A Description of Literacy Instruction in a First Grade Two-way Immersion Classroom

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Abstract

This study describes a bilingual teacher during whole group Spanish instruction in a two-way immersion first grade classroom. Inductive analysis, as domain analysis, was used in the study. The data came from four literacy lessons and two teacher interviews during the 2009-2010 school year. Findings indicated that the bilingual teacher promoted opportunities for students to use and develop language. Her teaching practices were based on a Contextualization/Problematization/Decentralization framework, which served as an instructional framework and pedagogical combination to student language production. The bilingual teacher provided students with a context for language comprehension, presented students with problems that needed solving, and decentralized her role for students to become autonomous problem-solvers and negotiators. This study adds to the extant literature about effective teaching practices to foster language opportunities for students to build and practice the minority language in two-way immersion classrooms in the United States.

Key words: two-way immersion programs, bilingual education, second language teaching, second language learning

Resumen

El estudio describe a una maestra bilingüe en una clase de español de primer grado en una escuela de inmersión bilingüe de doble vía. Este estudio se basa en el paradigma cualitativo inductivo, en forma de análisis de dominio (domain analysis), donde los datos provienen de observaciones

de cuatro lecciones de español y dos entrevistas a la maestra en el período lectivo 2009-2010. Los resultados revelan que la docente promovió oportunidades para el uso del idioma español. Sus prácticas de enseñanza se basan en una estructura pedagógica focalizada en tres pilares: Contextualización/Problematización/Descentralización, los cuales constituyen una técnica pedagógica para la producción de este idioma. La maestra ofreció un contexto para la comprensión del español, presentó problemas que necesitaban ser solucionados y descentralizó su rol en la clase con la finalidad de que los estudiantes participaran solucionando problemas y proponiendo estrategias de forma autónoma. El estudio hace énfasis en prácticas pedagógicas efectivas para promover oportunidades del uso del español en estudiantes de programas de inmersión bilingüe de doble vía en los Estados Unidos.

Palabras clave: programas de inmersión de doble vía, educación bilingüe, aprendizaje de un segundo idioma, enseñanza de un segundo idioma.

1. Introduction

Two-way immersion (TWI)[1] programs seek to address the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in today's classrooms by equalizing education and by resisting "educational and linguistic homogenisation" (López & Fránquiz, 2009, p. 176). TWI programs favor the importance of placing equal value on both languages and fully integrating them in the curriculum so that the goals of academic achievement, additive bilingualism and biliteracy, and cross-cultural competence for all students are reached (Christian *et al.*, 2000; García, 2004; Lessow-Hurley, 2009). Nevertheless, TWI programs are complex in nature since striving for an equal balance and interaction of both languages in an English-speaking country can be challenging (Hayes, 2005; Valdes, 1997). There has been a growing concern about first language maintenance, its use and development, optimal language learning opportunities for language minority students,

and the role teachers played in the spaces and opportunities for students to use Spanish in meaningful ways in TWI programs (de Jong & Howard, 2009; Hayes, 2005; Potowski, 2004; Valdes, 1997). This study provides insights about Spanish instruction by focusing on one bilingual teacher and describing her pedagogical strategies to provide a classroom environment that sought to elicit and support extended conversations in Spanish in a first grade TWI classroom.

Using the minority language

In the vast demographic landscape of the United States, language minority students have increasingly grown in number (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). From the late 1980s until 2012, the number of students who either spoke a language other than English at home or spoke English with

difficulty increased from 3.8 to 11.2 million (NCES, 2012). They represent 21% of children ages 5-17 in the US. Of the 2.7 million that spoke English with difficulty, 75 % spoke Spanish.

TWI programs seek to provide students who speak a language other than English the opportunity to learn English while maintaining their native language. Yet the programs struggle to provide meaningful Spanish interactions (Valdes, 1997). Others have also suggested that TWI programs are not always successful at providing equal learning and instructional opportunities to develop the minority language (de Jong & Howard, 2009; Howard *et al*., 2003; Valdes, 1997). Christian (1994) argues that there is current growing concern about maintenance, development, and even survival of the target language all in the face of the dominance and power of English in U.S. society. DePalma (2010) echoes this position by stating that Spanish, as a minority language in the United Sates, risks significant underrepresentation in TWI classrooms.

