting signs for businesses in languages other than English became a hotly debated topic. In one community, Smyrna, city officials described signs in languages other than English as being “a threat to Smyrna’s public safety and community cohesiveness” (“A sign of intolerance,” 1996). In Walsh, the ACLU filed lawsuits on behalf of store owners with Spanish

language signs on the grounds that the Walsh ordinance was unconstitutional (Jones, 2000). In both communities, city officials cited safety issues, such as firefighters or police not being able to read signs in case of an emergency, but newspaper stories about the Smyrna and Walsh sign controversies point out that clearly visible numbers adequately direct emergency personnel to the correct locations. The Smyrna case, in which the city officials cited “community cohesiveness” is indicative of the real issue here: assimilation. Using languages other than English may be tolerable during the Olympics, but for immigrants who plan on staying it becomes a threat to the English-speaking community. The message here seems to be: we’re willing to be an international city—but only from the outside in—not from the inside out. We might be willing to have our children study another language in school, but we don’t need to see that language on signs (excluding our favorite Mexican restaurant, of course).

Here are the excerpts from the interviews in which “global citizen” was used. When I asked principal Jean Roxbury if all students should be required to study an additional language she replied:

JR: I really do. I think they should start in elementary school. I do. I think that foreign language should be embedded in what we teach kids all the way through elementary school. Also I think that if we really want to be good **global citizens** I think we should speak other languages, even though we don’t see that . . . But I also think that it’s good for kids if you look at how we learn and I think that if they started early and we started teaching foreign languages we’d probably do better in all subjects. (JR 3/7/03)

Likewise, when I asked IB director Mickey Harper how important learning another language was in the IB program, he also invoked the term “global citizen”:

MH: It’s very important because one of the philosophies of the program is intercultural



thinking or understanding and also again, being bilingual because of our global society—and that’s one of the aspects of the program is to be a **global citizen**. So we feel that learning another language is very important as far as the student’s progress later on in life and their lifelong- being a lifelong learner and being able to relate to all types of people is very important within the concept of the IB program, is being able to relate to the cultures of other people. (MH 5/21/03)

One aspect of the ideal global citizen is apparently foreign language education. Both of these administrators (Mickey Harper is also an assistant principal) talk about the importance of learning other languages. Jean Roxbury advocates early foreign language education and Mickey Harper even mentions the importance of being bilingual. The principal positions herself here as being an enlightened other in opposition to those who do not see the need for early foreign language instruction, “I think we should speak other languages, even though **we** don’t see that”. However, she is actually in line with popular, mainstream opinion that supports foreign language learning for English-speaking monolinguals while at the same time rejecting first language education for immigrants. As Tse (2001) notes in her book on the U.S. language debate, “some of the same students who are denied the opportunity to develop their heritage language during their formative years in school are, in junior high and high school, encouraged to become bilingual by learning a (new) ‘foreign’ language” (p. 54). Ortega (1999) goes even further by noting that, “hegemonic beliefs among FL teachers and educators perpetuate misconceptions of language-as-resource for the elites and keep minority students and teachers away from the FL profession” (p. 248).

The focus in fact seems to be on the U.S.-born, English-speaking background students at Walsh who can be made into “global citizens,” not students who actually come from other places

on the globe. For example, Mickey Harper's mention of "the cultures of other people" leaves out the possibility of people from other cultures being present in the Walsh IB program.

Mickey Harper acknowledged that within the international structure of the IB program, the possibility for "delivery" of content in French, Spanish or German exists, but that Walsh is not set up for it. So, while students from linguistically different backgrounds could, in theory, participate in IB, for some reason school resources are not spent on it. I asked him if ESOL students are made aware of the IB program and recruited into it:

MH: . . . Now, if we were a true, full IB program, which means that we could deliver in different languages that would be a different story. We could deliver in Spanish, we could deliver in French... because the program, although here our language, uh what we call language "A1" is English, your language other than A1 could also be French, or a number of other languages, your language B could be English . . . but unfortunately, of course, we don't have that luxury where we do have the authority to deliver in another language. (MH 5/21/03)

So, in theory, if resources were available, a student population not yet academically proficient in English would be able to complete assignments in Spanish, and have English be a supplementary language. As de Mejía (2002) finds in her study, however, "in spite of the variety of language options permitted, there was no evidence that the IB programme promoted bilingual teaching in general in international schools" (p. 21). In the IB program then, "international" is apparently construed simply as an elite set of students who have already been channeled into Advanced Placement classes. For example, Harper compared the IB program clientele to AP students. The image of a "global citizen" in an "international" program at Walsh is most likely therefore a fluent English-speaking student who has already learned to play the game of schooling in the

United States very well. Well enough to have parents and resources available that get them tracked into Advanced Placement level classes.

Nevertheless, at Walsh, there was also a ready-made population of other “global citizens.” These were the immigrant students, students from places like Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Honduras, Haiti, Korea, Vietnam, China and Ecuador (to name only a few countries represented). ESOL department head Victor Harris reported that, “over 50% of our students are Spanish-speakers and probably close to 70% of the Spanish-speakers come from Mexico”(VH 4/24/03).

As the study proceeded, I became interested in knowing whether or not the teachers and administrators were recognizing these truly international citizens as such. Were they seen as “global citizens”? The school rhetoric about the international nature of the Walsh community was evident in the various student, parent and faculty publications. The PTSA newsletter, *Walsh News*, featured a paragraph about one way in which the school acknowledged its diversity, “we just finished with our International Week . . . a celebration of 15 dances from around the world. It was wonderful watching the dancers in their native costumes with brilliant colors and designs as they expressed the customs of their heritage. We are richly diverse at Walsh and are proud of all the students who shared their ethnic heritage with us” (*Walsh News*, 2003, p. 1). As well-intended as such a program was, designed to show off the school’s multicultural heritage, it was a perfect example of what Banks (1997) describes as, “quick solutions to problems related to race and ethnicity . . . such as marginalizing content about ethnic groups by limiting them to specific days and holidays” (p. 71). So Walsh can enjoy the diverse heritage of its students, as it only lasts a week out every year. There is also an assumption that students with an “ethnic heritage” enjoy the privilege of sharing this heritage. Hornberger (2000) also describes this

situation as an ideological “paradox wherein a traditionally standardizing education is increasingly called on to make room for and promote diversity” (p. 173). This paradox creates situations in which diversity is only desirable on a surface level.

One of the publications that the IB program produced at Walsh included a “Walsh High School Faculty International Profile.” It featured an article entitled, “We are many- coming together as one. The Walsh High School Community.” The rest of the stapled and photocopied publication consisted mostly of travel anecdotes from faculty at Walsh, equating being a global citizen with cultural tourism. A list of faculty born in other countries included a teacher born in St. Croix, not a separate country at all, but a United States Territory. Also on the front page was a list of “comments” about foreign travel, three out of five of which were negative, such as “getting my wallet stolen from my purse in Mexico” and “experiencing the hostility of the people who live in Bermuda towards the tourists.” Foreign travel was something to be proud of, but it did put one at risk for losing purses and facing hostility.

The Walsh High School Accountability Report, a slick brochure produced for parents and community members, was clear on some of the challenges the school faced by having to educate immigrant and “other” students, “Although Walsh is one of the most diverse schools in the county, its students achieve some of the highest SAT scores in the state” (Roxbury and Hendrix, 2002). Here, “diverse” seems to be seen as a potential liability.

So, being international at Walsh meant “coming together as one” and occasionally (like, say, during International Week) coming out from the larger group of “one” and showing your “brilliant colors.” The ideology behind these assimilationist ideas was traced by Banks (1997):

the liberal utopians who envision this ... visualize a just and equitable society in which individuals from all cultural, ethnic, regional, and religious groups are able to fully

participate. However, for this kind of equitable, modernized society to emerge and blossom, individuals must be freed of their communal, primordial, and cultural attachments..." (pp. 132-133).

At Walsh, being from somewhere else was fine, as long as that somewhere else was contained and partitioned from the rest of the life of the school.

At the state level, an examination of the Georgia Department of Education's websites provided an official perspective the teaching and learning of additional ("foreign") languages in public schools. A completely separate site was devoted to the state's ESOL program. This separation is reflected in most public schools, including Walsh High School. On the Languages and International Education home page, the opening paragraph begins, "Today foreign language skills are vital to national defense, law enforcement and economic security" (*Languages and International Education*, 2003). Apparently knowing languages other than English is a skill necessary only in emergencies and for the defense of one's homeland. Thus, some of the contradictions present in the dueling desires to be both international and yet not *too* international that are present in the way Walsh High School handles its ESOL students (marginalized in a separate wing of the school, in need of remediation and generally not placed in elite programs) and yet is proud of its international flavor (participation in the IB program, International Week) are present at the state level in the way in which ESOL and foreign language programs are presented on the internet. While the foreign language page is called "Languages and International Education," apparently even at the state level ESOL students are not quite "international."

So who does get to be international? At Walsh, the attitude seemed to be that studying other languages and becoming international was fine, desirable even, if English had already been

mastered, and one was college-bound. Maintaining an unarguably useful first language like Spanish however, was not on the agenda.

The potential bilingual skills of Spanish-speaking immigrants were perhaps not as important as getting up to speed for U.S.-style educational practices, such as frequent standardized testing. ESOL department head Victor Harris spoke about his view of priorities for English-language learners. Maintaining a first language (in most cases Spanish) and becoming bilingual was not one of them.

RN: I know a lot of times students ... haven't had a chance to even go to school in their first language. Do you think it would be worth it, or maybe just a little bit, it would be worth it for them to have some uh, native- classes for native speakers?

VH: I think it would be helpful. I think that uh, that what would be more helpful is for those same students to be able to get, um a great deal of support and mentoring outside of the school day. I think that's more crucial than just the in-class language-literacy ... for that type of student, some kind of program outside of the school day: a mentoring program, an after school tutorial program... would be as important as continuing to develop literacy in their native language if that isn't only during the six-hour school day.

(VH 4/24/03)

Mr. Harris does not seem to be opposed in principle to the students maintaining their bilingualism. In fact his attitude toward the students shows concern that they get the skills necessary to succeed outside of the classroom. Delpit (1995) would certainly agree that the acquisition of these skills is important, but she maintains that access to the power code "Standard English" is not the only thing an educator should give to linguistically diverse students. Teachers should encourage students to note and play with the linguistic diversity all around

them, “those who have acquired additional codes because their ... language differs significantly from the language of the national culture may actually be in a better position to gain access to the **global culture** than ‘mainstream’ Americans’ ... rather than think of these diverse students as problems, we can view them instead as resources who can help all of us learn ... how to become citizens of the **global community**” (p. 69, emphasis mine). Here Delpit is talking about linguistically diverse students as members of the global community, or at least as resources better able to become part of this community than their monolingual peers. Unfortunately, her view is in contrast to the view of who is global at Walsh.

In order to find out more about the attitudes of the Walsh administration concerning the potentially global Spanish-speaking immigrant students, I decided to ask more about these students’ backgrounds. When I asked Jean Roxbury about where the Spanish-speakers at Walsh were coming from, her feelings about the Mexican immigrant students became very clear. I had not even mentioned Mexican students in particular and she proceeded to tell me exactly why they were problematic:

JR: Now we’ve seen them coming from a variety of different countries. We’ve got a lot of South American countries represented. We have a very large portion from Mexico ... and I know I’m making generalizations here, but a lot of the young people that come to us from Mexico less schooled. So we see a great portion of that population coming to us [who] may not have a 6<sup>th</sup> grade education. They come to learn some language skills, not necessarily to get a degree. And really what they’re doing is trying to increase their marketability for a job. Then we see a number of people that come to us from South American countries ... a lot of them are really trying to find ways to finish their education ... some kids are just here to learn some language that have no intention of

graduating and yet we're supposed to be working with all kids to try to get them through high school but that's not where their focus is. (JR 3/7/03)

Here, she carefully differentiates between South American and Mexican students. She seems to allow the South Americans entry into the potential for global citizenship after all, she says, they, "are really trying to find ways to finish their education and they're wanting to go on to college." A class-based distinction in who is a "global citizen" begins to emerge. At Walsh, most South Americans with the resources required to immigrate to the United States were members of their home countries' economic elite and had considerable cultural capital before they even arrived here. Most Mexicans, on the other hand, came of economic necessity and arrived in the U.S. with far less cultural capital.

The knowledge and skills that they bring with them from home are not valued in U.S. schools. So, for Ms. Roxbury and Mr. Harris, the Mexican immigrant student is in need of help in order to become global. Apparently a truly "global citizen" needs to already know how to do school in the U.S. and do it well, like getting placed in AP classes and knowing how to get to college.

Perhaps even more than the Advanced Placement program (in which high school students can take upper tracked classes that will give them college credit if they pass an exam), the IB program seemed to exemplify the ideal global citizen at Walsh. The program was relatively new (a preliminary program started in 1996). I sought and collected all the IB program brochures available at Walsh as a way of investigating why the IB program was in place there. What attracted administrators to the program? One answer seemed to be in the "international" status afforded by participation. International here seems to mean Europe only though. IB is based in Switzerland. Interestingly, the Walsh brochures seemed to reproduce (intermittently) the British



spellings one would find in European published materials in English. Here are some excerpts from IB brochures (all in English) at Walsh:

Through comprehensive and balanced curricula coupled with challenging assessments, the International Baccalaureate Organisation [British spelling] aims to assist schools in their endeavors [not British spelling] to develop the individual talents of young people and teach them to relate the experience of the classroom to the **world outside** . . . strong emphasis is placed on the ideals of **international** understanding and responsible citizenship (emphasis mine).

The use of British spelling possibly indexes increased cultural capital of Britain and Europe in general. Interestingly, the British spellings are not consistent. In another excerpt, the brochure takes on an inclusive tone:

Designed as a comprehensive curriculum that allows its graduates to fulfill requirements of the vigorous national systems of education, the IB is based on the pattern of no single country. It provides students of **different linguistic**, cultural, and educational backgrounds with the intellectual, social and critical perspectives necessary for the adult world that lies ahead of them (emphasis mine).

Students in the IB program at Walsh may have had different backgrounds, but they had better all have assimilated to mainstream U.S. academic success in order to even be in the program, as these requirements attest:

Profile of an International Baccalaureate student . . . At Walsh High School, we encourage **any and all students** who want to challenge themselves academically to seriously consider entering our International Baccalaureate program [. . .]

The successful International Baccalaureate student would . . .

[. . .] speak and write the English language clearly and effectively

[. . .] have proficient written and oral skills in either French, German, or Spanish

(emphasis mine).

A list of application criteria makes it clear that only a student with the kind of resources that socioeconomic privilege can provide would be a successful candidate,

The evaluation criteria for entrance into 9<sup>th</sup> grade pre-IB course work is:

- performance at 85% in all subjects
- recommendation for honors level classes
- a composite score of 80% or above on last achievement test
- completion of a “student inventory sheet” with parental approval
- a hand written paragraph of student’s reasons for interest in IB
- a “letter of recommendation” form completed by core teachers.

Although a student with non-English literate parents might be able to fulfill some of these requirements, the nebulous “recommendation for honors level classes” would prove to be a formidable obstacle, given that I never found a straight answer from teachers about how students are placed in these classes.

Since two of my focal students at Walsh, Christophe and Brigitte, were in this program, it is true that some Walsh IB students were from “different” linguistic backgrounds. However, these two students were already in honors/ AP type classes and were also South American immigrant students, not Mexican or Central American. Nor had either one spent time in ESOL classes at the high school level.

Even while advocating multilingualism and global citizenry, IB director Mickey Harper had to say that Spanish-speaking ESOL students were not being recruited into IB precisely

because of their bilingualism:

RN: OK. Um, in my research here at Walsh, I've noticed this is a very international school—

MH:—Correct.

RN: And there's a lot of students from a lot of different countries, immigrant students, um you know, people whose parents are here just temporarily. I was wondering if ESOL students are made aware of the IB program and recruited into the IB program.

MH: Yes they are . . . usually a lot of the ESOL students are very gifted, very bright, their barrier is language. And that would probably be their own obstacle as far as being a participant in the program in that, again you would have to be at a very high level in each particular area. Maybe math would probably not be a problem . . . but the language aspect of it would usually be the thing that basically keep them from being full participants in the program. (MH 5/21/03)

At the international level there did seem to be concern in the IB brochures with the perception that the program was only for a certain few:

The IBO strategic plan stresses the need to assure that its programs are not viewed as being for an academic or economic elite . . . This is particularly relevant in North America where over 80% of the IB schools are public schools with economically and ethnically diverse populations (2002).

But the recruiting brochure at Walsh did little to bridge the gap academically or socioeconomically. In all, then, monolinguals or token bilinguals can be global citizens as long as their dominant language is English, while much more fluent bilinguals can be excluded if their dominant language is not English. The “global citizen” is a construct more defined by

socioeconomic factors than by language spoken or cultural experience.

Since 1996, in the 2003-2004 Georgia General Assembly legislative session, a bill to amend the English as official language law has been introduced that would do away with any exceptions, including a provision that prohibits the publication of any state documents in languages other than English (“An act to amend article 4 of chapter 3 of title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the official state language,” 2004). Apparently, even though this bill was not passed in 2004, the Olympic glow that encouraged a tolerance for other languages has since worn off with some in the state legislature.

