

## **Bilingual Language Use in Hispanic Young Adults: Did Elementary Bilingual Programs Help?**

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### **Abstract**

This descriptive study of language use examined the extent to which bilingual Hispanic young adults used their two languages in varying aspects of their lives and analyzed the extent to which they maintained the use of Spanish in these domains. A convenience sample of 202 undergraduate, Hispanic university students completed the Language and Education Survey (Hasson, 2001). Data from the Language Use section of this instrument was the basis for the present study, which compared Hispanic students who were enrolled in bilingual or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs in their elementary schooling with students who experienced an all-English curriculum. The results of this study showed that while there was a definite shift toward English in this sample, there were nevertheless significant differences between the Bilingual/ESOL group and the All-English group in the very specific dimension of language use. The findings raised some critical questions regarding how school systems address the particular needs of bilingual students and how this might affect the maintenance of their native language and its use in later life.

### **Introduction**

The United States has a long history of multilingualism. Because it is a country whose foundations have rested on constant immigration, the issue of language, language use in public, and language in educational settings has been a point of interest and contention among various groups who have differing opinions regarding the symbolic nature of language. Recent 2000 census data have indicated that the number of Hispanics in the United States has reached 35.3 million (Whitefield, 2001) and that numeric parity with African Americans has already been attained (Viglucci, 2001). The impact on schools,

especially in the past decades, of English language learners (ELLs) in general has been staggering. According to a recent report (Kindler, 2002) that reflects 2000 census data, public school figures pertaining to ELLs of all language backgrounds show a 105% increase from the previous census report, in contrast to a 12% student growth rate overall. California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, and Arizona continue to be the states with the most ELL enrollments in schools. The states with the largest growth in this regard, however, are Georgia, North Carolina, and Nebraska, with increases of 671%, 652%, and 571% respectively since the 1991–1992 school year (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c).

In past decades, the response on the part of schools across the country has included numerous curricular models and instructional delivery modes, ranging from no special or particular attention to the possible needs of ELLs (submersion, or the “sink or swim” approach) to a full range of classes in both English and the students’ native languages, reflecting a variety of bilingual and/or English as a second language (ESL) approaches. The decision of which approach is the most appropriate for students has made ELLs across the country pawns on a political battlefield of ideology.

On one end of the spectrum, proponents of English as the primary unifying national and cultural force in the United States insist that non-English-speaking arrivals relinquish any language or culture they hold to assimilate into their new environment. In contrast, supporters of a more pluralistic vision emphasize the psychocultural significance of retaining a sense of national origin, including language, as newcomers acquire English and adapt to the new sociocultural norms they encounter as a result of living here. These viewpoints have trickled into education in general and have generated controversy over bilingual education in particular. Opponents of bilingual programs fear that children do not learn English fast enough or well enough. This has been the rationale behind recent state legislation in California and Arizona. For those who believe that individuals in the United States should all speak English and only English, bilingual education programs have succeeded in having students achieve that goal. Recent studies (Gold, 2000; Ramírez, 1998) have showcased the English academic achievement of students who participated in bilingual education programs. Whether transitional in nature or maintenance-oriented, or any of the many degrees in between, the use of the students’ home language as a medium of instruction has generally been regarded as a useful cognitive tool to assist students in the process of becoming proficient and literate in English so that they are capable of learning all subject areas in a typical, mainstream, all-English setting.

As ELLs have been involved in the language acquisition process, little attention has been directed toward what happens to their native language over time. The degree to which bilingual programs are subtractive (seeking to replace students’ first language) or additive (attempting to make students

fully capable of functioning in the two languages on a number of levels) is determined by a series of factors that include, but are not limited to (a) the overarching philosophy of the educators at a particular school, (b) the number of students representing a specific language group, (c) the extent to which there are teachers qualified to teach in a language other than English, (d) district or state policies regarding the services to be provided to ELLs students, (e) parental support for providing instruction in two languages, (f) the linguistic and/or cultural makeup of the community surrounding the school, and (g) the perceived need for having bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural students. These factors, in turn, may play a role in the degree to which students continue to study their native language in secondary school and beyond, and whether they maintain and utilize it in varying domains throughout their lives.

This study of language use is part of a larger investigation on trends in language maintenance in Hispanic university students who participated in bilingual or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs in their elementary schooling compared to those who had experienced an all-English curriculum (Hasson, 2001). The main emphasis of this article is to examine how and to what extent bilingual Hispanic young adults use their two languages in varying domains in a multilingual city and the potential impact on the way the community operates.