TWI programs encounter many challenges including integrating native and non-native speakers, establishing equilibrium between making content comprehensible to nonnative speakers, and ensuring content is stimulating and challenging enough for the native speakers (Freeman, 1998; Hayes, 2005; Howard *et al.*, 2007; Howard & Loeb, 1998; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Palmer, 2008, 2009; Potowski, 2004; Valdes, 1997). One of the most significant challenges, however, is ensuring the use of strategies that foster language development and use, particularly in the minority language (de Jong & Howard, 2009; Potowski, 2004; Valdes, 1997).

De Jong and Howard (2009) indicate that TWI teachers of that minority language should provide extended opportunities to engage students in "challenging, rich language and literacy activities in the native language" (p. 93).

Hayes (2005) analyzed a dual language teacher in her efforts to foster interaction among native English and Spanish speakers in a dual language kindergarten classroom during Spanish language play centers. Hayes' findings concluded that it was in conflictive episodes that genuine examples of "language-productive negotiation" (p. 107) happened. Data from Hayes' study (2005) was part of a one-year ethnographic study conducted by DePalma (2010) in a TWI kindergarten classroom. The more extended interactive patterns among students happened when conflicts had to be negotiated and ambiguities needed to be resolved, which "supports [the] pragmatic view of language" (DePalma, 2010, p, 184).

In an ethnographic study, Takahashi-Breines (2002) examined teacher talk and the multifaceted role played in a third grade TWI classroom. The findings of the study were organized and presented in terms of Thomas and Collier's (1997) "Prism Model" which intertwines four different components that influence language learning in the setting of a bilingual context. Findings indicated that teacher discourse is a tool that can work as sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic support (Takahashi-Breines, 2002). Specific teacher discourse examples include the use of positive politeness imperatives, diminutives, endearing terms, and humor. The teacher also made connections with the students and built on students' personal

experiences. As a linguistic support, teacher talk worked as input for second language learning and as a source of language modeling. Teacher talk provided students with access to language in terms of content, vocabulary, and language structures. Additionally, specific instructional practices reflected meaningful classroom activities where the teacher fostered purposeful talk taking into account students' personal interests. Related to cognitive support, findings highlighted the nature of the teacher's questions to enhance students' thinking. The teacher's use of a version of Initiate-Response-Evaluate (IRE) fostered students' extended responses and enhanced their thinking, language, and cognitive skills. In relation to academic support, students participated in group work which promoted social interaction and content development. Findings concluded that optimal language settings involved those where teacher discourse plays complex, multifaceted roles involving distinctive yet complementary supports.

3. Research context

3.1 School context

The context for this study is a K-5 public, two-way Spanish immersion school in the Northeast United States. Escuela El Milagro[2] began the TWI program model in 1990-1991. The state's Department of Education reported that, for the 2009-2010 school year, 60% of students in the school spoke a language other than English, 49% were Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, and about 54% qualified for free or reduced lunch (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011). The language dominance was determined by the district which offers a language dominance test before kindergarten. In 2009-2010, the school was in its third year of transitioning to an 80:20 TWI model where students were integrated during the entire instructional time and the emphasis of instruction was 80% in Spanish.

3.2 Classroom Context

Even though the study does not focus on the students, there is a brief classroom context provided. The classroom was a self-contained classroom 80/20 Spanish first grade; 80% Spanish one teacher/one language and 20% all specials (Art, Music, Gym and ELD) in English. There were twenty students in Maestra Mara's classroom in the 2009-2010 school year. Nine were female and eleven were male. Seven of the students were Spanish dominant, six of them were English dominant, and the other seven of the students were both Spanish and English dominant. The classroom context was in alignment with TWI core characteristics where classroom should have a balance of students from the target language (in this case Spanish speakers) and English native speakers (that is, Spanish learners). Students and their families were from countries such as the U. S., Puerto Rico, Mexico, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, and El Salvador. Maestra Mara was the main classroom teacher and there was also a bilingual teacher's aide and a volunteer with her during the literacy lessons. Maestra Mara[3] is originally from South America where she obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary

Education. She worked in full immersion English programs and taught early childhood classes in her country for ten years. She obtained her Masters of Arts in Early Childhood Education in the United States in 1991, and her doctoral degree in Curriculum and Teaching in 1998. She began working at Escuela El Milagro in 2005. Her bilingual education knowledge has been building up through her over 18 years of teaching experience in one-way and TWI programs.