Were the potential bilinguals (and potential trilinguals) of this study being acknowledged as having linguistic and cultural skills that made Walsh a global school? Or were they being seen as deficient, in need of remediation that focused on English acquisition (as well as the acquisition of U.S.-style study skills) above all else?

Expanding the concept of the global citizen is the only way that Walsh can hope to become the truly international school it seems to want to become. To paraphrase an advertising campaign of the 1970's<sup>2</sup>, a bilingual mind is a terrible thing to waste.

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<sup>2</sup> “A mind is a terrible thing to waste”, an advertising campaign used by the Ad Council starting in 1972 to benefit the United Negro College Fund.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE ACADEMIC AND LINGUISTIC IDENTITIES OF THE FOCAL STUDENTS

In this chapter I will talk more about the two classes that I worked with and the focal students, and discuss the academic identity of these potentially bilingual and multilingual students. Specifically I seek to answer the following research question:

How do these bilingual (and potentially bilingual) Spanish-English speakers in a French as a foreign language classroom regard their own academic and linguistic competence?

How do teachers and administrators regard the academic and linguistic competence of bilingual immigrant students?

#### **Tracking at Walsh**

When I began working with these two similar courses (both French I), I quickly noticed how different they were from one another. I soon realized that it was a result of the school's track system. One of the first things to know about how students were academically regarded at the school was to know which track they were in. Harklau (1999) noted that, "tracking is a major force in the differentiation of linguistic and academic environments encountered by adolescent language learners in American high schools" (p. 51). Oakes and Wells (1997) commented on the sociopolitical reasons for ability grouping in U.S. schools,

historical and contemporary cultural norms about race and social class inform educators', parents', and students' conventional conceptions of intelligence, ability, and giftedness [...] these prevailing conceptions of and responses to intelligence are grounded in ideologies that maintain race and class privilege through the structure as well as the content of schooling (p. 483).

Table 5.1  
Focal student information

**2<sup>nd</sup> Period**

Focal students	National background	Track/ grade level/ academic placement 2002-2003 school year	Parents' occupations	Length of time in U.S.	Preferred language in interviews
Christophe	Venezuela	College Prep/ Freshman/ Gifted/IB	Father-MBA student; Mother-Spanish teacher	5 years	English
Brigitte	Ecuador	College Prep/ Freshman/ Gifted/IB	Father- works in tortilla factory; Mother-daycare worker	10-11 years	English
Anne-Marie	Mexico	College Prep/ Freshman/ Gifted/ honors (switched to honors during this school year)	Single mother sells vitamin supplements	11 years	English
Sophie	Venezuela	College Prep/ Sophomore/ Some gifted and honors classes	Mother and father work together installing wallpaper	14 years	English

**3<sup>rd</sup> Period**

Ulises	Mexico	ESOL/ Junior/ some tech classes and some college prep	Mother and father work at the same grocery store; Father is butcher there	1 year	Spanish
Gracy*	Colombia	College Prep N/A	Father- owns car dealership; Mother-seamstress	Born in U.S. but spent 5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> grade in Colombia	English
Karen*	Mexico	ESOL/ N/A	N/A	3 years	Spanish
Mike*	Honduras	ESOL?/ N/A	N/A	N/A	Spanish

\*Once these students left Walsh High School, their records were no longer available to me. Mike was expelled before I could do second and third interviews with him. Karen was suspended before I could do a third interview with her. Gracy was not at Walsh during the 2003-2004 school year.

There were three tracks in place at Walsh High School. Sometimes these were euphemistically referred to as “diplomas” (as in the three diploma options available to students): college preparatory, technical and honors college preparatory. In addition to these “official” tracks, students could also be placed in one or several elite academic programs such as the International Baccalaureate Program, the gifted program or the Advanced Placement program. Harklau further states in the same article that tracking at the high school level results in completely different classroom environments in which students have varying degrees of access to potentially enriched curricula.

Although I did not observe every class at Walsh, I believe that there were completely different classroom environments created by the differentiation described above. Mme O’Riley for example, said that she used more French in her higher-tracked classes. Higher-tracked students would also make comments about the kind of independent projects that they did for their other classes such as a survey project on romantic love (in which I was a participant), while I heard no similar accounts from lower-tracked students.

I asked several faculty members about tracking. Due to its negative connotation, some teachers avoided the use of the word “tracking” when I would use it. Conversely some teachers would use the word when I was consciously avoiding it (in order to avoid putting them on the defensive about its existence). Here are the takes on tracking from three different faculty members: focal teacher Mme O’Riley, ESOL department head Victor Harris, and Spanish teacher Maggie Rivers:

RN: In general, could you describe the tracking system at Walsh?

MO: There's, uh it's pretty much, you take- there's two different degrees, you can do- actually there's three different degrees. There's the technical diploma, then there's the college prep and then there's also the gifted and IB program. And then within those there's gifted and honors and AP level for certain classes, and uh students-they work- they decide at an early age, an early level which track they're gonna go in. And it's a decision made by parents, counselors and the students themselves. Um, some classes, depending on the number, sometimes classes are often mixed AP and college prep, and those students are just given additional work. (MO, 2/24/03)

Here Mme O'Riley stays mainly in the official school line, using "degrees" at first when I talk about tracking. Then she shifts to "track" as she twice affirms the view that students themselves make the decision about which track they will be in.

As Victor Harris intimates below, however, it seems clear that the lower the track, the less likely it is that a student will be able to choose which track she or he ends up in:

RN: When students do exit the [ESOL] program...are they usually all sent to college prep or some to tech prep and some to honors?

VH: There isn't really, I don't think, a standard or a overriding desire to put students into any kind of a given track. Some students that are really struggling academically, and may not have the background, those students may be uh, advised that it may be easier for them to graduate with a technical diploma than with a college prep diploma, but again it's, it becomes a guidance function with each student. (VH, 4/24/03)



In this instance, Victor Harris is the one who used the word “track”. I did not, but he uses it in a way that downplays its existence. According to him there is no “overriding desire” to classify students. Since graduation is presumably the most desirable outcome for the student, then that is presumably also the goal of the guidance counselor. But it must be stated that this is the most desirable outcome for the school in terms of annual No Child Left Behind ratings and this is another outcome that the ESOL department works to promote. An easier route to graduation might not always provide the best education for immigrant students, but it will make the school look better in terms of higher numbers of students graduating, even if it is with a tech diploma (which does not provide all of the requirements for college entrance).

Spanish teacher Maggie Rivers corrects what she sees as my apparent misconception about any tracking that might be going on at Walsh.

RN: OK- and let me- there's-college prep is like, one track below AP-Advanced Placement and honors?

MR: Actually the diplomas are technical, and/or college prep. Like it's technical prep/college prep. But with the college prep diploma you can have all these hours, you can have distinctions: AP classes, honors classes, with an honors grad distinction, there are other distinctions other than just the diploma. But it's just college prep or tech.

(MR, 3/28/03)

One way to deny the possible overall structural effects of tracking is to downplay it or pretend that it does not exist. Here Maggie Rivers chooses to discuss diplomas as Mme

O’Riley did, thereby making it seem like a choice that students make about what to do after high school (college or work in a “technical” field).

The graduation requirements information sheet available in the counseling office listed the diploma options described by Maggie Rivers above: “Diploma: College Preparatory, College Preparatory with Distinction, College Prep Diploma with Technical Add-on (core courses must be Prep level and above); Diploma: Technology/ Career Preparatory with Distinction (core courses must be technical level and above).” The term “distinction” is not explained anywhere on the information sheet. In the counseling office lobby, where I found the graduation requirement sheet, I did not find any printed information on the gifted program, honors program or Advanced Placement classes.

### **The Two French I Classes**

The two classes I observed (second and third periods) were both French I classes. I chose them because of the relatively high numbers of students who described themselves as being bilingual on my initial language survey (see Appendix). Mme O’Riley described the second period class as honors/ gifted, and also appropriate for students in the International Baccalaureate program. The students who were in the IB program were required to have more participation points than the other students in this class. She also said that she used more French in this class than in her other French I classes. The gifted distinction is one that is given to students after teachers have identified and tested them. The State Department of Education website describes a gifted student as one:

who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual and/or creative ability(ies), exhibits an exceptionally high degree of motivation, and/or excels in specific academic fields, and

who needs special instruction and/or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her abilities (*Classroom instruction: Gifted education*, 2004). These special students are then placed in special classes and are taught mostly by teachers with the state-conferred gifted certification. The curriculum is altered so that it will be presumably more challenging than what is taught to “un-gifted” students.

The Nicholas County Public Schools website states that “all gifted education classes offer accelerated learning and enriched academic curriculum experiences” (*Gifted education*, 2004). Of course not all of the students at Walsh had an opportunity to be identified as a recipient of this challenging education. As Valdés (2003) points out, “definitions and methods used to identify traits and talents considered characteristic of gifted children can often discriminate against poor, minority, handicapped, and underachieving students” (p. 10). Although I did not have access to the demographic breakdown of all of the gifted and honors classes at Walsh, at least one faculty member, ESOL teacher Lee Traverse, did express to me that she felt like not enough ESOL students were being identified as gifted. In an email that I received after completion of my fieldwork, ESOL teacher Amanda Smith told me that:

[...] in the 2002-2003 school year, to my knowledge, no ESOL students were identified as gifted. It wasn't until the end of the 2002-2003 school year that an announcement was made in a faculty meeting, encouraging all teachers to try to identify Hispanic students, in particular, who might qualify for gifted education. (Smith, 2004)

Presumably testing in languages other than English would also have to be available for students whose skills would not be apparent if they were only tested in English.

Mme O’Riley did not yet have her gifted certification, but she was still allowed to teach the class. She would not be allowed to continue however, past the 2004-2005 school year as the

school district administration “was cracking down on teachers teaching in areas in which they are not certified” (O’Riley, 2004). However she also said that there was usually laxity in this area, as schools cannot always find teachers with the gifted certification. During the summer of 2003, she took classes to qualify for teaching Advanced Placement level classes. These classes are taught to students whose goal it is to take the Advanced Placement exams offered in various subjects and then enter college without having to take introductory levels of those classes. So even teachers must enter a “track” (through different levels of certification) in order to teach to the upper-tracked students.

The honors distinction was conferred on certain classes and students were placed in these classes after they had been selected by teachers and counselors for the honors program. There was no special testing done for entry into the honors program. The difference between honors and gifted seems to be more of one between achievement and presumed intelligence. High achievers not identified as gifted could still be placed in honors classes. The high school diploma would reflect the honors distinction.

However the students were classified in second period (honors or gifted), they represented the highest track in the school. Students in this class seemed to know that they were the “smart” kids. Classroom talk frequently reflected how these students saw themselves and their futures. Even their off-task behavior was academically focused. My field notes contain an excerpt in which a group of students who were supposed to be working on a group dialogue in French discussed their chances for getting into MIT and Stanford instead. They also frequently discussed grades in this and their other classes, as well as their current class rankings. As most of the students in this class are freshmen, I found it surprising that they were so future-oriented at such a young age (but maybe this is only because I was not at that age). Class ranking

throughout high school is a factor in the college admissions process, but the standardized tests that they could take for college admissions (PSAT, SAT, ACT) would not even be available to them for two more years. Although a few of the students were quiet most of the time, students in this class generally were clamoring to volunteer answers and usually spoke with confidence. Overall, they seemed used to having their opinions listened to and validated.

Three of the four focal students (all of the Spanish-speakers) in this class, Christophe, Brigitte, Sophie (she added the class second semester) were of South American origin. Anne-Marie was from Mexico. The rest of the class were also bilingual in English and another language (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese), except for one monolingual English-speaker, Bertrand, who left Walsh after the first semester. None of these students were still in ESOL classes, although some of them had been in earlier grades. With the addition of Sophie and the departure of Bertrand, this class stayed at eleven students total throughout the year. The only European-American in this class was Bertrand. Everyone else was of Asian or Latin American background, except for the Japanese speaker, Judith who was half European-American. When Bertrand was still in the class, there were three boys and eight girls. When he left and Sophie joined the class, there were two boys and nine girls.

The third period class was classified as college prep. This was the track for the supposedly college bound student, one track above technical prep. These students seemed to know that they were not the “smart” kids. Classroom talk centered on lots of clowning and joking. In spite of this, they were quieter than second period when it came to actually participating in the lesson. They were less used to expressing their opinions and having them validated. I never once heard anyone in this class discussing college plans, in spite of the fact that this class contained more sophomores and juniors than second period. One student (Jean-

Paul) of Haitian origin did participate more than any other student, due to his having a large amount of background knowledge of French. This class also had a very high turnover rate and a high absence rate.

Some students in this class were not able to be included in my study due to the fact that I could never seem to get them to turn in a permission form or that they were just never there when I was. At the start of my fieldwork, there were 19 students in the class. Five of these students listed themselves as Spanish-speakers on my language survey. Three of these students were in ESOL classes as well. My original focal students from this class were Ulises, Karen, Mike, Gracy and Marie. Mike, Karen and Ulises were all still in some ESOL classes. Marie's frequent absences and eventual departure from the class made it impossible for her to participate in the study. Mike was eventually expelled for reasons unknown to me and was thus only able to do one interview. Karen moved to a different French class and was later suspended near the end of the school year. I was able to complete two interviews with her. Ulises and Gracy were able to complete all three interviews. Mike was from Honduras. Karen, Marie, and Ulises were from Mexico and Gracy was of Colombian origin (born in the U.S.), but she did attend elementary school briefly in Colombia as well.

The rest of the class consisted of two European-American boys, one European-American girl (she was frequently absent and withdrew from the class second semester), two African-American boys, one Haitian-American boy, six African-American girls (one of whom might have been Nigerian, but this was never confirmed. I witnessed Jean-Paul teasing her about being African once). There was also one Vietnamese-American girl (Patricia) and one Filipino-American boy (Daelin). The class turnover rate was so high that once I identified and obtained permission from the focal students in the class, I did not collect language survey information on

non Spanish-speaking students. Daelin did tell me once that he spoke Tagalog and I suspect that Patricia spoke Vietnamese as well. Students who added the class later in the semester or who were not there when I distributed the language use survey form were given only permission forms.

Mme O'Riley expressed frequent dissatisfaction with this group due to what she perceived as their complete lack of interest in studying, non-completion of homework and failure to bring books and materials to class. For example, my fieldnotes from March record:

3/21/03

I help out with speaking tests. Three students were absent yesterday. Mme O. expresses frustration with what she sees as the apathetic attitude of this class. Several students have misplaced their books. She says that they had a test last week in which the class average was in the 60's. This was after she had thoroughly reviewed with them beforehand.

Another example of the sharp contrast between this class and second period. How much does what these students are told about themselves and their potential have to do with this?

No one who has ever taught in public schools could fail to be sympathetic to Mme O'Riley's frustration with this class. But structural constraints at the institutional level, like tracking, must share some of the responsibility.

In some ways the situation that Heller (1999) described in two similarly contrasting classes in a French-English bilingual school in Anglophone Canada fits very well with what went on in Mme O'Riley's two French classes:

the *Français avancé* students are playing the game. They ... do what the school asks them to do... The *Français général* students resist this social order, in the way they

organize themselves in the physical space of the classroom, in the organization, form and content of their talk, in their failure to do their work regularly in the way they are supposed to do it (p. 138).

This did not mean however that third period never was on-task with French nor that they did not notice language or the benefits of multilingualism (see Chapter 6).

### **Focal Student Profiles**

#### **Christophe**

Christophe is a tall, affable young man with gelled-back hair and neat, new-looking clothes. Christophe is from Venezuela. He said that he only had four months of ESOL when he arrived here in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Both of his parents are working on advanced degrees. His father is pursuing an MBA. His mother is a Spanish teacher and is also working on a Master's degree.

He is also light-skinned with brown hair and has virtually no accent when he speaks English. He was confident and assured when he talked about his language-learning abilities:

RN: [...] why did you sign up to take French?

C: Uh, I was interested in learning another language, third language.

RN: OK, um do you think you're good at learning languages?

C: Probably not as good as I was before but still OK. I'm not terribly slow at learning it.

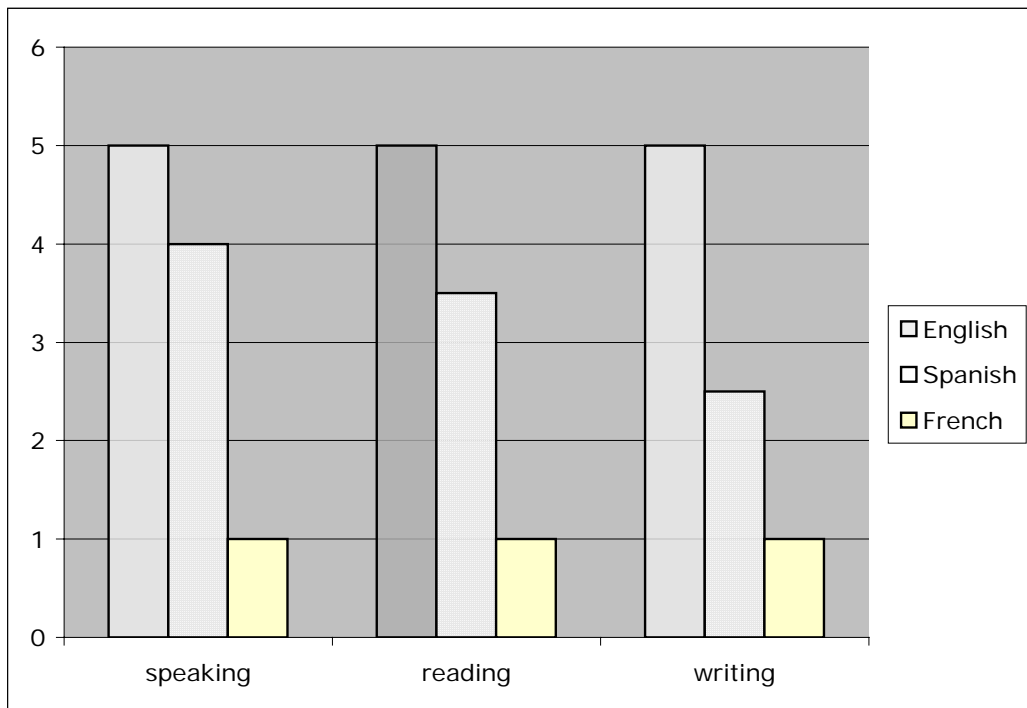
RN: What do you mean before, like when you were in elementary school?

C: Yeah, when I was younger. (C, 3/14/03)

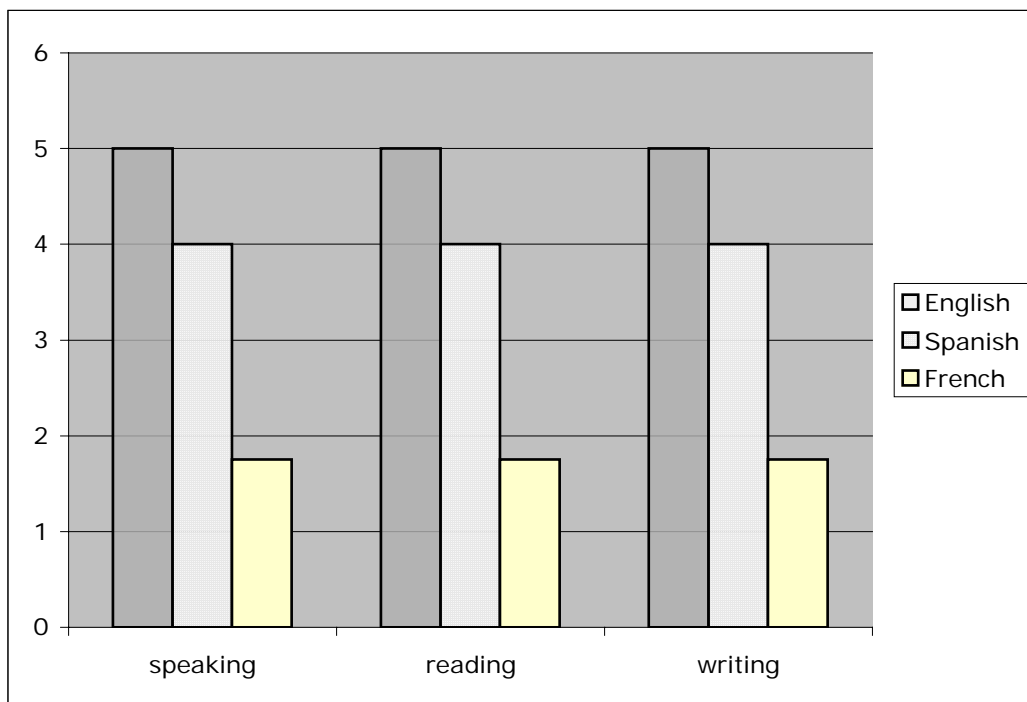
His presence in the second period class was already an indicator of his high track placement. The rest of his schedule for the 2002-2003 school year showed him listed in all gifted classes (except for non-tracked electives like word processing, health, life fitness, and web design). He



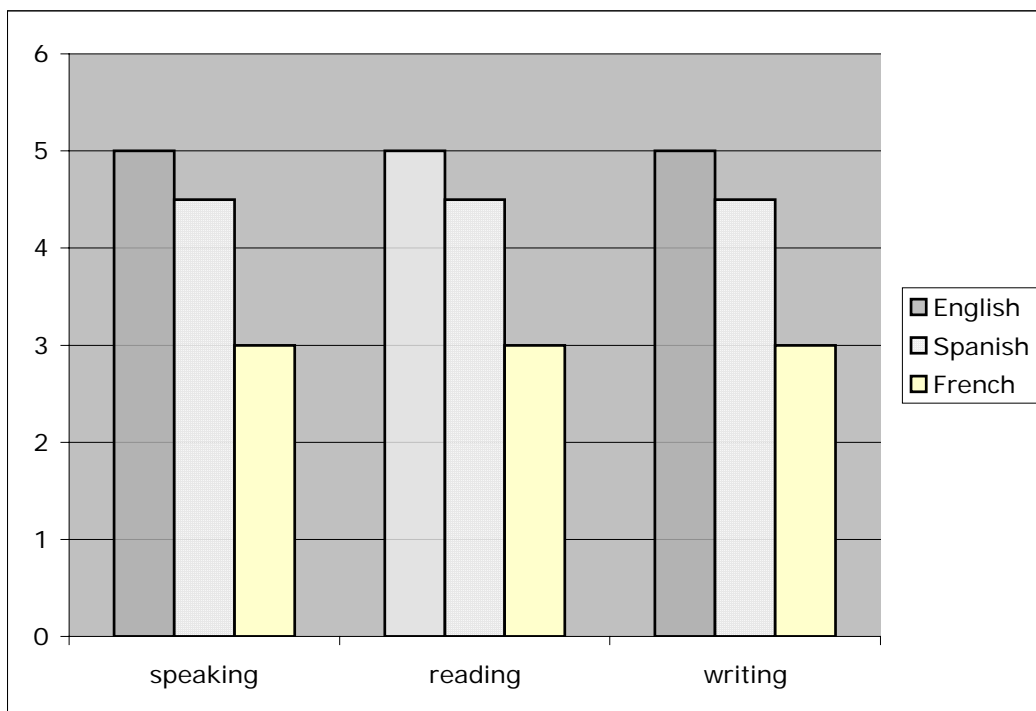
Figure 5.1, a – g  
Students' self-rating of their language skills  
Scale of 1-5 (5 being the best)  
(from interview 2)



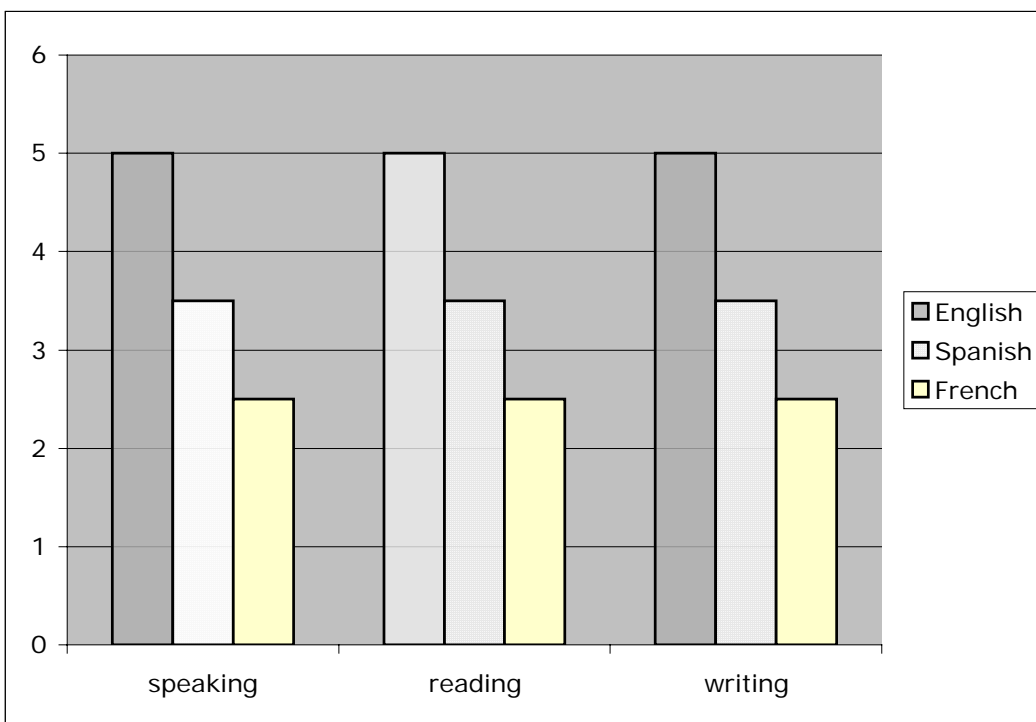
a. Christophe



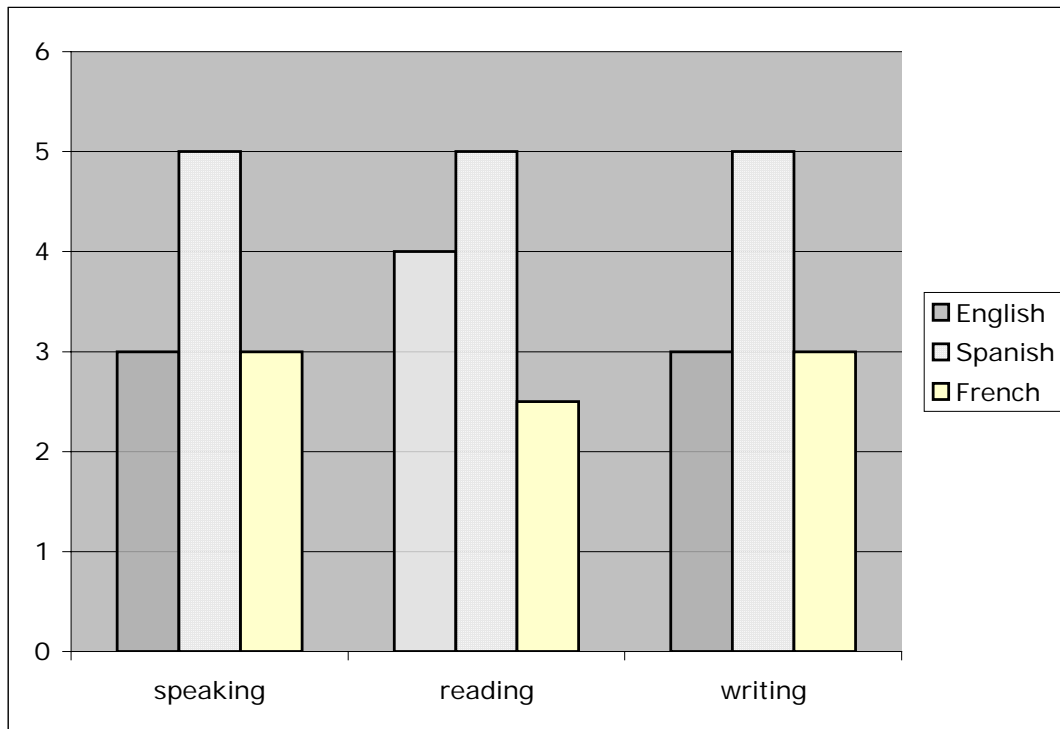
b. Brigitte



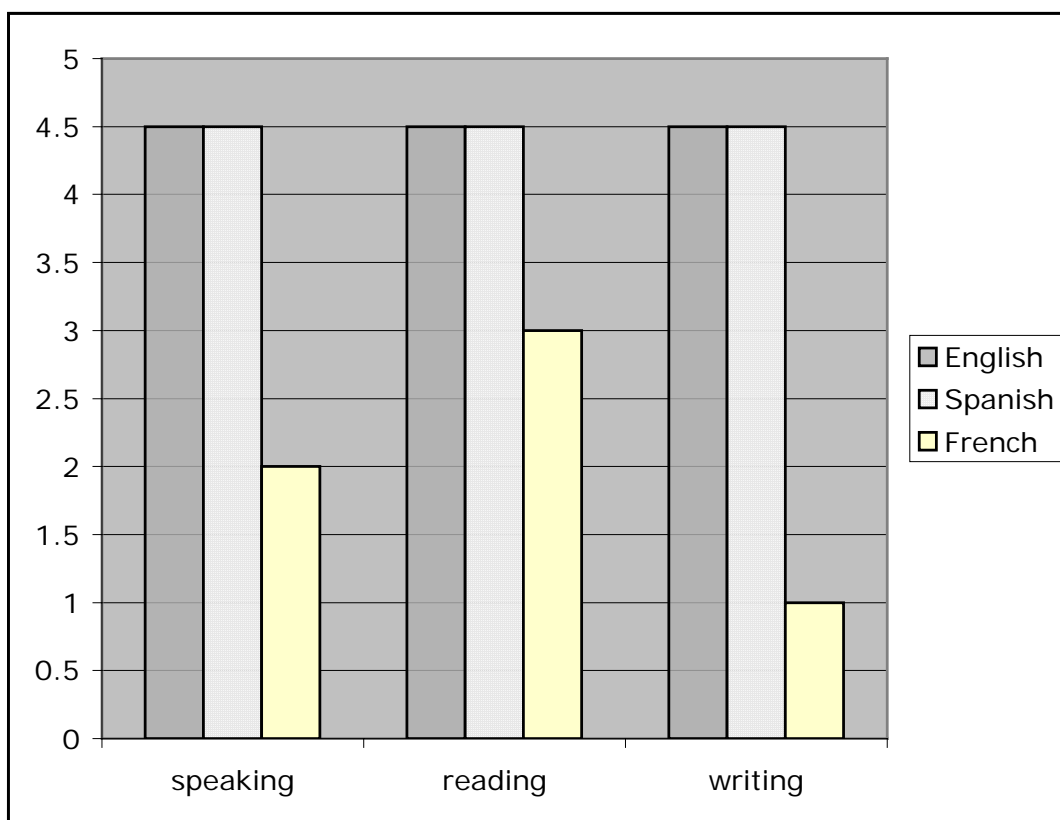
c. Anne-Marie



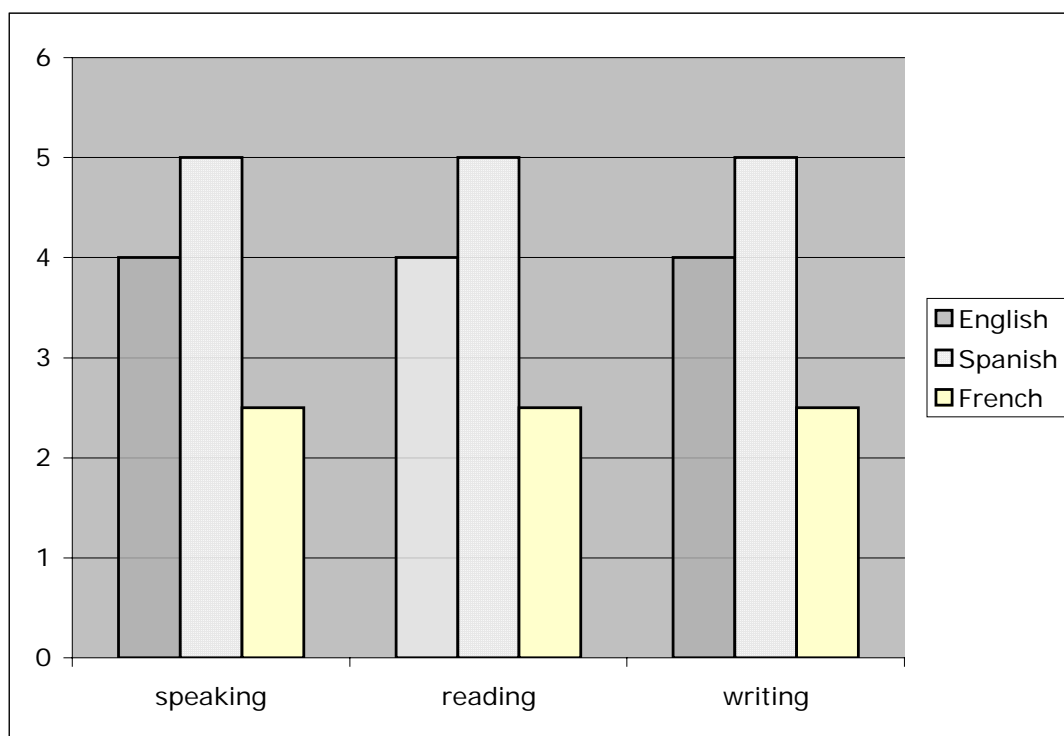
d. Sophie



e. Ulises



f. Gracy



g. Karen

began the gifted program in middle school. He was also in the IB program and spoke casually about the presence of potential trilinguals in the program:

RN: [...] What do your friends say about you learning French too? Anybody say anything about that?

C: They just, no one, we don't talk about, because there are so many people really, especially in the IB program, that already know a second language and are learning a third, so it's not really that big of a deal. (C, 5/8/03)

It is interesting that Christophe had the perception that lots of IB students were already bilingual. Also, he seemed to have gotten mainly positive feedback about being bilingual and speaking Spanish. This seems in line with the popular culture and media view of elite bilinguals as worldly diplomats and spies. The main character on the popular television series "Alias" is portrayed as able to change languages as often as she changes disguises, going from Mandarin to Italian to Arabic in one episode. Cummins (2000) wrote about how this contrast between the bilingualism of low-status immigrants contrasts with this status-symbol view of bilingualism for elites:

The very positive media picture of bilingual education for affluent children in countries around the world is similar to the way French immersion programs have typically been depicted in the Canadian context. These programs serve the interests of dominant middle-class majority language children. By contrast, when bilingual education aims to serve the interests of marginalized students from minority groups, the media appear to have extreme difficulty understanding the rationale for these programs (p. 23).

Christophe and his classmates in the IB program had assimilated enough into the mainstream to qualify as “dominant middle-class majority.” Their language use was not a threat, as Christophe affirmed below.

### *Christophe’s Language Use*

Christophe reported in the first interview that he speaks Spanish at home with his mother. He also reported that when his mother speaks to him in Spanish, he usually responded in English. His at school Spanish use was limited to conversations with people he calls “Spanish”, but he later modified that statement:

RN: When do you speak Spanish at school?

C: At school? Probably just Spanish friends. Actually I don’t speak Spanish at all now, because I don’t see anyone really anymore. Maybe just Brigitte, but that’s it.

RN: Who’s Brigitte? Oh, in the class?

C: Yeah.

RN: OK, OK. Um, yeah I was just going to ask you, who do you speak Spanish with at school?

C: With Brigitte sometimes, because now no one speaks Spanish in my classes.

RN: In any of your other classes?

C: No, not really. Because even if they do know Spanish, they’ll speak English.

(C, 3/14/03)

Students in Christophe’s classes, even Spanish-speaking ones had learned that Spanish was not the code of choice for upper-tracked classes.

For Christophe then, Spanish was not really a school language, not even with his Spanish-speaking pals. My field notes confirm this linguistic behavior on Christophe’s part:

10/24/02

Christophe and Brigitte sit in the same row. Christophe is in front. I need to observe them for code choice. Students take a quiz and then grade each other's papers. Students then divide into groups to work on dialogues. Christophe, Brigitte, and Karine (Vietnamese-American) are in a group. Within this group, Christophe and Brigitte are speaking English (due to the presence of Karine?).

In fact I never saw Christophe speak Spanish at school. The only time I observed him speaking Spanish was in relation to French: comparing vocabulary or grammar rules.

Christophe's own rating of his language abilities in French, Spanish, and English showed how he views himself as a speaker of his first language in relation to English:

RN: OK, let's talk about all the languages you speak, starting with English, on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best, how good are you in English? Uh, speaking and reading and writing, for English? And 5's the best.

C: Probably 5, yeah 4 or 5.

RN: For speaking, writing and reading?

C: Yeah, probably 5 actually.

RN: OK, OK. And in Spanish, for speaking, writing and reading?

C: I'd say 3.

RN: For what? For reading, writing or?

C: Oh just, for speaking probably like 4, but then writing it, 3 or a 2—

RN: —OK

C: And what was the other one?

RN: Reading?

C: And reading, yeah probably like a 3 or a 4. (C, 3/14/03)

Christophe chose English as his primary language, an investment (Peirce, 1995) that has clearly paid off for him. He did still use Spanish as a way to access French, as mentioned above. He seemed to know better than to use it in any meaningful way however, since other students seemed to think that he was not a Spanish-speaker, and other known Spanish-speakers did not use Spanish with him. Christophe's experiences of being bilingual and an immigrant were for the most part positive:

RN: OK, OK. Um, do all of your teachers know that you're bilingual?

C: Um, yeah, I think so.

RN: And has anyone ever said, have any of the teachers ever said anything about you being bilingual?

C: No, well maybe just Mme O'Riley, but I don't think any of the other teachers, and history class too, but not really—

RN: Um, and what about your friends who aren't bilingual, have they ever said anything to you about the fact that you can speak Spanish and English?

C: Well, most people think it's really good and it's an advantage, especially since you can learn a third language. (C, 5/8/03)

Spanish was an advantage he could call on when it related to another subject area (French, or perhaps history). However, his use of other languages in the school setting never conflicted with the school's use of the power code, English.

### *Christophe's Academic Identity*

As a member of the elite International Baccalaureate Program, and as a student in all gifted academic classes, Christophe was usually confident and outgoing in French class. His



grades for the 2002-2003 school year were all A's. He did sometimes suffer anxiety over tests and assignments in other classes:

11/20/02

The class filters in, complaining of a particularly difficult exam in another class.

Christophe seems to be absent today or maybe he is still taking the test. Karine arrives late to class, looking like she's in a bad mood. "That test kicked my butt", she confides to another classmate. Christophe arrives exclaiming that he failed the test (the subject was language arts). Karine and Christophe continue to discuss the difficulty of the test.

Most of the time, however, Christophe did quite well in his academic pursuits. On the two occasions that I administered oral exams for Mme O'Riley, he excelled.

12/10/02

2<sup>nd</sup> pd. 8:40 am Today the French I students in both classes have their final (speaking and writing) tests. Mme O. is letting me help administer speaking exams. One of my interviewees is Christophe. He scores a 99 on his test- barely any problems with fluency or comprehension.

5/12/03

I administer speaking tests to Christophe, Brigitte, and Anne-Marie during 1<sup>st</sup> pd. Not one of them scores below 98. Christophe does the best.

His usual confidence extended to his ambitious choice for undergraduate study (shared by several of his classmates):

2/26/03

Today Karine, Kim, Christophe and Judith are talking about what percentile they need to be in to get into Stanford- where Judith wants to go.

Along with the other students in this class, Christophe understood what he needed to do to achieve his academic and future goals. Here he showed his awareness of the exact requirements he needs to stay in the elite IB program:

RN: Um, will you take French next year? Why or why not?

C: Um, yes I would like to learn and continue to study another language.

RN: OK, you need it for college...or are you in the IB program?—

C: —well yeah, but I don't need to take it because I could switch to Spanish and take Spanish too (2?) and that would still be on track for IB. (C, 5/8/03)

He did see Spanish as a resource he could use if necessary for maintaining his high-tracked position, but it was not essential since he planned on taking French.

His academic identity at the school as a member of the highest tracked group solidified his position as an elite speaker of English and Spanish, and as a learner of French. He was free to move from gifted English speaker at school to Spanish speaker at home with his family. He was an “international” participant in the International Baccalaureate program. This is an ideal situation for the IB proponents at the school: here is a clean-cut, light-skinned potentially trilingual student, who in no way threatens the hegemony of English (he knows better than to use Spanish at school, after all). This was most likely due to his having learned the rules of school in Nicholas County, since his arrival in the fourth grade. He knew that English was what he needed to get ahead in school and that has assured his success, along with his ability to excel at the kinds of tests given for placement in gifted classes.

### **Brigitte**

Like Christophe, Brigitte has brown hair, light skin and virtually no accent in English. She is friendly and affectionate (she greeted me with a hug on one of my visits to her class after

the study was over). She wore her straight hair long and usually wore clean, new-looking jeans and t-shirts to school. Her clothes were neither conservative nor revealing, and she wore little or no makeup. She arrived here from Ecuador when she was three or four. Her mother runs a daycare out of her home and her father works in a tortilla factory. Her mother finished high school and her father has had some college. Brigitte was also in the second period class and in gifted classes and the IB program with Christophe, thus sharing his same high track placement. She was identified as gifted in elementary school. She was fairly confident about her language-learning abilities:

RN: OK, um, why did you sign up to take French?

B: I'm not sure. I just thought having the Spanish background it'd be easier to learn. I would catch on quicker, than say German.

RN: OK. Do you think you're good at learning languages?

B: Um, so far I think I haven't done so bad, but, so. . . (B, 3/17/03)

She also showed that she is aware that French and Spanish are in the same language family. Interesting that she did not make the same connection to German, since she is also a speaker of English, in the same (Germanic) language family.

### *Brigitte's Language Use*

Brigitte reported speaking Spanish at home, and even translating for family members:

12/11/02

I notice Brigitte talking to Grégoire about how she translates for her mom what her brother says.

At school, it was a different story. When I began my observations of the second period class, I noted that she and Christophe were friends but that they did not speak Spanish together during French class (see field note from 10/24/02 above):

RN: When do you speak Spanish at school?

B: Um, sometimes with other Spanish-speaking people. We might have a conversation. Or especially if we're talking about something in our culture and we only know how to say it in Spanish.

RN: Where are the other Spanish-speaking people that you talk to at school usually from?

B: Well, there's like a major population of Mexican people. I know like a kid in my class is from Venezuela, so I get along with him really well.

RN: And that was my next question, who do you speak Spanish with at school?

B: Yeah, um friends—

RN: —You can say names and then I can change them when I transcribe.

B: Oh, OK. All right, well Christophe, or uh, I can't really think of other people at school because I'm in with American people or people from like, Asia. (B, 10/31/02)

I was also curious about the presence of the only other Spanish speaker in that French class during the first semester, Anne-Marie. I asked Brigitte about this:

RN: I know Christophe speaks Spanish because he's from Venezuela and also Anne-Marie does too. Do you ever speak Spanish with Anne-Marie?

B: Unh-unh. We don't really talk much actually. This is the only class we have together and we sit on opposite sides of the room, so no.

RN: Do you know where she's from?

B: Mexico. (B, 10/31/02)

At the time I thought this was perhaps an indication of some socioeconomic clique formation at the school that kept Mexicans and South Americans apart (although there may be some truth to that, when I asked Mme O’Riley about this she replied, “snobisme?”). However as the school year progressed an interesting change occurred:

3/13/03

Brigitte asks Anne-Marie about practice (for dance?) in English. I wonder if they speak Spanish in the dance club? I ask Anne-Marie- she tells me that she’s having her *quinceñera*<sup>3</sup> soon and that Brigitte is helping pick out a dress, etc.

Even though I did not observe them speaking Spanish here, the fact that Brigitte was participating in an aspect of Latin American culture that she shared with Anne-Marie, showed that they had developed some cultural, if not always linguistic solidarity. Although I never actually observed Brigitte speaking Spanish, she did always seem willing to share her knowledge of it with others:

2/26/03

The class is working on a pair exercise with prepositions- I tell them that prepositions are tricky in any language-you can’t really translate. Brigitte says it’s just like Spanish-“ you just reverse it”.

Brigitte seemed to enjoy taking on the role of Spanish teacher. She even took this on this role with her French teacher:

12/6/02

Mme O. mentions that she’s taking Spanish. Brigitte says, “you’ll find that it’s a lot like French.” A non-Spanish speaking student tries rolling the *r* Spanish-style. Brigitte says “good.”

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<sup>3</sup> Coming out party for 15 year-old girls common in many Spanish-speaking cultures.

In spite of the obvious enjoyment that Brigitte took in sharing her Spanish knowledge, she seemed to realize that Spanish is not the language that has led to her school success (IB program, gifted program). When she rated herself in her languages, here is what she said about her first language:

RN: How about Spanish?

B: Spanish I would probably say a four because I'm, because it's not like an everyday thing. I mean I speak it at home but since it's not a school thing, it's kinda a little less developed. (B, 3/17/03)

She does seem to recognize the utility of Spanish as she talks about any future family she might have:

RN: Brigitte, if you have children, will you teach them Spanish?

B: Oh, definitely, because it's just important, especially in the US today with so many immigrants and people from Spanish-speaking countries coming to the US, you need that language to get a job or it's just important. (B, 5/8/03)

But in the above excerpt she does not attach any sentimental value to it, or even mention it as a language of the family. Sometimes she even seemed to forget that she spoke Spanish:

12/06/02

Brigitte says that she is going to be bilingual- no trilingual- as the reason that she wants to learn French.

However, like Christophe, Brigitte had learned that the language of the school was English, the legitimate code that guaranteed their success. Brigitte even explicitly said of Spanish above that "it's not a school thing" Except as a novelty, Spanish had little place in their school lives.

### *Brigitte's Academic Identity*

Brigitte had all A's during the 2002-2003 school year except for her second semester when she got an 89 in geometry. She was also in all gifted classes and in the IB program, and thus a member of the highest-track group in the school, the group of gifted and IB participants who are not really in any "diploma" track, but who receive an academically enhanced education.

Brigitte did not seem as outwardly anxious about class rankings and college entrance requirements as her other French I classmates did. She was aware that she was one of the school's academic elite and that she had to do "more work", but her classroom talk was never about grades or tests.

When it came to studying French she developed methods on her own that any language teacher would approve of:

RN: [...] OK, um what kinds of things do you do to help yourself study and learn French?

B: Um, well, the songs for the adverbs that Mme O. does really do help. Otherwise just repeat, repeat, repeat everything over and over again until it stays. Or think up little scenarios where you would use it. (B, 3/17/03)

The scenarios are an especially effective innovation on her part, since an important part of language acquisition is either having a real need or inventing one.

Like Christophe, Brigitte mentioned the IB program's language requirements as a reason to continue studying French:

RN: Will you take French next year? Why or why not?

B: Yes, um, mainly because I need 4 years of the same language to graduate with IB but I think to at least have some sort of close to fluency in a language you need to take it for more than one year.

RN: What is IB?

B: International Baccalaureate, it's just a higher level of, um, work really, they give you more work.

RN: And this is the degree that is recognized in other countries?

B: Mm huh, yeah.

(B, 5/8/03)

Brigitte was an IB student, but unlike Christophe when asked this question, she did not mention the option of having Spanish as an IB language, even though only one is required.

### **Anne-Marie**

At the beginning of the study, Anne-Marie looked almost out of place in the second period class. She is naturally quiet and reserved and I did not observe her interacting much with her fellow students. She has black hair and olive skin. She usually wore her long hair pulled back in a ponytail. She wore more make-up than the other girls in this class. She also wore tighter fitting clothes. These clothes were in the style of two of the most popular female singers among teenagers at the time, Britney Spears and Jennifer López.

She arrived here from Mexico when she was three. Her father was not a part of her life. Her mother sells vitamins for Herbalife. Anne-Marie reported that her mom had had some college. In dress and demeanor she aligned herself more with Mexican and Mexican-American students (that I observed in the hallways between classes and in the cafeteria) in the school than with the more clean-cut, slightly conservative-dressing IB/Gifted students in the class. During



one interview we were interrupted by the following incident:

At this point in the interview (we're in the cafeteria) another girl approaches Anne-Marie and asks her why she is "mad-dogging her out" [speaking about her in a derogatory way behind her back]. Anne-Marie tells the girl that she is working and that they will talk later. (AM, 10/8/02)

Anne-Marie was always polite, but she did seem to have a slightly tough edge to her. I could not imagine her, for example, telling her classmates that her fondest wish was to meet Harry Potter, like one of her classmates did when Mme O'Riley was teaching a lesson on how to express wishes in French. She was less accommodating than her fellow second period students, more likely to give a sarcastic remark to another student:

1/31/03

Sophie and Anne-Marie continue to work together speaking Spanish and English. Karine hears them speaking Spanish and says, "You speak Spanish!" Anne-Marie says sarcastically, "No, Korean!"

To my knowledge, she never had any serious discipline problems and I never saw her be disrespectful to an authority figure. She enacted her resistance in subtle ways:

1/16/03

I'm sitting near Anne-Marie. She has her textbook open as Mme O goes over the lesson of the uses of the verb avoir. She also has a piece of notebook paper under her book on which she is writing Karine's name in Gothic letters. Karine hands her another piece of notebook paper with a name written in Gothic letters. I can't see what the name is.

Even though she was successful in this high tracked French class, she did not want to be seen as taking it or herself too seriously:

RN: And what do your friends who don't take French, what do they think about you taking French?

AM: That I need to get out more—[overlapping laughter from both of us]

(AM, 5/8/03)

Since “getting out” can most likely be taken to mean non-school type activities, Anne-Marie's main social group probably did not place much emphasis on the kind of success that the rest of the second period class sought out. Anne-Marie was sort of a hybrid second period student: in the high track class, but not totally embracing the high achiever identity.

### *Anne-Marie's Language Use*

Anne-Marie reported that she spoke Spanish and English at home. She also reported speaking Spanish at school with friends, but not in French class:

RN: In French class who do you speak Spanish with?

AM: Spanish? Nobody.

RN: You don't? OK. Because the next question was tell me about a time you spoke Spanish in French class. There's two other Spanish speakers in there. You don't speak Spanish with them?

AM: There are? Oh, no they speak only English to me. (AM, 10/8/02)

The other Spanish speakers in the class were Brigitte and Christophe (before Sophie's arrival), as mentioned above at the time I thought there were social class issues at play, but eventually I did see Anne-Marie and Brigitte socializing more. I never observed them speaking Spanish together.

Even though Anne-Marie said that she spoke Spanish at school with friends, she resisted enacting the sort of teacher function that Brigitte and Christophe did when Mme O'Riley talked about studying Spanish:

12/06/02

Brigitte here is taking on the role of Spanish teacher. Christophe and Anne-Marie are silent. [...] Brigitte and Christophe contribute more to the discussion about Spanish.

Anne-Marie is silent.

Anne-Marie did not speak about Spanish in this class. She waited until Sophie joined the class and then spoke Spanish. In this way, she maintained the vitality of Spanish as a school language.

When Sophie joined the class during the second semester, Anne-Marie would often do pair work with her:

1/16/03

Pair work- Anne-Marie and Sophie (who listed Spanish as one of her languages) are working together, speaking English. Anne-Marie asks Sophie where she's from (she says Venezuela) then asked her something in Spanish. Sophie answered in English.

At first, Sophie resisted the switch to Spanish. She later succumbed:

1/31/03

8:30 2<sup>nd</sup> pd. Sophie and Anne-Marie are working together on the warm-up. I notice them speaking in Spanish.

Sophie reported that she spoke Spanish with Anne-Marie because Anne-Marie liked to speak Spanish.

Anne-Marie strongly asserted her intention to teach her future children Spanish:

RN: If you have children will you teach them Spanish?

AM: Yeah, that'd be the first thing I'd teach them. (AM 5/8/03)

She said that her mother insisted that she learn to read in Spanish, even though she was never in Spanish classes.

Her identity as a bilingual Spanish-English speaker was something she was secure about in her social group, but perhaps she felt that it did not seem to matter in the school realm:

RN: OK. Um, do all of your teachers know that you're bilingual?

AM: Yeah.

RN: Yeah? And how do you think they feel about that?

AM: They're OK with it. I don't think it makes a difference.

RN: OK. And what about your friends who aren't bilingual, have they ever said anything to you about the fact that you can speak Spanish and English?

AM: That it's cool.

(AM, 5/8/03)

In fact, her statement "they're OK with it" conveys the idea that she thought they could have a problem with her being bilingual, but they did not.

### *Anne-Marie's Academic Identity*

As stated above, Anne-Marie did well in French, without ever totally embracing the high achiever identity. Her 2002-2003 grades and schedule were as follows: first semester, gifted French 94, gifted language arts 74, honors biology 76, honors geometry 75; second semester, gifted French 95, gifted language arts 74, honors biology 80, honors geometry 90. She had been in the gifted program since elementary school.

I never heard Anne-Marie discuss the difficulty of tests or her academic ranking or her college plans. She even resisted the being placed in the gifted program:

2/6/03

Anne-Marie says that she dropped out of the gifted program. Most kids in this class are in it. Anne-Marie says that she dropped out of the gifted language arts class because of the workload. She said she had a zero average.

According to her grades above, this was not true. But by saying that she had a zero in it, she was able to distance herself from it. The workload was not something she was willing to invest in, so she let it go. Like Brigitte, she had been identified as gifted in elementary school. It was not an identity that was important for her to maintain.

In contrast to Brigitte and Christophe's stated goals of trilingualism and IB language requirement fulfillment, Anne-Marie was characteristically casual about her reasons for studying French:

RN: [...] why did you sign up for French?

AM: 'Cause I like it?

(AM, 4/2/03)

Her upward intonation at the end of the above statement could be interpreted as asking for my approval of her reason for taking French, but I see it as more of a questioning of my asking such a silly, obvious question. What other reason could she possibly have for studying it?

In a later interview, she ignored my question about why she would take French next year, and just stated that she would take it, without elaborating further.

RN: Um, will you take French next year, and why or why not?

AM: Yes, I'm gonna take it for four years.

RN: Are you in the IB program?

AM: No.

(AM, 5/8/03)

She was a very good student of French. In fact it was the subject that she did best in. She also gave herself the highest rating (see Figure 5.1) of any student in the study in French, rating herself as “3” for all three skills.

She spoke about her study techniques for French:

RN: OK. Um, what kinds of things do you do to help yourself study and learn French?

AM: Speak it at home.

RN: OK, and um, how, uh, what do you do? Like if you have a vocabulary list that you need to take home and study it, what do you do? What are some things that you do when you have your French homework?

AM: Hmm. . . I just [incomprehensible] over and over or I’ll just whenever I’m talking English I’ll think of what- how to say it in French.

I got the feeling that Anne-Marie was not going to do anything that she did not want to do academically. French was something that she enjoyed and had a talent for, so she did her work well. The same investments that Brigitte and Christophe made as members of the school’s academic elite were not investments that she felt the need to make.

### **Sophie**

Sophie joined the second period class during the second semester. She has black curly hair that she usually wore back in a ponytail and dark eyes. She is slim and usually wore modest, neat-looking clothing such as t-shirts, khaki pants and jeans. During the first semester she was in non-honors French with Mme S. Unlike the rest of her French class (who were all in their freshman year), she was a sophomore during the 2002-2003 school year. She was not in the IB program. She was in honors, gifted and Advanced Placement classes, except for her math and science classes. She arrived in the US from Venezuela when she was 7 months old. Her mother

had some college and has worked as a teacher here and in Venezuela. Her father has a business installing wallpaper. Sometimes the mother helps out with this business, as well as providing childcare for Sophie's niece.

I chose Sophie to be one of two focal students (the other was Ulises) that I shadowed in other classes for a day. She represented a Spanish-speaker from South America in upper-tracked classes, the kind of Spanish-speaker that principal Jean Roxbury approved of, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Sophie learned English first, then Spanish. She said that she spoke English with her father and Spanish with her mother. Her mother seemed to be the one most concerned with Sophie's retention of Spanish. Sophie herself did not seem as concerned about her identity as a Spanish speaker. When asked about how she would respond to people who might hear her speaking Spanish and try to censor it, she responded:

S: [...] but I barely ever use Spanish, it's like sometimes like someone needs help and I'm helping them, and the way you can respond to that is, I mean, you're with your family and it's culture and people need to accept that, you're not like, like I love English, I love words, I love speaking English and it's my primary language [...]. (S, 5/8/03)

Her behavior in her language arts class confirmed this since it was the class in which I observed her participating the most.

She was confident in our second interview when I asked her about learning languages:

RN: Do you think you're good at languages?

S: I think so. (S, 4/17/03)

She ruled out German and Spanish as possible languages due to her perception that the former was difficult and she already knew Spanish. Her sister took French and loved it so Sophie decided to follow suit.

### *Sophie's Language Use*

When Sophie joined the class at the start of the second semester, she would often do pair work with Anne-Marie. Up until this point, Spanish did not figure as a school language for Sophie, much as it did not for Brigitte and Christophe. Anne-Marie however, as mentioned above, liked to speak Spanish and would insist on it with Sophie. Without Anne-Marie's enforcement of Spanish, Sophie spoke in English, even with other Spanish speakers:

2/13/03

2<sup>nd</sup> period is working on posters, finishing them for a presentation. Adeline and Kim are speaking to each other in Korean. Sophie and Christophe are working together. They seem to be speaking in English—presence of other English speakers?

The fact that the Korean speakers were choosing to speak Korean did not matter to them.

English was the school language, especially in these upper-tracked classes.

When rating her language abilities, Sophie rated Spanish only slightly above her French abilities:

RN: [...] Spanish?

S: Three to four.

RN: Three to four for all the skills? Do you read or write very often in Spanish?

S: Um, not really. Sometimes when I go to church I take notes. Or my mom asks me to translate something to her, so I write it down, but—

RN: —And your church services are all in Spanish?



S: Yes.

RN: Um, OK and then French?

S: Um, three, two to three.

RN: Two to three? So are you- I guess you're doing a lot of reading and writing in class?

S: Yeah. (S, 4/17/03)

Sophie wrote notes in Spanish and translated things for her mother. These are high level language skills (see Valdés, 2003), yet she did not rate herself very high in the language that she has spoken almost her whole life. In English she rated herself as 5 for all of the skills.

When I asked Sophie about her future language use, her answer was not nearly as strong as Anne-Marie's:

RN: If you have children will you teach them Spanish?

S: I want to. (S, 5/8/03)

This answer suggests that although she may wish to teach her child Spanish, intervening factors (such as a non-Spanish speaking spouse) could prevent it.

When I observed Sophie in her other classes on the day that I shadowed her, I did not see her speak Spanish with anyone else, as she reported in her interview. In her Advanced Placement history class, she appeared to be the only person of Spanish-speaking background. This was also true of her honors sophomore English class. In her non upper-tracked geometry class, there were other students of Spanish-speaking background, but she did not have any interaction with them. She mostly spoke with her European-American boyfriend who was in this class with her. The only time I ever observed Sophie speaking Spanish was with Anne-Marie.

### *Sophie's Academic Identity*

Sophie was a sophomore during the 2002-2003 school year. Sophomore year is the first time Advanced Placement classes are available to eligible students. Sophie was in an Advanced Placement world history class. She was also in two honors classes: language arts and French. Her other classes were college prep track chemistry, symphony band and geometry. French was her best subject this academic year. She earned a 97 both semesters. Her next best subject was symphony band where she earned a 97 the first semester and a 95 the second. Her other grades throughout the year were 83 and 86 for language arts, 77 for both semesters in geometry, 78 and 77 for world history. She made a dramatic improvement in chemistry over the course of the year, going from a 77 to 96.

When I asked her if she was in the IB program, she said no but did identify herself as being in the Advanced Placement program (for world history). She did not mention her honors classes. She planned to attend college and said that she was taking French for that reason:

RN: Will you take French next year? Why or why not?

S: I do need to, because it's required for school, um but I will because I want to be able to teach my children and to be able to use it in work and maybe take a couple of courses in college and maybe a third year. (S, 5/8/03)

I did not observe her make the same kinds of college entrance anxiety statements that I heard Christophe and others make in the second period class, but neither did she seem as relaxed as Anne-Marie did about her classes. She mentioned her AP class as if she were proud of it, but did not feel compelled to earn straight A's.

Sophie's identity as an English speaker, as seen in the interview excerpt above was of paramount importance to her. She enjoys the cultural capital that identifying herself as an

English speaker first and foremost brings her. She tolerates Anne-Marie's insistence on Spanish and is able to converse fluently, in spite of her protests that she hardly ever uses it. The cultural capital that French brings is something that she embraces as well. The historical status of French in the U.S. is illustrated by Melinda Todd's comment above that for years French was the only language taught at Walsh.

### Ulises

Ulises is a tall, slightly heavy teenager with slicked-back black hair curling up at his neck. He has dark skin and dark eyes. He moved to Walsh with his family from Mexico. He wears the oversized shirts and khaki pants popular with his peer group. Sometimes he wore a t-shirt with the name of one of Mexico's popular soccer teams, like *Chivas* (goats). He had been at Walsh only one academic year when I began the study. His parents both work in a grocery store (his father is the butcher there). In the 2002-2003 school year he was classified as a junior, thus making him one of the older students in his French I class. He was shy, but would always quietly greet me ("hi, miss") when I came to his French or ESOL class.

Ulises was the only ESOL focal student who stayed in the study long enough to complete all three interviews. He was also the most pivotal student in the study. I chose him as the counterpart student to Sophie and spent a day shadowing him in his other classes. I also observed in his ESOL language arts class on another day. He was in the lower-tracked third period class and he was a recent Mexican immigrant, the kind of Spanish-speaker that was problematic for Jean Roxbury.

For me, he represented the multilingual potential that lay with all immigrant students, a potential that could easily be lost in the institutional shuffle described in the previous chapter. Ulises did not fit the profile of the global citizen, and he was certainly not being actively

encouraged to maintain his first language. In the eyes of administrators and others who did not know him, it is possible that Ulises was seen as another language deficient immigrant from Mexico, at-risk for dropping out and thus lowering the school's No Child Left Behind rating<sup>4</sup>. But Ulises did have something about him that encouraged some of his teachers to take special notice. I spoke often with his ESOL language arts teacher, Amanda Smith about his work and his progress. During our recorded interview she spoke at length about his work in her class:

RN: So that's my next question, how would you describe Ulises' progress over the year in your class?

AS: Actually progress reports went out today and he's doing very well. He, I believe, has a high B in here and he really had not done as well first semester. Um, and I don't know what, how to account for it, but I definitely noticed a change in his likelihood of, his propensity to speak out, or to uh... Even with his writing I've noticed an improvement. And I don't know if first semester, I don't know if he was feeling more inhibited um, but I've definitely seen a change. [...] So that's really significant- and he was making that improvement toward the end of last semester, but he was having to overcome some of his earlier grades so that's why it kept him a little lower. He has started this semester really well, pretty strong. (AS, 2/20/03)

Ulises continued to improve over the course of the spring semester, as his grades in the section below will attest.

Ulises was someone who was able to "jump tracks" (Harklau, 1994) by taking French as an ESOL student, but he also risked getting lost in the system, being tracked in the lowest track in the school (tech) for some of his classes. In order to move him through Walsh so that he ends

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<sup>4</sup> The Adequate Yearly Progress indicator by which schools are evaluated under NCLB includes graduation rates.

up with some sort of diploma, the tech track is the best option for the school. Whether it will be for Ulises remains to be seen.

### *Ulises' Language Use*

Ulises preferred to do all of our interviews in Spanish. I observed him speaking Spanish in French class whenever he was seated in proximity to his best buddy in the class, Mike. He also spoke Spanish with Karen. I wondered if perhaps Karen had developed a crush on Ulises as she chose Ulises' real last name as her last name for her pseudonym (which I did not use).

There were times at the beginning of the study when I noted that Ulises did not seem to understand Mme O'Riley's directives in English:

10/24/02

Ulises comes to class late. Mme O asks him to step outside while the quiz is being graded. He does not comply. As I don't think he would blatantly disregard a request, I wonder if he did not understand her request (made in English). When she motioned to the door for him to exit, he complied. When I asked Mme O about this she said that he often doesn't seem to understand requests like this.

As the school year progressed, Ulises' comprehension improved. He was even able to accommodate my own limitations in Spanish in a later interview when I needed to switch to English:

RN: [...] I'm gonna ask this in English because it's complicated, if you were out somewhere with a parent, relative or friend, and you were speaking Spanish and someone said, "speak English, this is America" how would you respond? And has anything like that ever happened to you or someone you know?

U: Uh, they are... I think somebody told me I need to speak English because we are here but I say I don't know no English to speak with so...., but I try, I try to speak English and Spanish I speak in my home with my friends I speak Spanish too. (U, 5/8/03)

I continued with the rest of the interview in Spanish. On a visit to the school at the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year I met with Ulises and carried on an entire conversation with him in English about his plans for next year:

10/2/03

I take Ulises out into the hall so I can ask him some questions. He said that he was only taking 2 classes in ESOL, both of them language arts (check with Amanda Smith on this). He also says that he spent the summer working in a body shop, fixing cars. This whole conversation was in English (which I found to be vastly improved). He said he wanted to go to college, but that he had no idea how to proceed.

Since this conversation took place outside Mme O'Riley's honors/gifted French II class, Ulises was already in some ways getting closer to attending college. He had successfully jumped a track by getting placed in this class. His spoken English had improved and he was exceeding the state college requirements by acquiring French as well. However, low institutional expectations for students like these could still stand in Ulises' way.

### *Ulises' Academic Identity*

Ulises was in the lower-tracked, college prep third period class. During the 2002-2003 school year his schedule was a mix of tech (lowest track) and college prep (middle track) classes. He was enrolled in ESOL language arts and sheltered ESOL biology, keyboarding, and world history. For the first semester his biology class was not sheltered. After he was placed in a sheltered class for spring, his grade improved. In fact all of his grades improved in the second

semester except for math (where he went from 70 to 61). In language arts he went from 73 to 88, in desktop publishing/ keyboarding 71 to 90, biology 63 to 77, world history 79 to 91, and French 75 to 83.

Near the end of my study I stopped by the ESOL wing to talk to Amanda Smith, and ran into Ms. W., Ulises' world history teacher. She was not at all surprised that Ulises was taking French (unlike Ms. Smith) and in fact told me a story about him from last year. I asked Ulises about this story during our last interview:

RN: [. . .] Me ha dicho que el año pasado, que tú querías estudiar tanto francés que fuiste a la biblioteca y sacaste cintas para escuchar. ¿Es verdad? [*She told me that last year, you wanted to study French so much that you went to the library and checked out tapes to listen to. Is that true?*]

U: Uh-huh. Yeah, sí. (U, 5/8/03)

Ulises had an older brother who had studied French at a university in Mexico and who had been a big influence on him, sending him French music tapes and talking to him about French.

His parents wanted him to be as successful in school as his brother. Ulises described their expectations:

RN: Y, um, ¿qué, ellos quieren que tú estudies en la universidad después? [*And, um, what, they want you to study in the university after?*]

U: Sí, sí, de hecho, porque mi hermano, él estudió y ya está graduado él, y quieren que llego también que sea, sigo los mismos pasos. [*Yes, yes, really, because my brother, he studied and has already graduated, and they want me to follow in his footsteps.*]

(U, 5/8/03)

Since, as stated above, at the beginning of his senior year he was not sure how to go about getting into college, it is not clear if he will find his way there. Even if he does get admitted, the fact that he is not yet a U.S. citizen could make financing difficult, as non-citizens are not eligible for most state and federal financial aid programs.

Ulises' academic identity as a Mexican ESOL Spanish-speaking immigrant tracked into tech and college prep classes puts him at risk for falling between the cracks of work and college study as he completes his high school years. For him Spanish is still a viable language choice and as Amanda Smith noted, his English continues to improve. He made the effort on his own to study French and pulled five out of six of his grades up from one semester to the next. Ulises exemplifies a hard-working "global citizen" with the potential to be multilingual, thus contributing greatly to his adopted home county with its high immigrant population. If his story were known to those in the school who see only problems with this particular immigrant group, perhaps they would think twice about relegating Ulises and his compatriots to the status of a burden on the school and begin to tap into the linguistic resources that they represent.

### **Gracy**

Gracy is thin, of medium height, with reddish-blond, curly hair that she wears just past her shoulders. She has pale skin and usually wears dark eye makeup. She often wears low-rise jeans and tight-fitting t-shirts. Her parents are from Colombia but she was born here. Her father has a car repair shop and her mother is a seamstress. Her family moved back to Colombia when she was a child and she attended school for about a year and a half in Colombia starting in the fifth grade. She is quiet in class, but seems to seek out the attention of boys. In fact she allowed one of the boys in her French class to choose her pseudonym for her. She was always friendly and cooperative and willing to answer any questions I had during the study either in class or by



email. Several of the focal students gave me their email addresses, but she was one of the few to actually answer me.

Gracy has no accent when she speaks English and rarely spoke Spanish at school, as will be discussed in the next section. Her great-grandparents were from Europe and one of her grandfathers practices French with her, as he learned French from his parents.

Gracy was in the third period college prep-tracked French I class. She left Walsh before I could get access to her grades and schedule, but I suspect that her other classes were college prep as well.

### *Gracy's Language Use*

Gracy stated in her interviews that she speaks mainly Spanish at home and hardly ever at school. This was confirmed by my observations of her in French class. There were four other Spanish speakers in that class who always spoke Spanish with each other: Karen, Ulises, Mike, and Marie. I never observed Gracy speaking Spanish and in fact observed her not speak Spanish on one occasion in which it seemed very odd for her not to do so:

10/25/02

Karen, Mike and Ulises perform their skit. They are asked to leave their desks in place by the other group. Gracy makes this request in English to the all Spanish-speaking group.

I later asked Gracy through email why she did not speak Spanish to the Spanish-speakers in this class. She responded:

To answer your questions: you asked why I never spoke Spanish with others in my class, well I never spoke Spanish because most people didn't know. For those who did, most

aren't Colombian and I have a total different accent and some found it funny or weird, so I just speak to them in English. (Gracy, 2003)

In addition to being inhibited about her variety of Spanish, she might have also wished to distance herself from the recent immigrants who are still in ESOL and thus in many ways marginalized members of the school community.

Though she stated in a later interview that she never spoke Spanish at school, she did report speaking Spanish at school in the first interview:

RN: OK, OK. Um, who do you speak Spanish with at school?

G: Um, my best friend.

RN: Where's your best friend from?

G: Puerto Rico. (G, 2/3/03)

In the same interview she spoke about why she would use Spanish at school:

RN: OK, OK. Um, when do you speak Spanish at school?

G: Um, when I tell someone so that everyone else can't hear. (G, 2/3/03)

This clandestine, underground use of Spanish calls attention to the fact that it is an illegitimate language at school, something that will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Interestingly, even though Gracy does not see Spanish as a school language she rates herself relatively high in it:

G: I, 4 or 5 for everything.

RN: For everything, OK, English? And Spanish?

G: 4 and 5.

RN: 4 and 5 for everything? Is there anything that you're more, that you're stronger on?

Like are you doing a lot of reading and writing in Spanish these days?

G: Yeah.

RN: In a class here?

G: No.

RN: Just at home?

G: Just at home.

RN: You read in Spanish at home?

G: Yeah.

RN: OK, what do you read, like magazines or?

G: Magazines and newspapers from Colombia. (G, 3/14/03)

In fact she rates herself just as high in English. For Gracy, even though Spanish is not a school language, her home environment is such that Spanish literacy is reinforced through popular media from her parents' home country.

### *Gracy's Academic Identity*

As stated above, because Gracy left Walsh after the 2002-2003 school year, I did not have access to her grades and schedule. As a member of the third period class, Gracy was part of a classroom culture that did not spend a lot of time discussing their daily academic challenges. Gracy would volunteer answers in class sometimes as my fieldnotes from November show, even when she did not quite have the right answer:

11/20/02

When Mme O'Riley asks this class what it means to conjugate a verb, Gracy answers that it means to separate it.

Even though Gracy enjoyed socializing in this class, she was attentive to Mme O'Riley and quite

often earned “euros”, Mme O’Riley’s class participation point system for her voluntary answers to questions posed to the class.

Gracy stated in the third interview that she planned to go to college. Because of her middle track academic placement and her family’s economic situation, she was not likely to be eligible for a scholarship. She later wrote in an email that she was considering outside funding sources:

Yes, I am considering college , and I may want to study Sociology, I may want to join the Air Force or the Marines. (Gracy, 2003)

The military is often an option for lower socioeconomic groups without scholarship opportunities.

Gracy is a bright, friendly, potentially multilingual young woman. If she does get to college, she will undoubtedly do well. Her academic identity as a light-skinned South American (see Gándara, 1995) background Spanish speaker (who does not share the fact that she speaks Spanish with everyone) allows her to evade the identity of Spanish-speaking immigrant (which she is not after all), something that Ulises and Karen cannot avoid and something that Anne-Marie chooses to embrace.

### **Karen**

Unfortunately my information about Karen is limited due to her only being in third period for the first semester, and the fact that she left Walsh at the end of the 2002-2003 school year. Karen has black hair, brown eyes, and dark skin. She dressed rather conservatively for girls in this class, wearing blouses with collars, and not too-tight fitting pants and skirts. She arrived at Walsh from Mexico, after having spent about a month in Arizona. She was in the third period class with Ulises, Marie and Mike, and she spoke exclusively Spanish with them. She was still

in ESOL classes at the time of this study. At the end of the first semester her schedule changed and she joined the other non-gifted/honors French I class, taught by Mme S.

Karen was confident about learning languages and was aware that Spanish could help with French:

RN: OK, y ¿por qué escogiste a estudiar francés? [*OK, and why did you choose to study French?*]

K: Porque es parecido al español y porque me gusta francés y querría visitar Francia. [*Because it's similar to Spanish and because I like French and I want to visit France.*]

RN: ¿Y piensas que tienes un talento para aprender idiomas? [*And do you think you have a talent for learning languages?*]

K: Sí, yo creo que sí. Ya aprendí inglés y creo que sí yo puedo con otro. [*I think so. I already learned English and I think I can learn another.*] (K, 4/17/03)

Even though she felt confident about English, I never heard her speak it and she preferred to do the two interviews in Spanish. Spanish is a language that Karen feels comfortable with at school, but she also seems to be aware of its illegitimate status, as I heard her using inappropriate words (for the school context) in Spanish sometimes in the French class. This incident will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

### *Karen's Language Use*

Karen did prefer to do her interviews in Spanish, as stated above. She also had a very sophisticated way of speaking Spanish, as seen in the following excerpt. She was responding to the question, “do you think French is like other languages that you know, like English or Spanish?”:

K: Uh, sí el francés es un poco parecido al español en muchos aspectos, en muchas palabras. Y sí, es un poco parecido. [*yes, French is a little like Spanish in many aspects, in many words. And yes, it is a little similar.*] (K, 4/17/03)

I find it hard to imagine any of the other focal students using a word like “aspects” in English or Spanish, even if they had a passive knowledge of the word. It is a relatively sophisticated word choice.

### *Karen’s Academic Identity*

Karen was in ESOL classes and the lower-tracked third period class. She was another ESOL student, like Ulises, who had managed to jump tracks by taking French. The fact that she stayed in a French class even after her schedule changed, showed that it was something important for her. Karen has a lot of potential to be a strong multilingual, who uses Spanish outside the home and sees it as a viable language. However, her placement in ESOL is of concern as she risks slipping through the cracks through low-track placement.

### **Effects of Language Ideologies on the Academic Identities of the Focal Students**

It is interesting to note the students in the lower-tracked French class (Gracy, Ulises, and Karen) all rate themselves highest in Spanish than in any other language (see Figure 5.1). Gracy is not in ESOL, and has no accent in English. Only Anne-Marie, who takes a great deal of pride in speaking Spanish and strongly defends her right to do so, rates herself the same in Spanish as Gracy (4.5).

Brigitte and Christophe are for the most part, secure enough in their academic placement at Walsh to express pride in their abilities in Spanish without ever really having to use Spanish at school. They can use it as a resource in French class and, in Brigitte’s case, talk about Spanish

and instruct others in it. They have responded to the school's linguistic environment by adopting the ideology of elite bilingualism (English first—but look what else we can do).

Students like Sophie and Gracy, without the resources of total elite academic placement like Brigitte and Christophe have, seem to be students who could benefit from being trilingual, or at least bilingual in English and Spanish. But they have been strongly influenced by the assimilationist ideology that Spanish is not an important school language and therefore they do not value it as something useful to their academic and professional lives.

For Anne-Marie, Spanish is a part of her resistance to her elite placement and way to assert her Mexican identity. Ulises and Karen still use Spanish out of necessity, and at this point still have an additive view of multilingualism (we can learn English and French at the same time).

The stereotype of the superior South American student over the Mexican student did not quite hold in my data. Although Brigitte and Christophe were academic achievers, the obstacles that Ulises and Karen had to overcome to be allowed to continue in French class for two semesters were substantial. They also were taking these classes (foreign language) that for most students at Walsh were known as college requirement courses. If, as the principal stated, they were only interested in obtaining a job and not graduating, why would they bother with French?

Although the students do have personal agency, (the lower-tracked ESOL students did decide to take French despite the reservations of counselors and ESOL teachers) as Pavlenko (2002) reminds us, “an individual's will and choice are only part of the story” (p. 293). Academic placement, controlled by teachers and counselors (and **not** by parents and students in cases in which recent immigrants without structural knowledge of U.S. schools are involved) is one compelling example of a structural constraint on an individual's free will.

Language ideologies and their effects on the focal students in the school as a whole will be discussed more in depth in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 6

### SCHOOL LANGUAGE POLICY AND USE

In this chapter I look at how the state language policy is mirrored at the school. How is the legitimate language (Bourdieu, 1991) enforced at the state level and at the school level? I also look at the position of the languages at used at school. Which languages are used and when? And by whom? What “sets of belief about language” (Woolard, 1998) are in play at Walsh High School and in the larger community?

Specifically I address the following research questions:

How do bilingual (and potentially bilingual) Spanish-English speakers in a French classroom in a US school use their languages? What discourses about languages are taken up by these focal students when they talk about the languages that they use?

#### **Official Language and Language Ideologies in Georgia and at Walsh**

One way that discourses manifest themselves in society is through ideologies. I found three main language ideologies at Walsh:

- 1) English is the state and school language and ESOL students are deficient until they learn it.
- 2) Spanish is not a school language, but can be used to communicate urgent messages or messages advantageous to the school.
- 3) Foreign languages are mainly for fulfilling college requirements and making the school seem more “global” or international, but they are not for any real world use.

### *English is the State and School Language*

In order to closely examine language use and beliefs at the school, the larger context of language ideology must be taken into account. As an example of this larger state context, legislation in Georgia designates English as the official language. Likewise, on the Georgia Department of Education's ESOL program home page, a boxed logo with a globe in the background proclaims, "English: The language that Unifies U.S." (*ESOL program*, 2003). This logo has been in use at least since 1998, when it was the theme at a state ESOL and migrant education conference (Beck and Alleksaht-Snider, 2002).

The ESOL home page also offered helpful tips and links to information for ESOL teachers. One of these pages was set to dispel "common myths... regarding ESOL." Question 11 on the list of 22 myths was, "do I need to speak Spanish to teach ESOL?" The first word in the answer is "no." The rest of the answer goes on to accurately point out that not all ESOL students in Georgia speak Spanish. It continues by stating that, "if it was required to know the first language of your students, each ESOL teacher would have to know approximately 1,000 languages" (*Common myths and questions regarding ESOL*, 2003). For most schools, however this is simply not the case. At Walsh, as in most of Nicholas County, the students in ESOL classes who spoke Spanish made up around seventy percent of the total ESOL population (Badie, 2003).

Underlying this policy of not acknowledging the importance of Spanish is also a fear of Spanish-speakers and their large numbers. The authors of this policy hide their anxiety behind concern for speakers of languages they label "low-incidence", i.e. Farsi, Twi and Punjab. Spanish is quickly becoming recognized as necessary in many spheres, and whether the state ESOL curriculum planners choose to acknowledge it or not, Spanish-speaking personnel are a

necessity at many public schools. The whole argument against ESOL teachers knowing Spanish loses ground when one notices that on the Department of Education's own web page, a site "en español" is offered. There were no pages in Twi, Farsi, Japanese, Punjab, Hmong, or in the possible 995 other languages an ESOL teacher in Georgia might need to know.

In light of the high percentage of Spanish speakers in many areas in Georgia it seems odd to discourage teachers from learning a language that could be useful in reaching out to many of the parents and to understanding the challenges that many of their students faced with English, even if their classroom practice was strictly monolingual. The ESOL website seems geared to present English-only instruction and classrooms as the only viable way to help students get ahead. This practice is often advanced by those who believe they are doing their students a service by helping them to acquire English without the "crutch" of another language. As Olsen (1997) found in her study of immigrants in a California high school, "according to formal school policy, court law, and program design, the educational task of becoming American is viewed as a matter of becoming English-speaking" (p. 91). Undoubtedly there are many in the general public and in the education profession who feel that it would be irresponsible to do otherwise. Tse's (2001) survey of editorials and letters to the editor in five national newspapers and three news magazines revealed that the main reason the writers opposed bilingual education was that it was not effective in helping students learn English and achieve academically. I conducted a similar survey of the main Atlanta newspaper for the time period in which this study took place (August 2002 through May 2003) and found only one editorial section devoted to bilingual education, with an editorial devoted to each side of the issue. The anti-bilingual education editorial cited test scores and "failures" in places like California (McAlpin, 2002). It also went

on to advance the practice of “immersion”, a language-learning method also advocated on the Department of Education ESOL web page. The web page explained why immersion is best:

Do all children learn a second language the same way? **Yes.** Although patterns of language use may vary amongst cultures, the stages of how English is acquired do not vary. There is a natural order of English language acquisition with more salient features such as the progressive "-ing" suffix learned prior to the subtle "-ed" suffix for simple past. There are of course as many variables to learning language as there are to learning anything. These variables are individualistic not cultural. Therefore, English-only instructional methods through structured **immersion** and specialized ESOL instruction will serve all students equally. (*Common myths and questions regarding ESOL*, 2003, emphasis mine).

Even though there is a concern for equality in the excerpt above, the website cautions ESOL practitioners not to let some ESOL students rise above the imposed equality that acquisition of English brings, “The student's first language or home culture should not be viewed as bearing neither hindrance **nor asset** to learning any subject including ESOL” (*Common myths and questions regarding ESOL*, 2003, emphasis mine). Apparently the assets that middle to upper middle class children bring to school such as already knowing how to do show and tell and the routines of story time (Heath, 1983) are untroubling to the Department of Education. Knowing a language other than English risks becoming , as Lo Bianco (2000) reminds us, “an act of sedition.”

The above examples also show that the state, through its schools, enforced the monolingual ideal. English was considered the only necessary language in the schools. If a student was an immigrant, knowing another language was not an asset. Silverstein (1996) wrote

about how policies like this demonstrated an underlying ideology, “a culture of monoglot standardization (or Standard) can be demonstrated by showing the ways that this ideal underlies people’s understanding of linguistic usage in their community” (p. 285). ESOL students at Walsh were assumed to be in need of remediation until their English improved. Bilingual education was not even mentioned as an option on any state education website. Immersion in English was touted as the most effective method for English acquisition.

In order to support “immersion” as an English learning method for immigrants, those who promote it often rely on research that shows its effectiveness as a foreign language teaching tool, not as an effective way for those already surrounded by English in a new place. Researchers such as Cummins and Skutnabb-Kangas have shown that there is quite a significant difference between minority language children learning a new language in a country in which that language is the majority language and majority language children learning an additional language at school. In the latter situation, children are learning another language voluntarily, without societal pressure and the risk of failure is small. There is no pressure on them to give up a first language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981).

Although educators who advocate English-only methods for immigrant students may sincerely feel they are doing the best thing for these students academically, they are influenced by this society’s monolingual orientation, which sees children who come to school with languages other than English as a problem and not as a resource to be developed and encouraged (Ruíz, 1984). Excluding the possibilities in a multilingual community in favor of the unifying discourse of English-only creates a false sense of security for those who fear the difference of the other.

*Spanish is Not a School Language*

*English and Spanish at Walsh*

As English is in the larger state context, so it was at Walsh High School. The status of English at Walsh was clear. English was the unmarked language at school. It was the language that immigrant students were “deficient” in. It was what needed to be fixed in them, before they were ready to take on anything else. For example, some of the faculty interviewees seemed to view the ESOL students as not quite ready to take on languages outside of English or ESOL. When she was told that focal student Ulises was taking French, ESOL teacher Amanda Smith expressed surprise. As quoted in Chapter 4, ESOL department head Victor Harris said that what ESOL students needed more than instruction in literacy in their first languages was more focus on “study skills.” Here Amanda Smith talks about ESOL students taking other languages:

RN: Um, and what do you think about him studying French, a third language?

AS: Well, uh I know that what we’ll recommend to students is if they haven’t been in the US really long and they’re working to try to learn English, we’ll usually recommend not to take an additional language right away, um we usually ask them to wait a little while.

(AS 2/20/03)

Although she showed concern and care for these students, she also seemed to view them as unable to handle the cognitive demands of an additional language. This is an illustration of the discourse of multilingualism as cognitively confusing.

Additionally, students in ESOL classes who could not be placed in higher-level language arts ESOL received only elective credit for lower-level ESOL classes. Anyone else in the school (i.e. English-speaking monolinguals) receives foreign language credit (for admission to Georgia colleges and universities) for classes in additional languages, no matter how elementary, whereas

these speakers of other languages were considered so deficient that their classes in beginning English did not even contribute to their academic credits. Further evidence of a deficiency orientation is found in the ESOL departmental brochure. A list of classes deemed “appropriate for limited English proficient students” includes beginning chorus, 2D design and 3D design (prerequisites for all art courses) and physical education courses.

English was the language of all of the high-stakes standardized tests that students at public high schools throughout the state were required to take, regardless of the length of time that they had been in the U.S, although some concessions could be made, according to a Georgia Department of Education memo on Limited English Proficient Students and the No Child Left Behind Act (“No child left behind,” 2002). The memo stated that on state assessments, “LEP students may be given accommodations [...] that can take the form of providing appropriate linguistic accommodations, extra time and other options.” The term “appropriate linguistic options” was not defined on the memo, so it is unclear whether this means that students at any point would be able to complete any portion of the test in a first language, which could possibly demonstrate competency in a given subject area, if not competency in English. Given the overall attitude toward bilingual education at the state level, this was unlikely to be the case in many schools in Georgia. It was not the case at Walsh.

Teachers at Walsh usually reflected the language ideology that was in place in the state and at the school. When asked about Spanish use in the ESOL classroom, Amanda Smith expressed some inner conflict:

RN: [...] do your students usually speak their first languages in class, like when they're not working on a class assignment or just with each other?

AS: [...]because I have so many Spanish-speakers, they tend to[...]do that. And I

struggle with knowing what the best thing is to do. But then at the same point, um, I think that there are times when, when it's OK. Like I've got a student who's a lower level student who needs help and I can pair them and have them work together, um and maybe they can work in Spanish, and then put it, write it down in English. Uh, I think that there are situations where, you know, that's OK. I've given an assignment where, uh each person was supposed to come up with a song that was specific to them and had some kind of meaning and they had to explain that. Well they could bring the lyrics in Spanish, but I wanted an English translation also and they would explain in English what it was that was so important or special about that song. So, I don't, I want to encourage that, but at the same point I don't want—this is what my struggle is—I don't want it to be a crutch.

The discourse of English-only in the classroom was so strong that it pervaded the thinking of even those teachers who felt that they should be flexible about it.

Students were required to pass the Gateway exam (a district-wide standardized test) in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and the Georgia High School Graduation Test in order to earn a diploma. The Gateway exam includes a substantial essay section and students are evaluated on their writing, grammar and spelling. Thus students labeled “Limited-English proficient” would find themselves in the paradoxical position of not being encouraged to take classes outside of ESOL other than chorus, art or PE, because anything else would presumably be too challenging, but then on the other hand being expected to write essays in academic English, a task that researchers such as Cummins (1979) have pointed out can take up to seven years to achieve.

English was the language of assimilation, the default language that everyone at the school was unquestionably expected and assumed to know. This was demonstrated by the fact that



school events like Spirit Week, school dances and school plays were all promoted and performed in English. Publications like the school accountability report and brochures for the IB program were also exclusively in English. All PTSA newsletters were in English as was the school's student produced newspaper. The Walsh High School's official web site was also entirely in English (including the new student registration form). Even an event deemed so important to the well-being of the entire student body that a great deal of effort and expense went into it, ("Ghost-out", a dramatic re-enactment of a prom-night car accident designed to discourage drunk driving) was performed entirely in English. Apparently the cost of real helicopters, squad cars and ambulances left no money in the budget for an explanation of the program in other languages.

The above examples illustrate how language use at Walsh mirrors Schiffman's (1996) observation that, "the strength of American language policy is not in what is legally and officially stated, but ... in what I have called the covert and implicit language policy" (p. 211). The unquestioned presence of English for almost all transactions attests to this covert policy.

Spanish is the most widely used language of the largest immigrant group in the area. Out of 24,000 students in the Nicholas County school system who speak a language other than English at home, 12,425 are Spanish speakers (Macdonald, 2003). However, the way Spanish was used at the school seemed to at least partially reflected the state Department of Education's website rationale for studying additional languages (see Table 6.1), "today foreign language skills are vital to national defense, law enforcement and economic security" (*Languages and International Education*, 2003). This defensive, "only in case of emergency" orientation was evident at Walsh in its limited use of Spanish.

Table 6.1

## Reasons for Studying a Foreign Language/ Uses of Spanish at Walsh

Georgia Department of Education Website Rationale for Studying Foreign Languages	How Spanish is Used at Walsh
“National defense” “Law enforcement”	Sign on counseling office door directing all visitors to sign in at the office for security reasons
“Economic security”	Food drive posters for competitive class food drive (winning homeroom gets a prize)  Local college recruiting posters (money to be made from those eligible for financial aid) and meetings about scholarships for Hispanic students

The “national defense” and “law enforcement” rationales were evidenced by the presence of signs and other displays at the main school entrance. Posted on a counseling office door near the main entrances where Spanish-speaking parents, students or other family members might arrive was this sign, “por razones de seguridad, debe registrar su visita en la oficina principal para poder ayudarle”. Of course this sign also appeared in English: “all visitors must sign in at the office”. Other, more welcoming signs were in English and **not** in Spanish, such as a calendar of the month’s events, bulletin boards announcing scholarships and introducing new faculty, display cases highlighting art work by the students, and posters for plays put on by the drama department. The signs at the school entrance indicate the regulatory, defensive use of Spanish. This use excludes Spanish-speakers from the main community of the school and directs them

with bureaucratic efficiency to register their presence, so that they may be dealt with as expediently as possible.

The “economic security” rationale for using Spanish is demonstrated by the materials found posted in the hallways that were designed to entice or lure Spanish-speakers. Right before the Thanksgiving break I saw posters in the hallways in English and Spanish announcing a food drive. This was a competitive event among the homeroom classes (which included ESOL students along with non-ESOL students). The class with the most cans received some type of reward (free time, a party, or food). When it was time to induce the school’s Spanish-speakers to make contributions in this event, Spanish was used because it held a promise of economic gain.

Outside groups who could profit from the participation of Spanish speakers also used Spanish to entice them into participation: I noticed flyers in English and Spanish announcing a meeting about scholarships for Hispanic students. I also saw a local community college recruiting poster in Spanish in the hall. Although at first glance scholarship information and college recruiting seem inclusive and welcoming, it also reflects the college’s ongoing efforts to gain new state recognition and funding by growing its Spanish-speaking background student population.

So the presence of Spanish in its limited uses in the school is indicative of the status of Spanish-speakers in the school at large. When the PTSA brochures, school newspapers, school web page, new student information forms and even an information sheet on the location of the international newcomer center for the district are all exclusively in English, this is not a neutral, obvious choice when efforts to translate other materials into Spanish have been made. The situation at Walsh was analogous to the situation Heller (2001) described in Canada, “the manipulation of French and English is used in Canada to advance the interests of francophones

and anglophones occupying a variety of social positions” (p. 383). A low-status language like Spanish can be used when its use is advantageous to those in power.

***Foreign Languages Are Not for Any “Real World” Use***

What was the position of “foreign” languages at Walsh? Reagan and Osborn (2002) described the situation in most U.S. secondary schools, “foreign language education in the United States is clearly not successful for most students... it is clear that most students, parents, teachers, and policy-makers do not seriously expect it to succeed. Rather it serves an important tracking and sorting function” (p. 6). I found evidence of this tracking function at Walsh in my interviews with ESOL and foreign language faculty. For example, Spanish teacher Maggie Rivers spoke of the reasons students enroll in her class:

RN: And why do they take Spanish?

MR: Because they have to. And they’ll tell you that. Because it’s required.

RN: OK. It’s required for the college?

MR: It’s required to graduate with the college prep diploma. (MR, 3/28/03)

The school reinforced this gatekeeping view of “foreign” language study by denying, for the most part, the legitimacy of the Spanish spoken by the ESOL population of the school. In order to see if the Foreign Languages Department was interested in approximating “real world” use (i.e. having students who speak Spanish as a first language get to know students who are learning Spanish), I asked Foreign Languages Department Head and Spanish teacher Melinda Todd about having Spanish-speaking ESOL students meet with students in her Spanish classes for language exchanges:

RN: [...] do you ever have maybe some kids from ESOL who are native Spanish speakers come and talk to the kids in Spanish[...]?

MT: I tried one year having them be pen pals—one of my classes be pen pals with my dear friend who teaches ESOL keyboarding and so had them writing letters to each other and of course just exactly what I didn't want to happen happened. They, you know, suggested we meet for bad things—

RN: —Uh-oh.

MT: So, no I never do. They see each other out and about, you know. If they want to talk, they'll talk. (MT, 5/13/03)

Since the ESOL department was on a different floor from foreign languages and in a separate wing of the school, this was unlikely. If there were an area of the school in which Spanish could be recognized as a viable mode of communication, the foreign language department would be the most likely place. However this was not the case at Walsh. Real, live Spanish speakers were perceived as either a nuisance (in Spanish classrooms) because the teachers did not have challenging enough work for them, or as a threat because they might corrupt the English speakers with enticements to do “bad things.” Melinda Todd evidently felt that “they”— the ESOL students— were the initiators of forbidden activity.

Other language ideologies were evident in foreign language teachers' comments. My field notes contain this excerpt from a day when Mme O'Riley was talking to her class about French spoken in other parts of the world:

12/6/02

Mme O. talks about languages and how African French is different from France French. She asks class why African French isn't taught and France French is. Students respond that there are too many dialects. Mme O. says that France French is the variety that's more well known.

*Why* it is the variety that is better known was not called into question. It is accepted as a practicality, something that everyone just acknowledges without thinking. It is an apt illustration of Fairclough's (1989) comment that "...the teaching of language in schools has to a remarkable extent contrived to ignore its most decisive social functions" (p. 3). The fact that large-scale first language literacy campaigns have been conducted in Africa and that some former francophone countries like Central African Republic have changed back to an African language as the official language is not usually discussed in textbooks.

Besides French and Spanish, students at Walsh could also take German and Latin. Melinda Todd spoke about the perception of languages at Walsh, and the historical reasons for them:

MT: [...] The kids- when I first came to Walsh, the gifted kids all took German because we had that program over at [feeder middle school] for gifted kids, so when they got to Walsh, they would continue German. Uh, then the kids who were taking French, a lot, a whole lot of band kids took French because it, you know it gets to be a tradition with a certain group of people and because the French teacher- well French was the only language at Walsh for many years—

RN:—Hmm!

MT: And then she- there was just [French teacher's name] and then she picked up a class of Spanish, and then they started building the program, but [French teacher's name] had worked with the band and a lot of the band kids took French because they liked her. Who takes Spanish now is everybody. Because we have the gifted program over at [feeder middle school] so now we have gifted kids who have already started and continue with taking Spanish, as well as the kids who do the German too. But Spanish has a reputation

in society as not being too hard to learn and so kids, uh, will think about taking a foreign language and they'll say, "I'll take Spanish 'cause it won't be as hard as French or German or Latin." So everybody takes Spanish. (MT, 5/13/03)

One reason for this perception of Spanish as "not being too hard to learn" is explained by (Arteaga, 1994): "Spanish is a language of Latin Americans, south of the border and north. Across the border, Spanish is a Third World language; here it is the language of the poor" (p. 12). The way Spanish was used in the school did not do much to dispel this notion and students picked up on this. On the last day of the study, I videotaped students' comments as I debriefed them on the study. Here are my notes from the video of the second period honors/gifted class, 5/13/03

Karine says, "they think that if you're smart and in gifted classes you're not going to speak Spanish" (she was responding to Christophe saying that people don't usually think that he speaks Spanish). The whole class began talking in unison, showing agreement with Karine's statement.

If Spanish is not a legitimate language at the school, then it is certainly not a legitimate language in upper-tracked classes. Even if teachers and administrators are not forthcoming about this, students have no problem calling things as they see them.

### ***Illegitimate Spanish***

As stated above, in most cases, native Spanish speakers at Walsh (especially those in the ESOL program) did not have their linguistic competence recognized. Some Spanish teachers seemed to regard students who already spoke Spanish in their classes as speakers of an illegitimate variety, clashing with the Castilian or Latin American variety that the textbook enforced. Ortega (1999) notes this unfortunately widespread phenomenon, "Minority bilingual

students are often speakers of stigmatized varieties, for instance Chicano Spanish, rural Mexican Spanish, and rural Puerto Rican Spanish versus the standard Castilian or Mexican Spanish which are normally taught” (p. 250). Spanish teacher Maggie Rivers spoke about the native speakers in her class:

RN: And how do they do in the class?

MR: It depends. Many of them are communicative, I guess, in an oral way only. They can speak and understand, but they have no knowledge of grammar. They can't read, they don't spell very well in Spanish and um, they don't- some of them cooperative, some of them aren't very cooperative with the vocabulary we're required to learn. It takes a lot of explaining to them. 'Cause it's all- “we don't – that's not how we say it” and all that kind of stuff. Many of them have a really good attitude and it's a good thing to have them in class so the other students can hear the language modeled differently than me 'cause I'm, you know, not a native speaker. (MR, 3/28/03)

Maggie Rivers does acknowledge that her Spanish-speaking students can contribute to the class, but she is clearly frustrated when they do not tow the textbook line on the standard Latin American Spanish that is taught in most U.S. textbooks. She herself is exemplifying the ideal of monoglot standardization of Spanish, refusing to legitimize the students' home varieties of Spanish because the discourse of the textbook as absolute authority is so strong.

There were no native Spanish speakers teaching Spanish at the time of the study. Although there is no inherent superiority of native speaker teachers, it is likely that these English-speaking background teachers felt that they had less flexibility with the language, less of a right to go beyond textbook usage. In that way these students were a threat to the teachers' authority (in addition to the threat they posed to the textbook), as they possessed a colloquial



fluency with the language that perhaps the teachers did not possess. Maggie Rivers admitted that she valued her native-speaker students above, but she still wanted them to conform to a mythical standard Spanish, a language that she could control through the textbook. Reagan and Osborn (2002) wrote about another possible motivation for teachers to dismiss native speaker students' contributions:

Far from just a language issue, the refusal to recognize the native speaker as a knower may well function as a strategy to make such students invisible, thus preserving and legitimizing the dominant group's way of viewing what is language and who is a language user (p. 10).

Thus at Walsh, the opportunity to have Spanish-speakers share their linguistic competence with those learning Spanish was missed.

Since Spanish-speaking students were aware that Spanish was not a legitimate language at Walsh, they sometimes exploited this to use language that is not usually appropriate in the school context. When this happened once in the third period French class, I abandoned my silent observer mode as my field notes attest:

10/9/02

A group of Spanish-speaking students are seated together, speaking Spanish. One student (Karen) says "*chinga*" (*fuck*, an inappropriate word for the school context). The teacher in me comes out and I jump out of my researcher skin to remind her in Spanish about appropriate language (*¡cuidado con este lenguaje aquí, señorita!, careful with that language here, miss!*).

At the time I thought I was reacting in a rather prudish way, resisting the students efforts to use "naughty" language. On further analysis, it occurred to me that I was also not willing for

Spanish to be marginalized to the point where students feel that it is not and will never be a legitimate school language. Using Spanish appropriately in the classroom context is a step toward legitimization.

Overall, during the time of the study I found that there was a disconnect between the image that Walsh High School seemed to want to promote of itself as a school that encourages and promotes foreign language study, has international, prestigious, high track programs, and embraces diversity (as described in Chapter Four), versus the school in which foreign language classes are taken mainly as a college entrance requirement, in which the curriculum is based mainly on prepackaged textbook programs, in which the ESOL department is kept physically and ideologically separated from the other department that taught additional languages, and where immigrant students with linguistic resources are largely ignored.

The unspoken language policy and ideology that permeated Walsh from the State Department of Education to the ESOL and foreign language departments at the school were in large part responsible for this disconnect. As shown above, the tracking function of foreign language classes has primacy over any real attempt at having English-speaking monolinguals learn languages like Spanish. Thus meaningful interaction with native Spanish-speakers has been a quaint notion attempted only once and then abandoned. ESOL classes, in their function as the remedial repository for those deficient in English, marginalize students by keeping them separate from the rest of the school until they have learned the legitimate language. At the time of the study, ESOL students were not tracked into gifted, honors or IB programs.

### **Resisting Ideologies: Multilingualism as a Goal in Spite of it All**

The focal students still saw multilingualism as something that could be attained in the future. They did all say that they would continue to use Spanish in the future and continue

studying French. Of course, since they knew that I had worked as a French teacher myself, there is a possibility that they knew what I wanted to hear. Nevertheless, they did talk about French and Spanish as part of their optimistically imagined futures involving travel, study, career and family.

Here are their responses to the question, “in the future, how much do you think you’ll continue to use Spanish and French?” asked during the third interview. Brigitte saw French and Spanish as advantageous to her career:

B: I hope to use it a lot, if I can get a job where I can use all three languages I’ll be happy and continue to use them to stay fluent in ‘em, ‘cause otherwise you forget. (B, 5/8/03)

Anne-Marie saw Spanish as a lifelong language and French as a way to travel to France:

AM: Spanish, for like, ever, French, I want to go to France (AM, 5/8/03)

Christophe and Gracy envisioned a future of French study (with Spanish always present) for themselves:

C: Um, probably if I continue to study French and go on all the way through college, which I might, I’m still trying to decide whether to switch to Spanish in my junior year or not, but I’ll definitely use Spanish my whole life because, I mean, my whole family is in Venezuela except for my mom and my dad, and so I’ll need it. (C, 5/8/03)

G: Well, Spanish always and French, I guess if I go to college and take French classes, ‘cause I want to take it all through high school. (G, 5/8/03)

Sophie imagines having trilingual children, even if she cannot quite figure out how multiple languages could serve her in a career:

S: Um, I hope to be able to use it a lot, and um I’m still not sure what career wise. . . but if I could use Spanish and French it would really, I think I’d really like that. I really wish

I could speak French all they way, you know and teach my children Spanish and French and be able to always speak French fluently and stuff. (S, 5/8/03)

Ulises sees nothing but opportunity in knowing multiple languages (although it appears that he left one out):

U: O, sí, seguro que sí, saber dos lenguas abre puertas donde quiera [...] [*Oh, yes of course, knowing two languages opens doors anywhere*]. (U, 5/8/03)

If they could hold on to this optimism as they negotiate their ways through the discourses and ideologies about language that await them in college and in the workforce, there might be hope for them to serve as linguistic resources after all. But it would certainly help if these students received a positive message about multilingualism as soon as they entered school, instead of the message that English is the only language that counts.

### **Language Ideologies are not Fixed: Language Hybridity and Play at Walsh**

In spite of the three pervasive language ideologies described above, the rich linguistic environment at Walsh was not completely suppressed. The relatively large numbers of immigrant students did afford for some play and hybridity with languages at Walsh. My field notes and interview transcripts contain various examples of students (focal and non-focal) and teachers reacting to, talking about and using languages in unexpected ways.

#### *Students and Language Use*

One way in which students showed that there was hope for their multilingual futures is the fact they reported being able to make connections among their languages. In spite of the pervasive English-only orientation in the state and in the school at large, the focal students in the higher-tracked second period class and in the lower-tracked third period class were able to use

their language backgrounds to help them with French. For most of them, Spanish was seen as a positive asset.

Table 6.2 summarizes the focal students' comments on using English or Spanish to help them with French. It illustrates that students do feel that most of the time they are able to call on Spanish as a resource when learning another, related language. In these two French classrooms, their linguistic competence is, for the most part, available to them.

Here is an example of some unexpected language play from my November fieldnotes:

11/13/02

Anne-Marie works with Jeanne (L1 Korean). Jeanne teaches Anne-Marie some written phrases in Korean. Mme O'Riley welcomes and encourages this behavior, rather than telling them that this is off-task.

Likewise, in October, Grégoire, a Chinese-speaking background student in the high tracked second period class tries his hand at guessing the reason for noun genders in French:

10/17/02

Grégoire asks about the indefinite articles *un/une*. He asks if there are girl foods and guy foods. Christophe says "it's not that". Apparently, Christophe has knowledge of this from Spanish.

Christophe felt confident enough about his ability as a speaker of another Romance language to step in and clear things up for Grégoire.

10/4/02

Mike tells me he didn't know that I spoke Spanish. He says, "you speak French too! You're good at languages."

Table 6.2  
Using Other Languages to Help with French (from interview 2)

Student	English	Spanish
Christophe	“it just relates to some English words”	“and a lot of Spanish to it, helps me understand like a lot of the articles are the same”
Brigitte	“sort of [tied to] English”	“French is pretty closely tied to Spanish”
Anne-Marie	N/A	“it’s almost the same thing”
Sophie	“and in English, ‘cause it helps”	“most of the time in Spanish. It’s more often.”
Ulises	“No”	“más que nada con español” [more than anything, with Spanish]
Gracy	N/A	“Spanish”
Karen	N/A	“el francés es un poco parecido al español en muchos aspectos, en muchas palabras” [French is a little similar to Spanish in many aspects, in many words]

N/A= did not mention English in their answer to the question “Do you ever use the languages that you know like English or Spanish to help you with French?” Although I tried to phrase the question this way in all of the interviews, I was not always consistent. In Brigitte’s and Christophe’s interviews I did not mention a language in particular. In Anne-Marie’s interview I only mentioned Spanish.

11/13/02

I overhear Lisa, an African-American girl say that she is going to send her child to foreign language classes when she's in kindergarten. I'm encouraged and surprised to find these kind of future-oriented metalinguistic comments in a non-AP "non-gifted" class.

Thus the school ideology was not so all-pervasive that students were hammered into English-only drones. In a way, since students in third period were not as obsessed with grades and academic placement, they were freer to see language as something intriguing that could connect them to the world beyond school, instead of just as something that guaranteed college admission and IB program status.

Other students, aware that my study was about language, liked to share their knowledge with me:

12/11/02

Daelin was absent yesterday, so I give him the speaking test. Since he mentions that he speaks Spanish sometimes at home, I ask him about his language background. He's of Filipino descent- born in California, with Spanish and Tagalog-speaking relatives. He also tells me that he speaks some German and Japanese.

Sometimes, I would just overhear interesting comments on language:

4/2/03

Some students in Mme O's homeroom speaking Vietnamese- "I don't speak that language" says the Vietnamese boy to a Vietnamese girl, joking.

Since Vietnamese is the second most-spoken language other than English at Walsh, this could be an effort to resist an identity as an immigrant or ESOL other.

9/20/02

During class, one of the visiting Spanish class students says “No one understands a language when they’re thinking in another one.” Grégoire (who listed Chinese as one of his languages on my survey form) responded to this with, “I can hear Chinese and answer in English.” Interesting to note metalinguistic comments of this almost-all bilingual class.

Grégoire’s comment probably describes something he is used to doing with his parents, since this is a common practice in many bilingual homes.

Some students, not of Spanish-speaking backgrounds, would use comment on other languages that they knew as they learned French:

3/17/03

For the dialogue activity, Mme O. teaches the word “voleur [thief].” Jean-Paul repeats in a voice that suggests that he’s heard it before, like a cry, “voleur!”

Jean-Paul is of Haitian background and he often seemed to be aware of many vocabulary words in class. He was most likely connecting French to Haitian Creole.

Other times students would just show that they were tuned into language, and listening for any possible connection they could make:

1/9/03

When learning vieux/vieille [masculine and feminine forms of the adjective “old”]

Karine (Vietnamese-American) says that it sounds like a Vietnamese word.



3/13/03

I happen to have the camera off for a few seconds when Alexander, a native English speaker, makes a connection to Spanish (or uses a Spanish word) and says, “oh that’s Spanish.”

Most of the time connections between cognates in Spanish and French would normally yield a correct answer, as in these examples:

8/19/02

4<sup>th</sup> period French 2- since this is not a French 1 class, I really shouldn’t be looking for focal students here, but there is one Spanish-speaking boy sitting near me who is constantly making French connections (“contento-content”)

12/6/02

While going over pourquoi Mme O. says it’s very similar to a Spanish word and Marie says pórque?

But other times it can yield a wrong answer:

5/8/03

Christophe invents the word “carnicerie” for boucherie when Mme O. is reviewing place names (invention from Spanish- use of Spanish to help with French). Carnicería is the Spanish word.

Although it did not help Christophe arrive at the correct word for butcher shop, it is fascinating from a linguistic point of view. It shows that he actively used Spanish as a resource.

Spanish-speaking ESOL students would also connect Spanish to English, as in this excerpt from my fieldnotes on the day I shadowed Ulises:

5/2/03

Ms. R. starts a review on the overhead about the respiratory system. She asks about what mucous does- someone mutters “mocos” (connection from Spanish to English-word for “booger” sounds like mucous).

Overall then, in spite of English-only ideologies, the students were on many occasions able to make connections among their languages. They were also able compare their first languages and those of their peers to other languages in a more relaxed, non-academic context. If more teachers were aware of the linguistic resources of their students (instead of seeing them as deficient in English), and of the potential for language play in a multilingual environment, perhaps this could be another strength that teachers can use to enhance their lessons to benefit all of their students, not just the ones eligible for this school’s definition of global citizenship.

### *Teachers and Language Use*

In the course of my observations and fieldwork, I observed the focal teacher, teachers I interviewed, and other teachers not directly concerned with my study (for example, teachers in whose classes I observed focal students), comment on and interact with language and language use at the school.

Since I spent the most amount of time in Mme O’Riley’s room, I had plenty of opportunities to observe her comments on language:

11/15/02

Mme O. is going over some verbs. She specifically reminds Spanish-speakers not to add an –s to the verb étudier (estudiar in Spanish). She says it’s a common mistake for Spanish speakers.

Here she is showing awareness of Spanish and that it is a language of many of her students. This was not just in second and third periods. Her other classes had Spanish speakers in them too. In her interview she talked about the connections that her second period students made among languages:

RN: Do you hear them speaking their first languages in this class?

MO: Periodically. Um, you know a lot of times they'll work in groups and in smaller groups they will. Or they'll make connections with their language. They don't necessarily always speak in their language, but they're often bringing up things that are related to their language. I actually have a student though that reads a lot of comics in her native language. She's reading those in class (*mock strict voice*), even though she's not supposed to. [...]

MO: All the time these students are making those connections. Um, and it's great because a lot of times what I'll do is I'll use what they'll say to help other classes because it becomes very much of a strategy for them and I'll say, "OK, let's connect this- how many of you know a different language?" and I'll use what my second period says and what they know to make notations for my other classes. (MO, 2/24/03)

Mme O'Riley had the most positive experiences with linguistic connections in her gifted/honors classes. But she was also willing to see the positive linguistic contributions of the students in the third period class as well:

MO: There are some students that have Spanish as a first language. I actually have a student in there from Haiti, who has the French- has a little bit of a French background and he's very bright in that class. (MO, 2/24/03)

Not all of the teachers in the foreign language department were able to see that speakers of other languages could be a resource in their classrooms, however, as can be seen in this interview with foreign language department head Melinda Todd:

RN: And what are the provisions that you make in the Spanish classes for native speakers you might have in some of the classes?

MT: Um, what try to do is encourage children who are already native speakers to try another foreign language because it is a- in my own opinion- a big waste of their time. I have two boys in one of my classes. They are both from Mexico. They both speak and write at- they're just excellent writers, excellent speakers- nicest boys in the world. But they are bored to tears because I don't have time to create an entire different lesson plan for just them. [...] they get along with everybody, but there is still a little bit of tension if they make a mistake. The others love to turn and say, "I thought this was your native language." So we do try to get them to take another language. When they are in there in general they follow the same curriculum as everybody else. (MT, 5/13/03)

Instead of incorporating them into the lesson and having them serve as models, she sees them as a nuisance. Their real world knowledge of Spanish is of no value to her, so she chooses not to share this important resource with her class.

ESOL teachers I observed did not for the most part censor Spanish:

2/3/03 [observation of Ms. Smith's ESOL class]

The Spanish-speaking students all speak Spanish to each other. It does not appear to be censored.

5/2/03 [biology class] Everyone in this class seems to be of Spanish-speaking background. They are all speaking Spanish, but they speak in English to Ms. R.

[math class] One girl chatters excitedly to her 2 friends in Spanish. Mr. T makes no effort to suppress this and when she says, “no comprendo” he says, “yes you do.” He circulates around the room. Ulises gets help from him in English. They work a problem together. Ulises seems to get it and confirms his answer- all in English. They work a problem together. As soon as Mr. T leaves his side, his Spanish-speaking neighbor asks him some questions in Spanish. They show each other their papers and discuss solutions to problems in Spanish.

Ms. Smith gave students opportunities to display metalinguistic knowledge:

2/3/03

Ms. Smith gives the class a journal prompt to write using irregular verbs. She asks a student what irregular past tense verbs are. He answers, “verbs that don’t end in –ed.”

Overall, then, Walsh High School was a place where language ideologies, although sometimes seemingly deeply entrenched, were also in a state of transition. For example, my fieldnotes record that:

3/28/03

I visited the school media center in order to see what publications were available to students in Spanish. The media specialist was not here, but I found *Selecciones de Reader’s Digest* and *Hispanic* magazine.

This is less-than-compelling material for young people, and I was dismayed. But later Mme O’Riley told that there had been a budget meeting for the library and that several teachers had advocated for purchasing books and other reading material in Spanish.

Walsh High School does have the potential to throw off existing language ideologies that keep multilingual students from becoming resources useful to their nation and community. The

school community must be willing to hear these students' voices, whatever languages the voices may be in. The fact that the students play with language and use their languages as resources shows that they see languages as vital aspects of their identities. Teachers who welcome linguistic diversity are essential to the development of these students as resources, and for this it is encouraging to find them at Walsh.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

In this research, I sought to document the sociocultural context of third language acquisition in one U.S. high school. I examined how language discourses were manifested by students, staff and the local media at this potentially multilingual school. I also sought to find out if bilingual immigrant students used their languages as resources in an environment in which they may or may not be encouraged to do so. In addition, I wanted to know how these students saw themselves academically and linguistically, and how these two aspects were related. I also wanted to know how teachers and administrators saw these students. Admittedly, I approached the study with my own language ideologies and beliefs about what I might find in a school that has only relatively recently had a large influx of Spanish-speaking students. Although some findings were not surprising (that ESOL Spanish speakers were not immediately encouraged to pursue further language study), other findings were unexpected (such as the ESOL department head's openness to students speaking their first languages in the classroom).

This study has provided only a partial view of how Spanish-speakers are perceived at one high school. At Walsh, I found that at varying times the focal students were seen as (and saw themselves as) competent bilinguals, in possession of a skill that could serve them well in the future and that others should aspire to. At other times I found that the students who came into the school speaking Spanish (especially students from Mexico and Central America) were seen as deficient in language (meaning English) and that mastery of English was considered the main factor in their school success.

Thus, this study illustrates how even a school in the U.S. that attempts to become more bilingual or even multilingual (by adding foreign languages and requiring more language study through international programs like IB), risks becoming only nominally so, and falling into the trap that Heller (2001) describes in Toronto, “a monolingual education that takes place in a bilingual and frequently multilingual context and that in fact aims at achieving individual bilingualism through institutional monolingualism” (p. 383).

Whether or not the focal students can maintain their Spanish, perfect their English to assure academic and career success, and add French as third language remains to be seen. However, at the point at which my study captured their portraits I believe that this could be a possibility. It is probable that as Christophe, Brigitte, Anne-Marie, Sophie, Ulises, Gracy, and Karen enter college and/or the workforce in the United States, they will continue to use at least Spanish and English, if not French (although most of them did say that they would continue with French), thus adding to a growing population of young adults with multilingual skills and changing the image worldwide of the monolingual American. An additive view of languages for all students is what schools need to have as their goal in order to realize the multilingual potential – a resource that must not be lost.

The discourses about language and school success at Walsh are by no means static, however. The faculty’s strong desire to do the best thing for their students, immigrants or otherwise was driving changes even during the study. As Sniad (2002) found in her study, language ideologies are not fixed. I believe at Walsh, and in the larger context of the state, things were becoming better in some ways for English language learners. In 2004 the state superintendent of schools was replaced by someone less hostile to the idea of bilingual education. Nicholas County began to implement Spanish for native speakers in some of its



schools. The Walsh High School library allocated some of its budget for the purchase of books appropriate to the interests of young people in Spanish.

### **Implications for Further Research**

Third language acquisition studies are still in an exciting new stage. Traditional methods of research borrowed from second and foreign language acquisition studies have yielded a wealth of information about the language processing capabilities of multilinguals. Additional studies are needed to augment this work by looking at the context of multilingualism in schools, much in the same way that researchers have studied societal bilingualism and bilingual students in public schools. As more potentially bilingual and multilingual students immigrate to parts of the United States that have previously had little contact with speakers of languages other than English, it will become increasingly important to have studies of varying contexts and languages that are informative and useful to practitioners and researchers alike, and that provide many perspectives on what it means to be multilingual in a traditionally monolingual context.

Another finding that is beyond the scope of the current study, but that would be a fascinating area for further research is the fact that **all** of the students in the higher-tracked second period class were bilingual (in Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, or Japanese, in addition to the Spanish-speakers). Further investigation into the socioeconomic status of higher-tracked immigrant students is also warranted.

There is also a need for further research following Peirce's (1995) notion of investment. Further longitudinal studies of why students choose to study an L3 (or beyond) would add much to the literature, in ways that I was only able to touch on briefly, given the scope of the present study.

### **Praxis in Nicholas County**

I recently accepted a job as an ESOL teacher at a different school in Nicholas County. At the interview the principal and I discussed our views of language and language learners. She stated that one of the changes she sought to make at the school was to have all of the language classes (ESOL, language arts, and foreign languages) in one wing of the school together. This is the type of structural change that I believe can make in difference in how **all** of the students' linguistic resources can be integrated into the curriculum, and can be seen as a strength for the school. It remains to be seen whether such structural changes can also change the remedial nature of the ESOL classes (as discussed in Chapter 6). The principal also echoed (without any prompting from me) Zentella's (1997) statement that we should work towards, "resolving the contradiction between national cries for widespread foreign language competence on the one hand and, the calloused indifference to the maintenance of [students' first languages] on the other" (p. 285). Whether or not actual resources materialize to back up these sentiments remains to be seen. As I have found educators will sometimes praise the goals of societal bilingualism while failing to implement practices that would actually bring about those goals.

As I plan my transition from graduate student to classroom practitioner I keep in mind the lessons I learned from my immigrant and immigrant-background focal students. I will seek to encourage the practices that facilitated their language acquisition and access to school and community resources and to help my students overcome barriers (such as tracking) to their educational opportunities beyond high school.

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## APPENDIX

**Initial Classroom Language Use Survey**

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you consider yourself to be bilingual? Yes Maybe No
3. Languages spoken most often at home \_\_\_\_\_
4. Languages spoken most often with friends \_\_\_\_\_
5. Languages I speak best \_\_\_\_\_
6. Other languages spoken by family members and friends  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. I'm in this class because \_\_\_\_\_