## **Review of the Literature**

Sociolinguistic studies on bilingual and multilingual communities often focus on the trends that are exhibited by ethnic groups and immigrants with regard to the ways the home language is utilized and the extent to which it is maintained or lost as the acculturation process unfolds. Various factors have been linked to patterns of native language use within the larger, dominant society. In communities that do not share the dominant culture's language (i.e., English) or that are multilingual, the native language and the dominant language have specific functions within the group. Although there are numerous variables that influence this, the native language is typically the language of the home and is used within contexts related to family life and perhaps religion, while the language of the dominant group is used for business and school. This is a rather simplified description, but it suffices to illustrate what happens in many linguistic communities where more than one language is present. These contexts are referred to as *domains* in the sociolinguistic literature. Romaine (1996) defines a domain as "an abstraction that refers to a sphere of activity representing a combination of specific times, settings, and role relationships" (p. 576).

The five domains for language use originally derived by Fishman, Cooper, and Ma (as cited in Romaine, 1996) were family, friendship, religion, employment, and education. While subsequent studies expanded upon this

idea and created new categories, most configurations remain consistent with these. For example, in their study of Hispanic adolescents, García and Díaz (1992) grouped their questions under three broad domains, or what they called “social interaction contexts” (p. 20): intimate, informal, and formal. MacGregor-Mendoza (1999) referred to four dimensions for language use—receptive, internal, emotional, and purposeful—as a means of specifically pinpointing the language choice of her subjects.

Studies that have focused on individual patterns of language use in bilinguals within specific ethnic/national groups (Castellanos, 1990; García & Díaz, 1992; MacGregor-Mendoza, 1999) have found similarities in the ways that the languages are applied and used in daily life and how they are changing. These studies suggest that language use in bilinguals is a complex phenomenon that is dependent on external factors and contexts that may prompt a bilingual individual to act or respond in a particular way. By examining different language and ethnic/national groups in a variety of settings, linguists are able to understand how people use their languages in their daily lives. As group patterns begin to emerge, implications about the roles of languages in a multilingual community can be translated into explanations about how that community operates in general and how its children are educated.

### Language Maintenance and Shift

A number of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociological issues play a role in what happens to the languages involved as a result of language contact in bilingual individuals or groups. A variety of factors and circumstances can contribute to the degree to which there will be maintenance or shift. This area of study has emerged as a discipline in the last 20 years (Pan & Gleason, 1986). There is a historical and sociological tendency with regard to the native language on the part of immigrant groups that has been well documented. Societal variables such as the status of the languages in question within the society, geographical and demographic distribution, extent of and number of entering immigrants of the same language background, and what have been called “institutional support factors” (Appel & Muysken, 1987, p. 37) like group representation of the minority group language “in the various institutions of a nation, a region or a community” (Appel & Muysken, p. 37) and also the mass media and education (Appel & Muysken, 1987; Gaarder, 1977). Individual factors in language maintenance and shift may include language background, age, length of residence, parents’ education and occupation, parents’ language use, attitudes (both individual and parental) toward the languages, and patterns of bilingualism (Fasold, 1984; Portes & Schauffler, 1996).

Perhaps the most pervasive example that exists in the study of language maintenance and shift is how immigrants who were non-English speakers dealt with the issue of living in a new country where English was the dominant

language. Historically, efforts to Americanize European immigrants who arrived to the United States in massive waves before and at the turn of the 20th century always included English-language education, and the extent to which different ethnic groups maintained or lost the native language has provided linguists with an intergenerational model of the process. Grosjean (1982) traces how language evolves in immigrant families throughout the generations using a flow chart to indicate possibilities of language dominance at each stage. In this model, the first generation is typically monolingual in the home language, the second generation is bilingual in both the home language and the dominant language of the society, and by the third generation in many families, the speakers are all monolingual in the dominant language (Appel & Muysken, 1987; Fasold, 1984; Grosjean, 1982; Portes & Schauffler, 1996). This pattern has been found to occur for all language groups that have come to the United States although there are some variations in the time span during which this evolution takes place. The extent to which the second and third generations are bilingual or monolingual in the dominant language indicates the degree of native language shift, and eventual loss of the home language.