4. Research methods

4.1 Data collection

The data used in this study were collected through two primary sources: four audio and video-recorded classroom literacy lessons, and two one-hour individual teacher interviews. The focus of the observations was instruction; the interviews helped complement these ones. Some questions of the interview dealt with addressing issues about the teacher's experiences in the TWI program, integrating native and non-native speakers, the role of the teacher in the program, and classroom interaction among others.

4.1.1 Classroom Literacy Lessons

There were a total of four literacy lessons in Spanish that took place on December 11 and 18, 2009, January 29, 2010, and May 28, 2010. The average length of the literacy lesson was about eighty minutes. All four lessons were interactive, focused around small group work, and the teacher's instruction and engagement of students in cooperative learning activities.

Five whole group instruction episodes were selected due to the emphasis of the study: to describe Maestra´s Mara pedagogical strategies during Spanish instruction, in which she maintained pure language environments. In addition, these episodes were significantly representative due to their Spanish-enriched nature. The five whole group segments totaled approximately one hundred and twenty seven minutes.

The majority of the whole group instruction took place at the beginning of each lesson (Lessons 1, 3, and 4). Lesson 2 had two whole group instruction segments, one at the beginning and one at the end. During whole group instruction, there were five particular activities. The first one was an opening activity referred to as "morning message" or the presentation of the "teacher's news". A second activity was a Think-Pair-Share cooperative learning structure. A third activity included the reading of poems to review grammar structures, practice reading skills, and build on content knowledge and vocabulary. The fourth activity was the presentation of specific tasks students needed to carry out with their peers (creating a poster in groups, practicing dialogues to role play a mini-play, and creating a classroom mural). The fifth and final activity was a debriefing session after the mini-play activity where the teacher encouraged students to provide feedback on how the activity went and what could be done to improve it.

4.1.2 Individual interviews

The research participant in this study was interviewed twice. The first interview was conducted in December 2009 and the second was in June

2010. The first interview provided background about the research participant. The second provided evidence of the teacher's set of notions about her teaching practices.

4.2 Data analysis

Data analysis for this study draws on Hatch's (2002) concept of inductive analysis specifically domain analysis where there is a constant and systematic search for patterns of meaning that are inducted from particular elements and then generated to larger categories within the data (Hatch, 2002; Spradley, 1979). Domains were established through the use of semantic relationship that link specific elements in order to create greater categories.

All data collected—audio and video recorded lessons and interviews were transcribed. From all four literacy lessons, the five teacher-initiated whole group instruction segments were isolated to begin initial coding. First, "frames of analysis"— meaning units (p. 163) or the pieces of analyzable parts of the data were identified. A set of categories of meaning domains were created in order to establish relationships represented in the data (Hatch, 2002). After the search for semantic relationships was conducted, then "data reduction" took place (Hatch, 2002). With all the domains that emerged and after in depth analysis, domains salient to the study were presented. The selection of the domains was highly related to the research purpose of the study and aimed at answering the questions within it. At this point, deductive reasoning was conducted in order to decide if the tentative domains found and the hypothetical categories identified

support the existence of domains. The final step of domain analysis involved looking for themes. From all the entire data analyzed, there was a broad themes analysis to bring pieces together. In order to do that, the domains in search of repeated patterns or patterns that showed connections among the data were analyzed. A meaningful whole that represented the specific parts of the analysis was made by creating a summary that organized all the parts in order to create "a whole that makes sense" (Hatch, 2002, p. 175).

5. Findings

The most prominent finding of the study is Maestra Mara's purposeful creation of opportunities for students to use and develop language. The teacher achieved this by means of three specific instructional structures, described as a Contextualization/Problematization/Decentralization (CPD) framework. The CPD framework proposed here by the authors worked as an instructional framework. The data were inferred from the domain analysis (Hatch, 2002) as part of creating a meaningful whole. During the analysis, there were domains that came together and originated the herein proposed instructional framework, composed of three well-known pedagogical strategies in second language teaching. First, Maestra Mara used strategies to provide students with a context for language comprehension in the form of comprehensible input (contextualization). Second, she presented students with problems that needed real-life solutions (problematization). Finally, she decentralized her role as

the teacher to promote more student participation and leadership in decision-making process and providing of suggestions (decentralization). These structures acted independently; nevertheless, they also acted together in simultaneous and complementary ways. The CPD instructional framework will now be explained taking into account its three complementary structures: Contextualization, Problematization, and Decentralization.

5.1. Contextualization: Providing context to support language comprehension

Maestra Mara provided students with a context (comprehensible input) to enhance comprehension and support the development of meaning by presenting situational, meaningful contexts and through her intonation and non-verbal communication. To provide these contexts, she used her personal life stories and personal problems, which provided authenticity and content for the problems she asked them to help resolve. Maestra Mara's intonation facilitated the development of meaning by denoting emphasis (e.g., the raising and lowering of her voice drew students' attention to specific elements of a story or problem and by creating variety that kept students engaged) and conveying the emotions connected to specific situations. Maestra Mara also used non-verbal communication (e.g. face and body gestures, touching and/or hitting body parts, making specific faces, showing emotions) parallel to verbal utterances to enhance student understanding. She used pausing, pointing at students, and sustaining eye contact, which

signaled students to provide solutions and communicated Maestra Mara's expectations for students to help her with a personal problem. This contextualization worked as an empowering tool to make content comprehensible for the students to understand and produce language more effectively.

Maestra Mara aimed at making students define words as a way to provide context for other students (contextualization) to carry out tasks with an emphasis on language production. Note how Maestra Mara question was posed as a wondering in this example, ¿Qué significará popular? ¿Qué será eso [popular]? (I wonder what popular means. What would that [popular] be?). Maestra Mara acted as if she did not know the meaning of the word "popular" and presented the students with the problem of not knowing. A student provided translation of the word by telling Maestra Mara that it was "popular" in English. Still pretending not to know, she paused and indicated that a student had provided an answer (literal translation in English), but she still did not know the meaning of the word. She opened up a space to include the rest of the class in reflecting about the meaning of the word. She expected students to provide more than a literal translation of the word. She encouraged students to think of possible ways to explain the meaning of word. Note how she raised her voice (underlined) and used repetition to convey emphasis, ¿Y saben que pasó? Andrés me dijo es popular y no sé que eso. ¡Yo no sé qué es eso! ¡No sé qué es eso! ¡No sé qué es eso! (And do you know what happened? Andrés told me it is popular and I don't know what that is. I don't know what that is! I don't know what that is! I don't know what that is!)

Maestra Mara used synonyms as means to provide context for the students (contextualization) and broaden students' possibilities to speak and interact with their classmates. She also used synonyms as a way to encourage students to learn vocabulary words and promote their thinking skills.

Maestra Mara activated students' background knowledge in order to establish connections between past and current content knowledge (contextualization). Also activating students' background knowledge enabled students to carry on classroom tasks and compensate for those whose Spanish background would otherwise be insufficient to carry out a classroom activity or engage in classroom conversations and discussions. This activation of knowledge elicited students' language and content knowledge and contextualized students' learning. She initiated this activation with "¿Quién se acuerda?" (Who remembers?). She activated knowledge by referencing to a book read, an activity, a word explained, or an event that happened in the classroom. In the following excerpt taken from a literacy lesson on January 29, 2010 Maestra Mara activated students' background knowledge by referring to a previously read book, The Three Little Pigs[4]. She asked students about a problem that was part of the plot of the book, ¿Quién se acuerda cuál era el problema? (Who remembers what the problem was?)

5.2 Problematization: Presenting students with problems

Maestra Mara presented students with problems and encouraged them to provide solutions. By providing students with real-life conflicts and through eliciting solutions in pairs and groups, she invited students to extend their language production and problem-solving skills. In several cases, she initiated conversation by stating she had a problem (Tengo un problema) [I have a problem]. In other instances, she simply posed a question or a statement with a reference to a problem. She presented students with varied problems, including content-related problems, task-related problems, and language-related problems.

Maestra Mara's purpose for pretending not to know and wondering aloud was to create an authentic reason for communication and elicit language from the students. Her strategy consisted on pretending not to know either the meaning of a word, some vocabulary term, or an answer to something. She also pretended not to know how to go about things or what to do in specific situations.

5.3 Decentralization: Decentralizing her teacher role

By decentralizing her role, she promoted students language production in Spanish by decentralizing her role in the classroom. Most importantly, decentralizing her role provided students with a central role: an ownership over their language and knowledge. She encouraged students to play a more central role in the classroom in specific ways. First, she made sure solutions, comments, and ideas came from the students. She invited class members to work together, help one another, and positively evaluate suggestions provided by others. Second, Maestra Mara not only opened up spaces for

students to make suggestions, but also provided spaces for students to explain those suggestions and to provide a rationale by sharing the thinking behind the suggestions. Finally, Maestra Mara explicitly stated that she was not the one that decided all the time, informing the students about how she welcomed and encouraged their suggestions. Maestra Mara was explicit in her expectations that as many students as possible participate.

Maestra Mara constantly encouraged students to produce more language. There was verbal encouragement to continue talking when students were in pairs sharing, brainstorming, or listing ideas. She also encouraged students to produce more language as a whole group when students were discussing a problem and formulating solutions to a problem. Maestra Mara encouraged students to produce more language in four distinctive ways: encouraging students to provide more ideas, reinforcing the use of complete sentences and ideas, encouraging students to provide different and varied ideas, expecting all students to participate, and implementing cooperative structures such Think-Pair-Share.

Maestra Mara pushed students to provide more ideas, think more deeply, and extend their language production. She used "más" (more, what/why else) as a key word in encouraging students to speak more. She expected students to diversify their answers and pushed them into thinking about different possibilities, suggestions, and solutions to problems proposed. The following excerpt comes from the lesson about her husband's birthday. When students began to repeat the same solutions to her problem, she encouraged them to

think of different solutions. Note how "diferente" (different) is emphasized by the raising of the voice. Note how "diferente" (different) and "otra" (another) as means for her to indicate she expected students to provide varied answers.

> ¿Quién tiene ideas para ayudarme a mí? ¿Otra idea? Ropa ¿Otra idea? ¿Otra idea diferente? ¿Quién tiene otra idea diferente? ¿Quién tiene otra idea? ¿Alguien tiene otra idea diferente de regalo? No regalos [díganme] otras cosas.

> Who else has ideas to help me? Another idea? Clothing. Another idea? A different idea? Who else has a different idea? Who else has another idea? Does somebody have a different idea from presents? Not presents [tell me] other things.

The following example taken from a literacy lesson on December 11, 2009, represents the combination of the CPD framework as a whole. Maestra Mara told the students that she and her entire family (son, daughter, and mother) had forgotten her husband's birthday. In one interview, she asserted that it was indeed a personal problem she was going through at the time. She read the story to the students as part of the morning message for the day. At the beginning of the story, she indicated that her story was sad and troublesome due to the fact that she forgot her husband's birthday. Her intonation and attitude invited the students to help her by providing suggestions to communicate her regret and secure her forgiveness. Note the non-verbal cues (in parentheses) which worked as non-linguistic support. Also note how

she raised (underlined) and lowered (italics) her voice to put emphasis on forgetting the birthday and reinforced the emphasis by using non-verbal communication (e.g. touching her head, making a sad face). Note how the situational context is a problem itself that claims for students' help. Maestra Mara not only provides students with comprehensible input and a real context students can relate to, she also presents students with a personal problem, and ensures solutions to her problem come from students.

(leyendo el mensaje de la mañana) Ahora tengo una mala historia (hace cara triste) una mala noticia (pone su dedo gordo hacia abajo) anteayer antes de ayer ayer fue jueves antes de ayer fue miércoles (se refiere a un poster de la clase) el miércoles el miércoles me olvidé (toca se cabeza) del cumpleaños del cumpleaños de Rafael ¡Cabeza de pollo! (toca su cabeza) Francisco no regalo, Francisco se olvidó Ana Emilia se olvidó (golpea su pierna) mi mami Carmen se olvidó (golpea su pierna) ¡Ay no! (hace cara triste y de preocupación) Todos nos olvidamos ¡Qué pena! ¿Qué puedo hacer? ¿Me ayudan (apuntan a los estudiantes) a mí (se refiere a sí misma)?

(reading the morning message) Now I have a sad story (making a sad face), a sad story (does "thumbs down"). Two days ago, two days ago yesterday it was Thursday two days ago was Wednesday (referring to a classroom poster). On Wednesday I forgot (touching her head) Rafael's birthday: his birthday! Chicken's head (touching her head)!

Francisco no present Francisco forgot about it, Ana Emilia forgot about it, (hitting her leg) my mother Carmen forgot about it, (hitting her leg) my mother the grandmother of the children. Oh no (making a sad and worried face)! Everybody forgot! What a shame! What can I do? Can you (pointing at the students) help me (referring to herself)?

When Maestra Mara wondered aloud, posed a question, or provided students with some context to solve problems, she expected students to be ready to provide ideas. Maestra Mara used specific strategies to encourage students to elaborate by requiring them to explain their thinking as they provided answers. All this asking for language elaboration worked within the CPD framework (contextualization/problematization/decentralization). She demanded that students share their thinking and listen to other's thinking as well. She provided the space and explicit expectation for students to provide rationale for their suggestions. Maestra Mara used follow-up and high-order questions to help students explain their thinking. She recurrently used three specific linguistic structures: "por qué" (why), "cómo" (how), and "qué crees" (what do you think).

6. Discussion

Findings indicated that Maestra Mara promoted genuine opportunities for students to use and develop language. Her willingness and disposition to create the opportunities was key in building the environment to elicit

student language. She not only pushed students to produce more language but expected them to produce more language. She encouraged them to provide more and varied ideas. She demanded, in subtle and explicit ways, that students use the language. She was constant and firm in what she considered to be necessary for students to produce Spanish. Maestra Mara's teaching practices are genuine since she sought to create a wholesome environment that welcomes students to produce language in meaningful ways. Shockingly interesting is Maestra Mara' creation of chaos in her classroom. She purposefully promoted ambiguity in her classroom (by pretending not to know things, not to group students, not to know solutions to problems). She explicitly acknowledged she was not the only knower in the classroom (content and language-wise). As a result of these pedagogically-oriented conflicts, she elicited students' extended use of Spanish.

6.1 The teacher's role

Maestra Mara's willingness to create learning environments for student collaboration and social interaction affected student language production in effective ways. Students identified with situations and problems posed by Maestra Mara and felt invited to speak and express their ideas. The findings of this study demonstrated that by building a warm, positive classroom community and establishing rapport with the students, she created an inviting environment for language use. In this environment, she created a space where students' comments and ideas were embraced, and even celebrated. Language production was supported with praise and encouragement. The classroom environment communicated to students the value of providing ideas and offering solutions in a non-threatening environment. Maestra Mara presented students with an environment where there was authentic language use, negotiation of meaning, and real-life settings for students to communicate in purposeful ways (Galloway, 1993; Richards, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Communication was rooted in issues, challenges, conflicts, and decisions that individuals face in the world which fostered communication that was saturated with meaning.

Palmer (2008) noted that teaching and discursive practices can stimulate language minority use. She asserted that teachers heavily influence students' discourse patterns since they provide (or fail to provide) spaces for students to use language. In both her studies, the role played by the teacher (or the person in control at a specific time, including Spanish or English teacher, substitute teacher, or librarian) was instrumental in fostering environments for students to interact and contribute in meaningful ways in the classroom. The teachers who purposefully promoted language use fostered language opportunities to support students in learning and in using the minority language in opportunities that were not artificial or mechanically created. Facilitative teachers made spaces for students to interact, problem-solve, negotiate, and use and develop language. Maestra Mara's creating of language spaces initiated authentic interaction and conversation. Many concurred that providing students with significant opportunities for language production is an essential

aspect of TWI programs (Crawford, 1991; de Jong & Howard, 2009; Lindholm-Leary, 2001).

Hayes' study (2005) reported that students were reluctant to comply with the teacher expectations to speak Spanish when presented with fixed environments and scripted language structures. However, Hayes (2005) noted extended language use when students mediated a classroom conflict referring to this as a "language-productive negotiation" example since students genuinely engage in solving a real-life problem (p. 107). Hayes argued that language is not an objective with specific requirements that must be met. Instead, language, especially in TWI programs, is "by nature an activity" (p. 110). De Palma (2010) subsequently conducted a larger study where she also examined teacher strategies that led to student language production. Similar conclusions were reached: real-life contexts in which conflicts are resolved and meaning is negotiated lead to extended language production. Maestra Mara stayed away from formulaic, scripted language. She presented ambiguities and generated problems and conflictive spaces in her classroom as ways to foster language production. It is important to emphasize the notion that "creating problems" might be considered counterproductive in second language classrooms. In Maestra Mara's classroom it was the opposite. Posing problems resulted in language production.

McKeon (1994) suggested that teachers need to foster a conversational tone in their classes and move away from monotonous, question-answer exchanges between the teacher and the students. Creating interactive environments, however, is not enough.

The role teachers play is also important. Maestra Mara's role went beyond the creation of the language production space. She also created a nurturing, responsive environment for students to produce more language. Maestra Mara consistently demanded more language production from the students. She created the language opportunities and promoted language production.

Findings from Södergård (2008) study highlighted the importance of teacher responsiveness to students with regard to their contributions in the classroom and their language building. Maestra Mara's responsiveness to the students' use of language ensured more student language production. She showed genuine interest when students shared personal information or offer a comment or solution. She did not agree or disagree but invited students to share their comments, elaborate their suggestions, and justify their answers. She engaged in discussion by validating and extending students' opinions. Maestra Mara paid careful attention to what students were saying. She did not want students to simply say things or superficially answer questions; she expected students to think about what they were saying and elaborate their thoughts and ideas. She did not focus on form and language accuracy but on meaning students were creating, on how they were struggling to try to make sense of their ideas and suggestions. She demonstrated that she valued students' contributions to the classroom.

Takahashi-Breines (2002) highlights the complexity of the role played by TWI teachers as that which intertwines various supports, as with the teacher in her study who played

multifaceted roles to provide for her students' cultural and linguistic diverse backgrounds. Maestra Mara's role in her TWI first grade classroom was also complex and implied being aware of the importance of providing students with opportunities to use language. She made sure a welcoming environment was created where students could feel motivated and praised for participating and providing their opinions. Maestra Mara's role was also complex to the extent that she used multiple pedagogical strategies that worked as linguistic complements to ensure students' extended use of Spanish. From the findings, it can be deduced that being a teacher in a TWI program claims for multifaceted, multimodal use of pedagogical practices that complement one another as a way to compensate for students' lack of linguistic knowledge as well as to ensure genuine language immersion. Complementing simultaneous instructional practices can result in students' language learning.

6. 2 Teaching practices to elicit student language production

Maestra Mara was a resourceful teacher who used several strategic instructional practices to elicit and support extended conversation in Spanish. Maestra Mara's instructional patterns promoted students' problem-solving and negotiation skills where she encouraged students to offer solutions and interact with peers to create and negotiate meaning. To ensure student language production, Maestra Mara used the CPD framework accompanied by specific teaching patterns, including pretending not to know and wondering

aloud, using synonyms, activating students' background knowledge, encouraging and expecting students to produce more language, implementing Think-Pair-Share events, and encouraging elaboration.

The CPD framework was a structure through which Maestra Mara provided students with a context for language comprehension, presented students with problems that needed solving, and decentralized her teacher role to ensure student participation and language elaboration. She provided students with situational contexts to which students could relate. She also provided context to the use of intonation and non-verbal communication. Additionally, students were presented with problems which opened up opportunities for students to help Maestra Mara either to solve a personal (e.g. forgetting a birthday) or a classroom (e.g. deciding on a character for a play) problem. The "I have a problem" phrase along with the non-verbal cues (e.g. leaning forward, showing a concerned face, staring at students, and sustaining eye contact) worked as an effective initiator to elicit student language productions in Spanish.

Maestra Mara's creation of spaces for students to use language freely implied a focus on meaning and content rather than a focus on learning specific language structures. Her classroom practices resembled a group conversation more than a formal didactic context for the teaching of language. Language in her classroom was not simply a subject that needed to be taught. Language became a medium to the free expression of ideas. It was within this context that students used language in authentic ways including communicating

a thought, sharing a comment, offering an idea or a solution to a problem.

Maestra Mara gave more control to the students. She decentralized herself in the classroom so that students became central, active players in their learning, linguistic, and cognitive processes. Language was elicited to foster development of thinking, problem-solving, and negotiation skills. Language became a vehicle for students to develop the ability to solve problems and propose solutions. Arce's (2000) study concluded that, when students are included, they become active participants since it is in these learning interactions that students engage in providing solutions where linguistic and cognitive skills can be out into practice.

The CPD framework provides a learner-center teaching approach. In Thomas and Collier (1997) study, a prominent finding highlighted that the most effective teaching practices in the setting of TWI programs were learner-centered classes. They indicated that instruction that was less teacher-centered was more likely to enhance linguistic and academic student gains. Shifting from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach in the TWI context has been encouraged by others, who also emphasized the importance of teachers who promote language rather than have power over it (Antón, 1999; Crawford, 1991; Cummins, 1994, 2000; Howard & Christian, 2000; Howard *et al.*, 2000, 2007; Souto-Manning, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). It is in this context that teachers are not language authorities; instead they foster environments in which students become language authorities. The teacher role changes from the only language provider to a facilitator of genuine dialogue between the students who also know language and can contribute to the classroom in meaningful ways. It was the CPD framework which supported purposeful talk by requiring students to actively engage in ideas, opinions, and solutions. In this way, the CPD framework provided students with an instructional support that fostered linguistic and cognitive development.

Maestra Mara's questioning was also indicative of strategies that elicited student language production. Her use of high-order and follow-up questions promoted students linguistic and cognitive skills. She expected students to elaborate and provide rationale for their suggestions and opinions. Her question patterns are consistent with patterns suggested in the literature. Nunan and Lamb (1996) and Toth (2011) argued that high-order questions and open-questions lead to more student second language discourse. Hall and Walsh (2002) noted that providing students with feedback (in the form of response affirmations, reformulations, comments, and request for justification, clarification, and elaboration), and valuing their contributions (not judging or evaluating them) resulted in students elaborating more on their utterances and participating more as ways to engage in meaningful communication. Maestra Mara's multifaceted role in the classroom was that of a language promoter and encourager.

7. Conclusion and implications

This current study suggests important implications for future practice and research in second language teaching. This study provides insights

into the ways in which TWI teachers, through their role and teaching practices, the classroom environment created, and the expectations they have can promote opportunities for students to build and practice Spanish in the classroom. Teaching practices to increase students' extended use of Spanish that are gathered from this study include creating a sense of classroom community, building rapport with the students, using a pedagogical framework with CDP features, and implementing specific instructional strategies. Maestra Mara constantly pushed students to use language to provide explanations, offer solutions, and negotiate meaning as a group. Teachers in TWI scenarios need to internalize that the mere demand for more language would not necessarily result in students producing more language. A context for language comprehension must be provided in which the teacher plays multifaceted roles and language is viewed as a social, live phenomenon that is real and meaningful. Teachers also need to foster a warm, respectful environment where students feel free to ask questions if something is unknown, make linguistic mistakes when expressing their ideas, and engage in conversation and discussion freely.

It is important to note how Maestra Mara provided feedback to the students. She did not offer judgmental responses; instead, she accepted students' responses and either sought clarification or elaboration of answers. Teachers should pay close attention to student participation. Maestra Mara constantly invited student participation reinforcing the need for students to participate and engage in classroom conversation. She made it clear that

she expected students to participate. Maestra Mara used a wondering tone which was key in getting students to offer solutions and express their ideas and comments. Posing a curiosity, presenting an uncertainty, and simply wondering aloud about something engaged students in meaningful communication where they needed to purposefully deal with issues. When wondering aloud, Maestra Mara used non-linguistic cues to provide a context for language comprehension and to emphasize her wondering about something. It is important for teachers to understand that wondering aloud worked as a strategy that invited students to produce language genuinely. Teachers need to understand that direct questioning might be counterproductive to language production since these types of questions and interactions might limit student language production.

Teachers need to understand the impact the teacher's role has in the classroom. The teacher is crucial in putting specific strategies into practice to provide students with opportunities for social interaction to use and develop language. However, providing the opportunities does not mean that the teacher has to control the language activities or become an authoritarian model in the classroom. The following specific strategies are suggested from Maestra Mara's instruction:

- Provide students with a context to make content and language comprehensible to the students.
- Provide students with real-life scenarios.
- Foster scenarios for students to develop problem-solving and negotiation skills.

- Activate student background knowledge to establish connections with previously learned content.
- Pretend not to know and wonder aloud.
- Use synonyms.
- Use non-verbal communication (referring to classroom materials and posters, face and body gestures, pauses, sustained eye contact).
- Use scaffolding techniques to facilitate student language learning.
- Push students to produce more.
- Encourage students to provide more and varied answers.
- Demand students to provide full sentences and ideas.
- Encourage all students to participate.
- