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On the Discursive Construction of Identities and Community in Reform Contexts

Contrastive Analyses of the Differences in
Resources Afforded Students
Pre-Post Reform Implementation

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Goals of the Presentation

- 📄 Explore how changes in *policy actions-- a shift from bilingual education to English only--* were consequential in supporting and then constraining particular forms of community and related *social and academic identity potentials* afforded students as well as their teacher

Approach: Contrastive Analyses

- 📄 By contrasting *a common event* across school years-- *the first time the teacher spoke to the class as a whole group*, we identify a rich point (Agar, 1990) or anchor for exploring how changes in policy beyond the classroom shaped what was discursively possible and how this, in turn, supported and constrained particular identity potentials for the collective as well as individuals within the collective

Backward and Forward Mapping

- ☞ I will then present a series of analyses within and across years that involve a process of *backward and forward mapping* from this rich point to construct a focused data for analysis of the impact of shifts in a systematic manner
- ☞ Through this analysis, I make visible how multiple levels of analytic scale are necessary to build warranted claims about the impact of policy on the discursive construction in the classroom community and identity potentials for teacher and students.

The Ethnography(1991-2002) as a foundation for contrasting actions

☞ The contrastive analyses are possible given a longitudinal ethnography undertaken with Beth Yeager from 1991-2000 in her fifth and sixth grade classes

- ☞ The data records include parallel collections each year:
- Video tapes of the first three weeks of school (all day-- 6 hrs/day) and purposeful samples of cycles of activity across the school year (ca. >100 hours of video tapes of key events)
 - Artifacts produced by students within these cycles of activity
 - Interviews (formal and informal) of teacher and students
 - Public records of policy decisions related to what occurred each year
 - Ongoing work with the teacher ethnographer (one of the authors)

Telling Case I

Contrast Analyses of the Effects of Policy Changes (Bilingual Education to English-Only) on Opportunities of the Construction of Social Identities of the Teacher and Her Students

I USED TO KNOW THAT

☞ This statement by a fifth grade student occurred in 1998, following the move of the local School Board to eliminate bilingual education and move to English Only, and

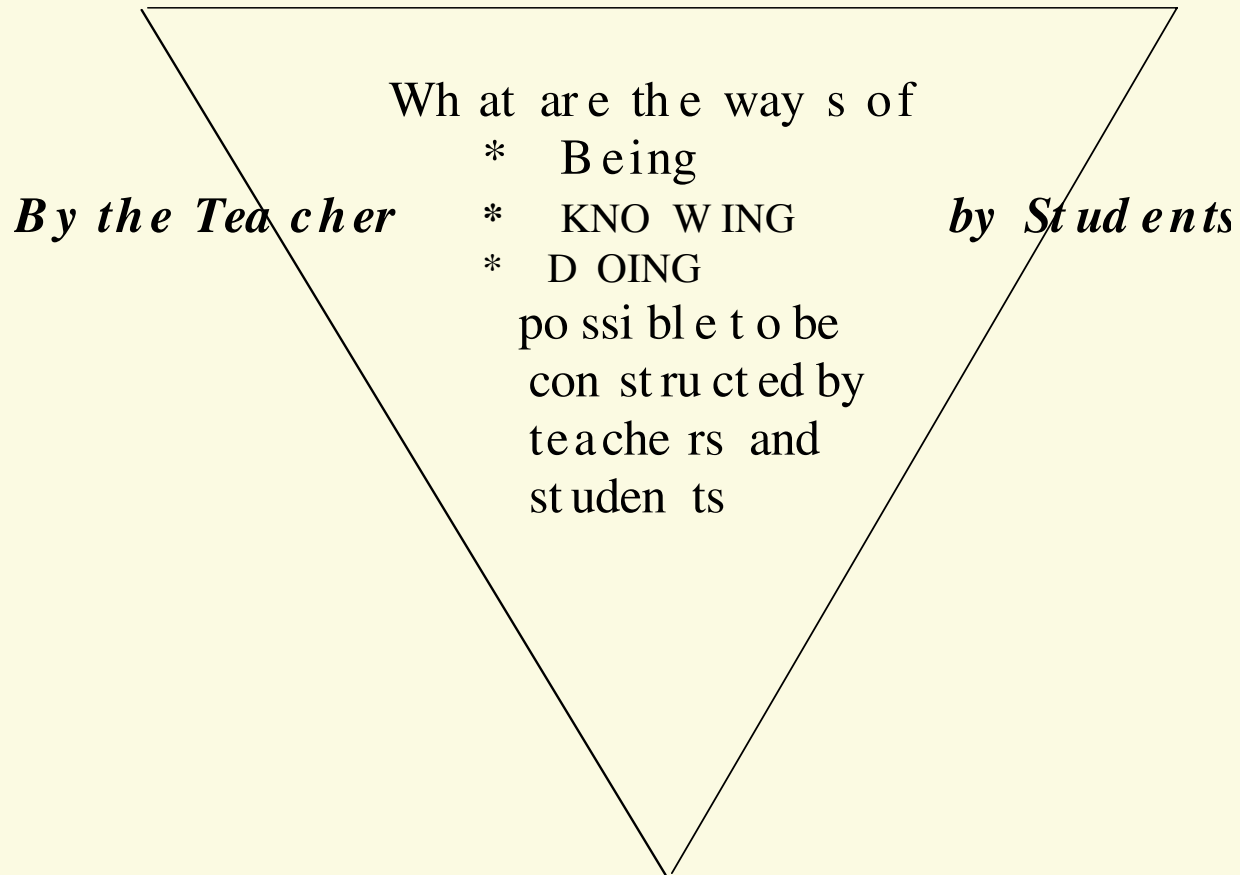
☞ A state-wide vote in California to initiate an English-Only policy in schools (as a general approach; statewide exceptions existed, but not in ABC district in which the study took place)

I USED TO KNOW THAT

- ☞ This statement occurred in Beth's class in 1998 and was part of a larger conversation in which José told her that he knew the concept in Spanish but did not know it anymore, now that he had to speak English

- ☞ This statement led to a series of analyses of classroom practices pre and post this critical moment of policy shift from different angles of vision --
 - The student (as indicated in his statement)
 - The teacher (through reflective writing and interviews)
 - The school board and state policy (through identifying policy changes across the 10 years)

What Social Identities and Opportunities for Learning Can Be Constructed



When *policy ACTIONS* limit the linguistic resource
curriculum materials and instructional approaches that
teachers and students are required to use

Interactional Ethnography

- ☰ The theoretical framework we used to guide this research brought together *Interactional Ethnography, Bakhtin, and related Sociocultural theories (e.g., Vygotsky)*
- ☰ *Interactional Ethnography* draws on theories from *cultural anthropology* that are practice oriented theories that frame the study of the ways in which people construct the patterns and practices of life within a social group

Interactional Ethnography

These theories provide a *coherent set of orienting theories* for studying:

what is accomplished over time, and
who has access to what
cultural practices,
processes,
resources,
language(s) and
roles and relationships


when and where,
in what ways (how),
under what conditions,
for what purposes, and
with what outcomes and consequences.

Interactional Sociolinguistics

📄 *Interactional Ethnography* draws on *Interactional Sociolinguistics* (cf. Gumperz) focusing on language (and other semiotic systems) in use to examine

- the patterns of language use and what members construct in and through such use
- the communicative demands entailed by membership in particular social groups (e.g., class, peer group, family)
- the interaction accomplishment of events of everyday life

Critical Discourse Analysis

 *Interactional Ethnography* draws on work in *Critical Discourse Analysis* to examine

- How, as texts are constructed, the discourse choices of the writers/speakers shape, and in turn are shaped by, the developing oral, written and/or visual text being constructed by members of a class (cf. Fairclough)
- How discourse choice simultaneously represent a text, a social practice, and a discourse process (cf. Fairclough)
- How the choices among available discourse of writers/speakers inscribe particular social identities for self and others (cf., Ivanic)

Past 1: Life in Sixth Grade: Alex, 1/92

Our community has a lot to do over the year.

Sometimes our community gets different during the year. What I mean is like the first day I walked in the door [in January of the school year that began in September]. I was new and nervous, just me thinking who am I, trying to make friends.

I came in the door. Other students explained how to do the Writer's Workshop. I didn't understand the three logs. Other kids and the teacher explained. Now I'm just part of everyone else. (Green & Dixon, 1993).

Past 1: Life in Sixth Grade: Evelyn

...My class is a community. Each of us can talk Spanish and English. We translate to Spanish and English. We have to cooperate at the same time. When Ms. Y. talks English and Spanish, that's a help. Each of us is different and describe the words differently.

– Evelyn, 1991-1992 (Excerpt - Community Essay)

Past 2 : Life in Fifth Grade (1997)

In our Tower community, we have our own language as well as the languages we bring from outside (like Spanish and English) which helped us make our own language. So, for example, someone that is not from our classroom community would not understand what insider, outsider, think twice, notetaking/notemaking, literature log and learning log mean...

These words are all part of the common Tower community language and if someone new were to come in, we would have to explain how we got them and what they mean. We also would tell them that we got this language by reports, information, investigations, and what we do and learn in our Tower community (Arturo, 1995-1996).

Bakhtin on assimilation of forms as a potential explanation of differences




We assimilate forms of language only in forms of utterances and in conjunctions with these forms.

The forms of language and the typical forms of utterances, that is speech [written] genres, enter our experience and our consciousness together, and in close connection with another...

These genres are so diverse because they differ depending on the situation, social position, and personal interrelations of participants in the communication" (p. 79)

Present:

Beth's Challenge in English Only 1998

-  *In 5th grade, this [past approach] has translated into engaging in a representative investigation in math on that first day, working in groups, finding ways to be mathematicians using English and Spanish as resources.*
-  *Later in the year, it's meant reading biographies, creating museums, talking about issues of tolerance and intolerance, writing poetry -- everyone, from new arrival to native English speaker, from learning disabled to GATE student. It's meant English speakers trying to present and communicate in their fledgling Spanish and Spanish speakers using their newly acquired English at every turn.*
-  *So, now I think about what I'm going to say and show on this new first day and what it will mean for the classroom community ... (Yeager, Tesol Newsletter, 1998)*

Contrasting Opening Moments of 1993

Table 1
Defining Languages Used 1993

Time	Spanish/Vietnamese	English
5:20	<p>Y los tres idiomas que tenemos en nuestra clase son Inglés, Español y Vietnamesee</p> <p>bienvenidos a la clase en Español</p> <p>says it in Vietnamese looking at Truc (más o menos ha nd signal)</p>	<p>Welcome to the tower I'm going to say that in three different ways welcome to our class because we're so lucky this year to have three languages in our class</p> <p>three languages in here this year So I'm going to say welcome to the class in English</p> <p>and I'm going to try to say if Truc will help me I'd like to say it in Vietnamese</p>
	<p>y por eso yo hablo los idiomas, los idiomas que puedo Y ustedes pueden hablarlos también</p> <p>pero no estoy diciendo la misma cosa no más es ta estoy siguiendo con el tema</p>	<p>Alright? OK? so we're so lucky to have three languages in our class all languages that we speak are important</p> <p>because they're all important so we'll be using them and you'll be hearing them lots now you might think right now that I am saying the same thing in one language that I'm saying in the other language right now</p> <p>and when I finish one thing I'm just going to keep on going with the same ideas</p>

With Post-reform 1998

First Day: Full Discourse Excerpt

Time/ Event	Spanish	English
55:20		<p>You've probably noticed (57) That and I'm going to talk about this this afternoon that I'm not speaking Spanish and English And I always do But you know we have a new law in California That says I need to be using English right now</p> <p>And so I'll be doing that And I am going according to the law that doesn't mean that you and I can't speak Spanish together and I will talk to you about that a little more when we get a chance</p> <p>And all of us But Right now I can only speak in English Because we need to speak English ... now I will ask you if you understand I will come around to you and ask if you speak Spanish But we're going to talk about that this afternoon</p>

Reform as Actions of Local Actors

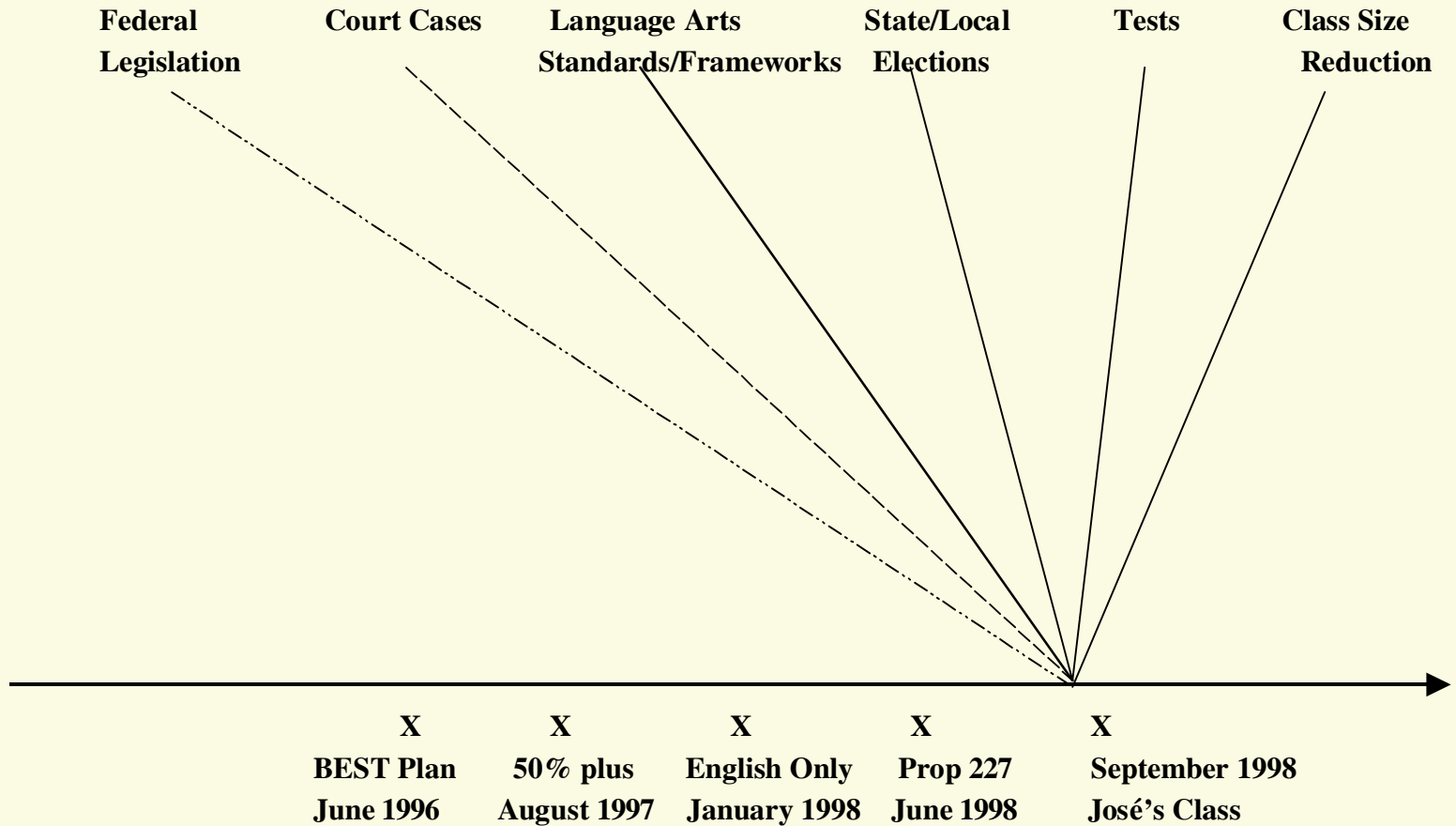
People, time and resources at each level of the system come together to accomplish a particular task

Decisions inside of the classroom are also shaped by the actions of actors outside

Members often make visible to others ways in which these actions support and/or constrain the actions that subsequent groups can take

(e.g., Barr & Dreeben, 1980; Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, 1992; Dixon, Green, Yeager, Baker, & Franquíz, 2000)

But...Policy Presses that led to changes in opportunities within the fifth grade class



Bakhtin as a Theoretical Resource

*Toward Understanding the
Language of the Classroom as
Identity Potentials as Socially
Constructed*

Bakhtin on delayed responses

Sooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behavior of the listener. In most cases, genres of complex cultural communication are intended precisely for this kind of actively responsive understanding with delayed action.

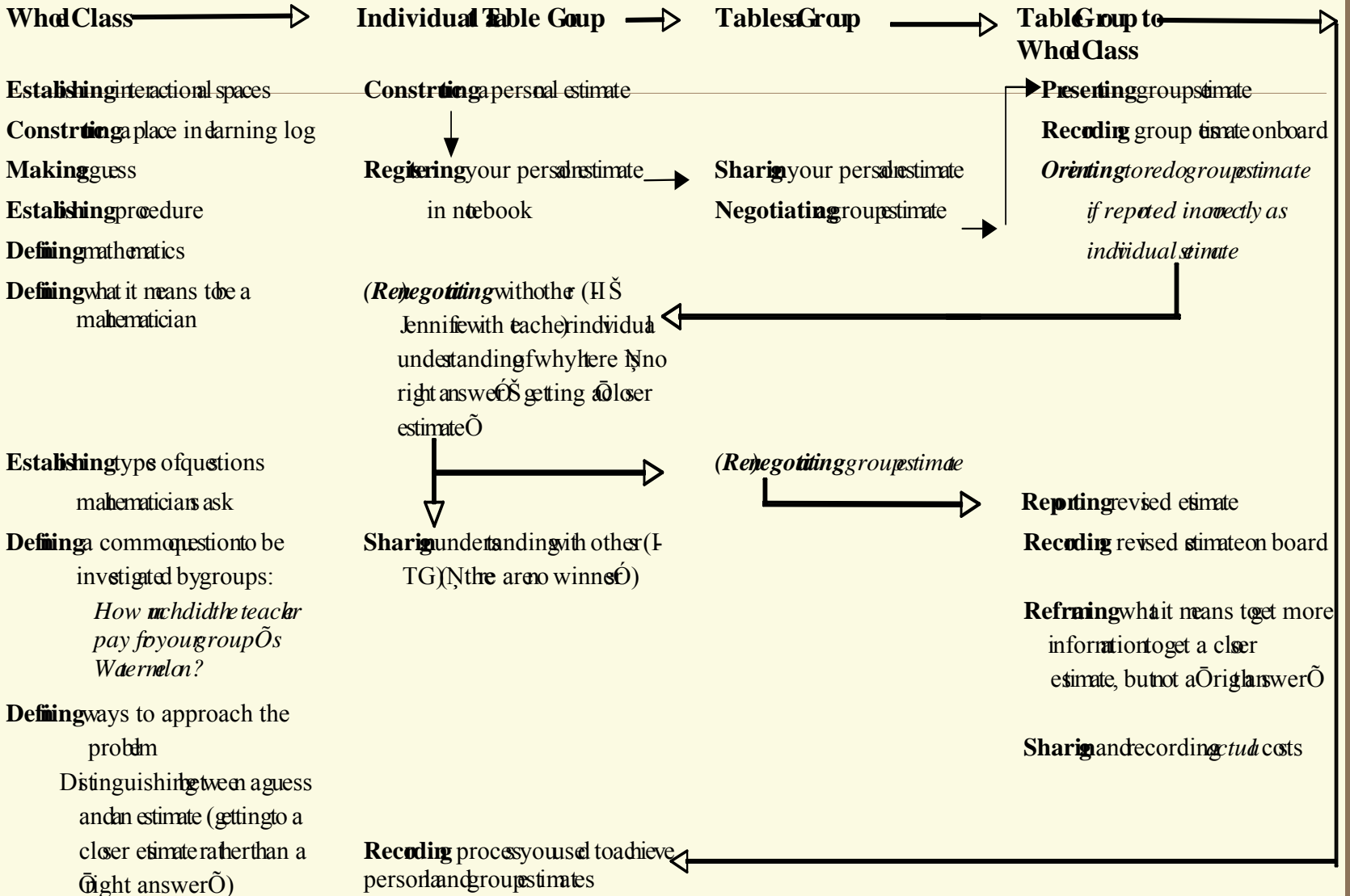
Everything that we have said here also pertains to written and read speech, with the appropriate adjustments and additions.” (p. 60)

Consequential Progression

- Members of a group construct *intertextualities* between and among past, present and future texts as events are constructed within and across times and events
- Across time and events, there is a consequential progression that shapes texts, practices and knowledge afforded individuals-within-a-group as well as the collective

Figure 1

Patterns Of Structuring Participation Creating Multiple Contrastive Opportunities for Negotiating Understandings And Potential Understandings across Time on Day 1



Contrastive Analysis: Cultural Practices Across 3 years

Actions & Practices Observed: First Day of School	1993	1996	1998
Observing	X	X	X
Using two languages	X	X	
Writing in language of choice	X	X	
Introducing & Defining roles	X	X	X
Collecting data	X	X	X
Interpreting data	X	X	X
Comparing data	X	X	X
Working in pairs	X	X	X
Working in groups	X	X	X
Explaining/Practicing new processes	X	X	X
Defining terms	X	X	X
Asking questions	X	X	X
Reporting to class	X	X	X
Participating as member of audience	X	X	X
"Writing to think"	X	X	
<i>Learning logs</i>	X	X	X
Revising thinking	X	X	X
Defining what things mean		X	X
Negotiating group answer	X	X	X
Supporting ideas with evidence	X	X	X
Sharing opinions & ideas	X	X	X

From the collective to the individual

A tale of two sisters

1998

vs

2000

386 words

289 words

Bakhtin on genres and individuality

They [genres]...acquire ... a special internal aspect because the speaking [writing, reading] subject in this case, the *author* of the work-- manifests his own individuality in his style, his world view, and in all aspects of the design of his work." (p. 75)

We argue that this can be extended to the collective and to individuals-within- the collective who also *author* works that manifest ways of knowing, being and doing that guide members' actions.

Comparison of Topics: Differences in discourses across classes for the sisters

Sister 1 (1998)

- Transition to English level 1/2
- Tower is a group
- Being an ethnographer
- Took position as ethnographer from Venezuela
- Worked as ethnographers and historians (Island History Project)

Sister 2 (2000)

- English (3 yrs)
- Tower works together
- Tell people things they don't know
- Tell them what Red Apple means
- Why we call it an Apple party

-
- Mathematics involves solving problems, times tables, etc.
 - Learned about Social Science
 - Learned about past--slavery and clothes, 19th century clothes
 - Use brains
 - Use English and Spanish
 - Celebrate people's birthdays (Las Mañanitas and cake and ice cream)
 - When problem in class, discuss it
 - Is a student and member of Tower community

-
- Bill of Rights and Responsibilities (rules they made)
 - Learned about investigations and evidence -- M& □M or Watermelon (day 1)

- People wouldn't know what she was talking about
- Take tolerance and respect with her for next year

Arguments in Favor of English Only

Here's the claim made in support of English Only

If children go through a full elementary career in English Only, then these students should be academically competent readers and writers (at grade level) by the end of that career.

Teachers, particularly in the primary grades, should be able to teach the science and social science content (curriculum) through the reading and second language program, therefore mitigating the loss of time due to the emphasis on language arts.

If you give kids English, then there will be a level playing field and high expectations for all. Research shows them that because the parents will encourage Spanish in the home, the students will not lose their Spanish. It will come back to them later as they become adults.

Questions this raises for the future

How does the withdrawal (or addition) of language (or other) resources impact the development of conceptual understanding across disciplines – e.g., science, social science as well as mathematics and literacy?

How does the changing language value influence students' perceptions of who counts as competent as well as what counts as competent performance?

What content and practice resources will students bring from the primary grades given the particular view of science and social science inscribed in Open Court and Into English?

What will count as disciplinary knowledge that they bring to subsequent years of schooling?

What are the consequences for parent-child communication and family relationship?


How does this affect their ability to conceptualize complex ideas in any language?

How does this affect their sense of efficacy as a learner as they begin to perceive themselves as not being able to do this?

Is it now no longer an issue of language, but also one of how they perceive self in all dimensions, not just about school?

How does this affect their view of who is competent and not competent?

Bakhtin on authoritative utterances


 In each epoch, in each social circle, in each small world of family, friends, acquaintances, and comrades in which a human being grows and lives, there are always authoritative utterances that set the tone--artistic, scientific, and journalistic works on which one relies, to which one refers, which are cited, imitated, and followed.

Here's my observation about the consequences
to date

Missing linguistic resources: when you can use Spanish (or other native language) to contextualize the content and/or specific vocabulary (conceptual vocabulary)—understand the word sentiment (Spanish speakers should have been able to use word in Spanish—perceiving as something worth knowing or making relationship to)

Williness to risk in content areas is missing—“I used to know this”... becoming silent—child could not explain her biography project to parents “I can't remember, I can't remember the words, I can't do this.” Those who were confident and bilingual before the change may be able to do task but impact on those more tentative. The tentative ones (and sometimes the confident ones as well) believe that they have lost the ability to access the vocabulary in Spanish that would enable them explain to their parents—ex. Not being able to explain the Holocaust or Ann Frank to parents where students previously could when they had access to both languages.

Bakhtin as a Potential Explanation of the Consequential Nature of the Differences

 In each epoch, in all areas of life and activity, there are particular traditions that are expressed and retained in verbal vestments: in written works, in utterances, in sayings, and so forth. (p. 88-89)

Across Years, the Changing Discourses Shaped Opportunities for Learning and Social Identities

**Policy Changes and Actions of those
External to the Classroom
Narrowed what could be**


***KNOWN
TAKEN UP
And
CONSTRUCTED***

By the Teacher

by Students

By restricting linguistic resources and instructional approaches, these policies had the consequence of constraining academic resources related to the construction of social identities

Support for the Research

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