In some communities where there is a continuous stream of immigrants who speak the same language, this pattern does not appear to take hold at all, but examining individual families over time, it becomes apparent that there is a substantial shift toward English (Sole, 1982). As a result, there is an increasing concern that the process of language shift may be accelerating too rapidly and it may be detrimental to immigrant families and their children's educational process (Kouritzin, 1999). Since language is such a part of culture, the use or loss of a native language in favor of a dominant language represents an aspect of self-identity for individuals that may have affective and psychological implications for them as they acculturate to their new society. Additive bilingual and dual language education programs have the potential to adjust this process so that students who are ELLs in our schools do not end up suffering from "that pathological duality born of contending cultural worlds and, perhaps more significantly, of the conflicting pressures toward both exclusion and forced incorporation" (Flores & Yudice, 1997, p. 177).

Gaarder's (1977) matrix for predicting language shift includes factors that will contribute to shift as well as factors that resist shift to the dominant language. He rates each for its potential to act in either direction, using the example of Spanish as a minority language in an English-dominant society. For example, among the sociocultural factors that provide a powerful resistance to the shift to English are the size and homogeneity of the bilingual group, the historic priority of bilingual education, and reinforcement by in-migration and immigration. Also included in this group are a close-knit, extended family, Spanish as a mother tongue and childhood language, and relative proficiency in both languages.

Studies on the use of language by bilingual children at different grade levels usually focus on short-term competence and achievement, usually in English. Recent studies dealing with language maintenance and Hispanic students have examined specific aspects of language proficiency and usage for Spanish-speaking children attending a bilingual preschool (Rodríguez, Díaz, Duran, & Espinosa, 1995) and language use and attitudes toward language in Mexican American high school students (Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992; MacGregor-Mendoza, 1999). Older studies dealing with Hispanic school-age children generally center on language attitudes (Sole, 1982), or address the topic of language maintenance on a short-term basis (Harley, Hart, & Lapkin, 1986).

With the exception of the preschool studies, few researchers examine the impact of program models on Spanish-language maintenance. Most research that is program-oriented focuses on academic achievement in English. There was one notable exception—an unpublished doctoral dissertation. Flores (1981) examined the long-term effects of a bilingual program on achievement, language maintenance, and attitudes. She compared 12th-grade students who had attended an elementary school that utilized a dual language model with students who had not, and found statistically significant differences in Spanish-language proficiency between the groups as measured by four items on an eight-item questionnaire that asked students to rate their ability to perform tasks related to understanding, speaking, reading, and writing in Spanish. Because she also investigated effects on academic achievement and attitudes, language maintenance was not her sole emphasis. The measures she utilized for assessing proficiency were not validated instruments for ascertaining Spanish proficiency or competence; it was a self-report of the four items in a “yes—a little—no” response format and the writing sample.

Most of the literature in this area indicates an overall trend of language shift toward English in Spanish-speaking students. Most of the studies are very focused on particular grade levels and take into consideration very few years in a student's life. Additionally, except for Flores' (1981) dissertation many of the student groups included were not separated by type of program (i.e., bilingual or non-bilingual), nor were there many follow-up studies beyond 1- or 2-year intervals. This indicates that there is little research that links long-term language maintenance in Spanish-speaking students to bilingual instruction or any kind of program at all, and studies involving language maintenance in young adults are almost non-existent.

### A Bilingual Community

According to recent census estimates, in Miami-Dade County, Hispanics made up 57% of the total population (Henderson, Lynch, & Yardley, 2000). Due to the predominance of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries and Spanish speakers in general, Miami has been described as “culturally closer

to Latin America and the Caribbean than to the rest of the nation” (Portes & Schauffler, 1996, p. 13). Many of the studies that have focused on language with Spanish speakers in south Florida have done so with individuals belonging to its largest national group among Hispanics, the Cubans (Castellanos, 1990; Portes & Schauffler, 1996; Sole, 1982). Sole found that “language choice seems to respond primarily to the linguistic competence of speakers, which in turn is governed by generational differences, years of residence in the United States, and age at the time of arrival” (p. 259). Bilingual education programs and/or other types of instructional and curricular support were not featured as a salient factor. Still, these studies indicated that a shift to English is taking place as evidenced by self-reports of proficiency level, comfort level and favorite language. Even within the continued increase of Latin American trade relations and Hispanic-owned businesses and commerce, English has emerged as the preferred language for many of Miami’s Hispanics, especially the second and third generations.

## **Method**

This study analyzed trends regarding the extent to which Hispanic bilingual students maintained the use of Spanish in different domains. It investigated bilingual programs, including ESOL, as curricular and instructional models that motivate Hispanic students to continue to use Spanish later in life as compared to students who did not participate in a bilingual program in elementary school. While ESOL programs emphasize the acquisition of English, they are viewed as part of the support services offered to ELLs and are included in the general umbrella of transitional bilingual programs as defined by the original Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (Hasson, 2001).

### **Sample**

A convenience sample of 202 undergraduate, Hispanic university students in south Florida enrolled in education classes completed the Language and Education Survey (Hasson, 2001) created for this study. Data were collected at the end of one semester and at the beginning of the following term to maximize the number of students filling out the survey. The gender breakdown was 87.6% female and 12.4% male, with a mean age of 22.3 years. The high proportion of females in the sample is consistent with university enrollment in the College of Education for gender. The mean high school grade point average (GPA) for this group was 3.26 on a 4-point scale, and the average Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) score was 997 out of 1,600. The majority of participants attended public and private schools in the county in which the university is located, with more than 70% attending public schools.

The participants in the sample represented 15 different countries of origin, with 67.3% born in the United States. The majority of participants born outside of the United States were from Cuba (16.4%), Nicaragua (4%), Colombia (3%),



and Spain (2%). Other countries of birth (7%) included Ecuador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Puerto Rico, Chile, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic, with only one or two from each of these. The average age of arrival for subjects born outside of the United States ( $n = 58$ ) was 4.2 years; the range of response was less than 1 year to age 10. The average length of time in the United States for the non-U.S. born respondents was 19.2 years.

Spanish was the native language for 90.6% of the entire sample group, while 9.4% claimed both English and Spanish as their native language. For those whose native language was solely Spanish, English was learned at a mean age of 4.6 years. When asked to indicate the language in which subjects learned to read and write, 29 respondents (14.4%) circled “English,” 10 (5%) circled “Spanish,” and 135 (66.8%) circled “Both.” Twenty-eight subjects (13.9%) did not respond to this item.

When asked to define “bilingualism” in a forced multiple choice item, 75.7% of the subjects included literacy skills (reading or both reading and writing) as part of their definition and 23.8% limited bilingualism to just understanding and speaking two languages. When asked whether or not they consider themselves to be bilingual, 173 subjects (85.6%) circled “yes,” while 7 (3.5%) circled “no.” Subjects generally showed greater dominance in English with respect to literacy skills in general and a sense of comfort in terms of comprehending and speaking both languages when asked to rate their comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing abilities in English and Spanish.

### Comparison Groups

The sample was divided into two groups according to responses to particular items on the Language and Education Survey (Hasson, 2001). Since the purpose of the study was to examine whether or not there was a relationship between previous schooling and long-term maintenance and use of Spanish, subjects were classified as having received some type of curricular or instructional service for linguistically and culturally diverse students—whether through ESOL classes, dual language instruction, or a general bilingual program that included first language support—or having participated in an all-English curriculum in a regular mainstream classroom with no support services at all. The type of bilingual program was not classified further because students were generally not aware of the type of program in which they had been enrolled. A response of “yes” to the items pertaining to having attended a bilingual school and/or having participated in a class for ESOL in the educational background section of the survey identified the subject as belonging to the experimental group (Bilingual/ESOL,  $n = 68$ ), while a “no” response to these items placed them in the comparison group (All-English,  $n = 134$ ).



Because of the disparity in the numbers comprising the groups, cross-tabulations and descriptive statistics were obtained for nominal and interval data, respectively, to assure equivalence between the groups in terms of their demographic characteristics and educational backgrounds. A lack of a statistically significant difference was interpreted as the groups not being statistically dissimilar. The two groups, Bilingual/ESOL and All-English, showed similarities in most demographic areas including age, parents' ages, high school GPAs and SAT scores, university levels and majors. The only variables that showed a statistically significant difference between the groups were gender,  $\chi^2(1, 201) = 4.06, p = .04$ , and country of origin,  $\chi^2(2, 201) = 25.02, p < .001$ , when the countries were coded as "United States," "Cuba," and "Other Spanish speaking country." The areas in which there were significant differences were gender, due to the overwhelming number of females, and country, because of the number of U.S.-born subjects in the All-English group. In general, the number of females in the groups and in the sample as a whole reflected the overrepresentation of females in education-related majors. Additionally, this sample as a whole had a large percentage of subjects born in the United States although the importance of this diminished in light of the overwhelming majority of the subjects (90.6%) having had Spanish as their home language. All other demographic variables, including age, high school GPA, SAT score, university level, major, first language, and parents' ages did not result in statistically significant differences between the groups.

The fact that there were no statistically significant differences between the groups with respect to language is important for this study. Had there been statistically significant differences in the first language between the Bilingual/ESOL and All-English groups, it would have affected any conclusions drawn for differences between the groups in any aspect of language maintenance or use.

### Instrumentation

This study used the Language Use section of a Language and Education Survey created for a larger study on different aspects of language maintenance in Hispanic young adults (Hasson, 2001). The survey included items pertaining to subjects' demographic, educational, and language background, and was divided into sections requesting information about language ability, language use, attitudes toward education and language, as well as eliciting a sample of written Spanish.

Demographic variables included gender, age, high school GPA, SAT score, current university level, intended major, country of origin, age of arrival (if other than U.S.-born), ethnicity, parents' country of origin, parents' age of arrival to the United States, and native language of each parent. These variables were used to establish similarities and commonalities between the comparison

groups. The language profile included the subject's native language, age at which the second language was learned, and language of initial reading and writing instruction. The educational background was critical to this study because responses on two specific items—whether they attended a bilingual school or participated in ESOL classes—determined the comparison groups and other items established some of the criteria for inclusion in the study. Subjects were asked to write in the names and locations (city/state) of their elementary, middle and senior high schools. Demographic characteristics for the field-test subjects were similar to the final sample of subjects used for the study.

In the same section of the survey, subjects were asked to indicate whether they had ever attended a bilingual school (i.e., core subjects such as math, science, or social studies taught in Spanish as well as English). They were to circle all the grades for which this was the case. The term “bilingual” was utilized in a non-specific manner to elicit subjects' interpretations of what this could encompass. A similar format was utilized for the following item which asked if the subject had ever been in a class for ESOL, and to indicate at which grade levels. These two items formed the basis of the grouping for the subjects for data analysis (students who had participated in special programs or who had received support services in English, Bilingual/ESOL group, as opposed to students who had not, All-English group) to see how this would influence future language patterns.

The Language Use section consisted of 16 items designed to determine patterns in the subjects' use of English and Spanish within varying contexts and with different interlocutors. The first two items asked who the subjects lived with and the language(s) used most frequently in the home. The remaining 14 items were bubble-in responses asking for self-reported perception of language dominance and also which language(s) were used for a variety of activities pertaining to personal and professional domains (e.g., watch television, pray, work, study, talk to different family members and friends). These were derived from various other instruments used in sociolinguistics studies pertaining to language use in bilingual individuals (Castellanos, 1990; García & Díaz, 1992; MacGregor-Mendoza, 1999), as indicated in the literature review.

## Procedure

A convenience sample of Hispanic university students was obtained by contacting professors and/or instructors of undergraduate level education classes and securing permission to distribute the Language and Education Survey in their classes. This was done during the months of November–December 2000 and January 2001. Surveys were administered to students in a total of 6 classes during the fall semester in 2000 and 11 classes during the spring term of 2001. The different class sections sampled included general

pre-College of Education requirements, required Foundations courses, and program-specific requirements for elementary education/ESOL infusion majors and subject-specific methodology courses for English and Modern Language Education majors. Surveys were collected on-site to ensure a 100% rate of return.

All eligible surveys included in the study were based on the following criteria pertaining to the subject: (a) was a Hispanic, bilingual English–Spanish speaker at some point in their life; (b) completed at least 3 years of elementary schooling in the United States; (c) had Spanish or both Spanish and English as the native/first language; and (d) completed the survey. Of the 343 surveys were collected, 202 were deemed eligible for inclusion in the study.

## Data Analysis

The first analysis for a general demographic profile included frequencies, descriptive statistics, and cross-tabulations. Subjects were grouped into Bilingual/ESOL and All-English. A profile of each group was also generated. Although there were 14 items in the Language Use section of the instrument used, the first item pertaining to language dominance was not included in the scoring process. For the remainder of the items, it was evident that there were a large number of “Not Applicable” or missing responses: “talk to children” (19.3% response rate), “talk to pets” (74.8% response rate) and “talk to spouse/significant other” (82.7% response rate). Upon reviewing the demographic profile of the sample, it became evident that the overwhelming majority of the participants in this study—undergraduate university students, with a mean age of 22.3 years—were not married and did not have children or pets, so many of them responded “Not Applicable.” It was thus decided that only items with a response rate of at least 90% would be included in the analysis, and no cases with missing data would be used.

In scoring the 10 remaining Language Use items, “English” was assigned a 0, “Both languages” was assigned 1 point, and “Spanish” was assigned 2 points. This was done so that when the scores were summed for each subject there would be a range from low (0), indicating English dominance, or language shift, to high (20), indicating Spanish dominance, or language maintenance. A midpoint score (e.g., 10) would indicate a balanced use—not necessarily a reflection of ability or competence—of both English and Spanish. Language shift and language maintenance can thus be perceived as opposite ends on a number line that represents a “bilingual continuum” which can provide a visual means of examining these phenomena.

An internal consistency analysis conducted with these items showed a result of  $\alpha = .75$ ,  $N = 148$ , which is acceptable for this type of study. A general language use score was then obtained by summing the 10 items for the 148 valid cases. This score was used to determine the extent of language

maintenance, balanced bilingualism or language shift on the bilingual continuum. Statistical analysis in the form of a *t*-test for independent samples was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences between the comparison groups with respect to language use.

## Results

Initial analyses were performed with subsection scores to ascertain differences between the two groups with respect to language use. Exploratory analyses using correlations and cross-tabulations were conducted for subjects' responses in the demographic and educational background sections of the survey. The grouping of subjects was based on their responses to questions asking about their participation in bilingual programs and ESOL instruction. Because the proportion of bilingual/ESOL programs in schools is relatively small compared to number of regular all-English curriculum classrooms, the numbers of subjects in the two groups used in the study were not evenly distributed: the Bilingual/ESOL group was much smaller ( $n = 68$ ) than the All-English group ( $n = 134$ ). The results of the study are therefore limited by a lack of specificity regarding particular programs subjects participated in during elementary school and the unequal distribution of subjects in each of the comparison groups.

The Language Use section of the Language and Education Survey (Hasson, 2001) included two preliminary items that established with whom the subject lived and which language(s) were most frequently used at home. Most of the subjects in the two groups, Bilingual/ESOL and All-English, lived with their parents/family (81.6%), followed by living with a spouse/significant other (14.4%). Very few subjects lived with a roommate or alone; these were all from the All-English group. While not related to language maintenance, this pattern may suggest a level of acculturation that is higher in the All-English group than the Bilingual/ESOL group. Remaining at home with parents and family rather than moving out or living alone during the college years is reflective of the traditional Hispanic culture which frowns upon the latter, especially with respect to young women.

The distribution of language use of English and Spanish at home for subjects overall and within the two groups was analyzed to provide additional background information that might play a role in participants' language use patterns (see Table 1). Overall, there were few monolingual households for either English (5%) or Spanish (11.9%). The majority of the subjects lived in bilingual households with different degrees of language distribution, with "Both languages equally" (29.4%) and "Mostly Spanish and some English" (27.9%) having been selected slightly more than "Mostly English and some Spanish" (25.9%). However, it is interesting to note that for participants in the

Table 1

*Language(s) Most Frequently Used at Home*

Language(s) used	Bilingual/ESOL		All-English		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
English-only	3	4.5	7	5.2	10	5.0
Mostly English	12	17.9	40	29.9	52	25.9
Both languages equally	18	26.9	41	30.6	59	29.4
Mostly Spanish	21	31.3	35	26.1	56	27.9
Spanish-only	13	19.4	11	8.2	24	11.9
Total	67	100	134	100	201	100

Bilingual/ESOL group, more lived in “Mostly Spanish” households (31.3%) than “Both languages equally” (26.9%), while in the All-English group, “Both languages equally” (30.6%) was only slightly higher than “Mostly English” (29.9%) and greater than “Mostly Spanish” (26.1%).

The distribution of subjects’ dominant language showed that despite having been native Spanish (90.6%) or bilingual English–Spanish (9.4%) speakers from birth, the subjects in this sample were overwhelmingly dominant in English (75.2%). Barely a quarter of the sample (24.3%) reported dominance in both languages, and just 1 person of the 202 indicated dominance in Spanish (see Table 2). When broken down into the comparison groups, 60.3% of the Bilingual/ESOL group considered themselves to be English dominant as compared to 82.8% of the All-English group participants. A greater percentage of individuals from the Bilingual/ESOL group (38.2%) reported dominance in both languages while only 17.2% of the All-English group did so.

The language use items focused primarily on activities in a variety of contexts and interactions with different individuals. Table 3 portrays the initial results of the 13 items in this section by group using frequency counts rather than percentages for “English” (E), “Spanish” (S), and “Both languages” (B). A preliminary visual examination of the results depicted in this table showed that the majority of activities and interactions were conducted primarily in English or both English and Spanish. The largest numbers for Spanish language use (81 for both groups combined) were for talking to parents and, to a lesser extent, for praying (29 for both groups combined). These represented the highest frequencies, respectively, within each comparison group. Many items within both groups had no Spanish use at all, and studying and talking

Table 2

*Subjects' Dominant Language*

Language	Bilingual/ESOL		All-English		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
English	41	60.3	111	82.8	152	75.2
Spanish	1	1.5	0	0	1	0.5
Both languages	26	38.2	23	17.2	49	24.3
Total	68	100	134	100	202	100

Table 3

*Distribution of Language Use Item Responses by Group (N = 202)*

Activity	Bilingual/ESOL			All-English			Total		
	E	S	B	E	S	B	E	S	B
Think	43	1	23	107	0	26	150	1	49
Watch TV	24	0	43	87	2	45	111	2	88
Pray	28	19	15	75	10	36	103	29	51
Dream	43	0	20	108	2	18	151	2	38
Study	61	0	5	129	0	4	190	0	9
Listen/Music	15	1	50	42	1	90	57	2	140
Work	23	1	39	50	1	76	73	2	115
Parents	6	39	23	22	42	69	28	81	92
Siblings	24	5	29	73	1	53	97	6	82
Spouse <sup>a</sup>	19	1	35	55	2	55	74	3	90
Children <sup>a</sup>	1	4	5	10	2	17	11	6	22
Friends	22	0	46	60	0	72	82	0	118
Pets <sup>a</sup>	10	6	29	45	6	55	55	12	84

Note. E = English; S = Spanish; B = Both languages.

<sup>a</sup>Not included in the statistical analysis.

to friends were not indicated by anyone for Spanish use across both groups. The shift in languages from “parents” to “siblings” reflects an intergenerational shift, as suggested by Grosjean (1982) and others (Castellanos, 1990; García & Díaz, 1992; MacGregor-Mendoza, 1999).

As indicated in the Data Analysis section, only the 10 items with a response rate of 90% or higher were included in the statistical analysis. A *t*-test for independent samples was conducted to determine whether there were any differences in language use between the two groups. A highly significant difference in means between the Bilingual/ESOL ( $M = 6.22$ ,  $SD = 2.77$ ) and All-English ( $M = 4.82$ ,  $SD = 2.84$ ) groups was found,  $t(146) = 2.791$ ,  $p = .006$ .

## Discussion

The results of this study served as confirmation or corroboration of some of the trends identified in the literature, such as the overwhelming shift to English dominance on the part of Hispanics and bilinguals in general (Hakuta & D’Andrea, 1992; Sole, 1982). The findings raised some critical questions regarding how school systems address the particular needs of bilingual students and how this might affect the maintenance of their native language and its use in later life.

Throughout this study, a bilingual language continuum was perceived as a mathematical number line, with Spanish dominance (language maintenance) on the higher end, English dominance (language shift) on the lower end, and a balance between the two as a midpoint. The subjects who participated in the study could then be conceived as being on different points along the number line, depending on their scores for language use. It would be safe to say that within the present sample, no one came close to being placed on the higher end of the continuum (Spanish dominance) because all of the subjects were bilingual. For these subjects, Spanish maintenance could constitute their degree of comfort or ability in using both languages. This number line image was helpful in assessing the degree of maintenance and shift between the Bilingual/ESOL and All-English groups.

The results of the study yielded few surprises. When examining the raw data for the different domains, it was apparent that the All-English group selected “English” more often than “Both languages” for a number of activities, including thinking, watching television, praying, dreaming, and talking to siblings. They used both languages for listening to music, and talking to their parents and friends. “Spanish” was not selected the most for any item.

The Bilingual/ESOL group only marked “English” more often than “Both languages” for thinking, praying, and dreaming, which shows that they, too, have shifted toward English since these activities are highly personal, intimate, and individual. They selected “Both languages” for passive activities like



watching television or listening to music and also for talking and interacting with their siblings and friends. Subjects in this group overwhelmingly chose “Spanish” for talking to their parents. Language choice for interacting with parents and siblings reflects the generational trend of language shift described by Grosjean (1982) and Hakuta and D’Andrea (1992), who found that proficiency and maintenance of Spanish in Mexican high school students were related to the age at which they learned English and the extent of adult usage of Spanish at home, while their preference for English was related to peer usage and language use in domains outside of the home.

The majority of the subjects in this sample (67.7%) were born in the United States. The average length of residence in the United States for the non-U.S. born subjects was 19.2 years and their average age of arrival was 4.2 years old. The overwhelming use of English was substantiated by these characteristics and the patterns of language shift. The findings of this study also corroborated the description in the literature (Castellanos, 1990) of the overlap in functions for English and Spanish. The main implication of this pattern of language use is that it contributes heavily to the shift to English. Once there is no longer a strict assignment of language to a particular function or domain, there is no longer a reason to use the native language in a society where the dominant language is English. It is interesting to note, however, that in almost two decades of research in this locale, a complete shift to English has *not* occurred.

The majority of the research on bilinguals showed a definite trend toward language shift to English (Hakuta & D’Andrea, 1992; Sole, 1982). The results of the present study paralleled this trend in the young adults who participated in the project. The extent to which this took place was startling, and attested to the power of generational language shift in immigrant families. Subjects who were included in the study either had Spanish as their native/first language (90.6%) or acquired both Spanish and English simultaneously (9.4%). Yet when they responded to the item regarding language dominance, 75.2% claimed English dominance, 24.3% specified that they were dominant in both languages, and just 1 person out of the 202 (0.5%) indicated Spanish dominance. In a United States university setting, it was expected that students would have strong English-language skills, but barely one quarter of all the native Spanish speakers indicated that they were truly bilingual or felt that they could use English and Spanish equally well.

There are several implications regarding curricular and instructional models for bilingual education programs. The purpose of this study was not to match the results for individual subjects with specific programs. The grouping occurred as a result of responses to general items regarding subjects’ participation in bilingual education or ESOL programs in their elementary schooling. The number of subjects included in the Bilingual/ESOL group was too small to further subdivide it. One of the extensions of this study could be a qualitative analysis of the schools attended by each of the subjects in the

Bilingual/ESOL group to ascertain the specific bilingual education model and curriculum that was experienced by the subject.

The model used—for example, dual language instruction or maintenance bilingual education versus transitional bilingual education or ESOL instruction—will determine the amount and distribution of home language instruction in the delivery system and the curricular materials used. The ideal program would incorporate elements of maintenance and dual language instruction so that the individual continues to build on the home language as English is acquired. The model would be sustained through secondary schooling, and barring that, home language arts and literature could be continued and students could have the option of studying content area subjects in the home language if there is a large enough group of students to warrant it. The results of this study showed that sustained study in Spanish at the secondary level was not a reality with this particular sample, regardless of elementary program models experienced.

## **Conclusion**

Sociolinguistic studies on bilingual communities have often focused on the trends that were exhibited by ethnic groups and immigrants with regard to the ways the home language was utilized and the extent to which it was maintained or lost as the acculturation process unfolded. Various factors have been linked to patterns of native language use within the larger, dominant society. Studies on the use of language by children at different grade levels usually focused on short-term competence and achievement, and many studies on language maintenance and shift in Hispanic communities have emphasized individuals representing a specific national origin, such as Cubans, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. This study included subjects from a number of Spanish-speaking countries of origin reflective of the changing demographics in south Florida and the international nature of the university's setting.

The results obtained from this study also shed light on a population that is seldom addressed in the sociolinguistic literature: the young adult. While there were statistically significant differences between the Bilingual/ESOL and All-English groups in terms of their patterns of Spanish-language use, the results nevertheless revealed that the sample as a whole was rather close to the English end of the bilingual language continuum. The findings from this study point to a decided and rapid shift to English within immigrant families in the south Florida area, especially among second generation young adults. In fact, over 75% of the sample indicated that English was their dominant language. This means that the Spanish-language skills of Hispanic students who remain in school eventually atrophy or remain at a relatively non-academic or non-professional level, what is sometimes referred to as “kitchen Spanish.”

The findings from this study showed that while there is a definite shift toward English in the sample subjects, there are nevertheless significant differences between the Bilingual/ESOL group and the All-English group in the very specific dimension of language use. Despite these significant differences, however, the Bilingual/ESOL group was not far behind the All-English group in the move toward English dominance. The edge provided by the special programs, curricula and service in their earlier schooling might not be enough to ensure that they will continue to maintain their Spanish when they graduate from college and face new challenges in the world of work in a setting that involves the use of both languages.

This study also examined language maintenance-related issues on a long-term basis with a sample of participants who were approaching adulthood, an age group not commonly examined, who represented previous educational experiences that varied in nature. Results of this study thus contributed to the limited existing body of literature regarding bilingual students and the extent to which program models and instructional delivery systems could be correlated to maintenance and usage of the primary or home language on a long-term basis. Given the current political climate with regard to bilingual education, longitudinal investigations pertaining to native language use and prior schooling are necessary to provide conclusive evidence that this might be a mechanism to delay language loss in bilingual individuals who are English dominant.

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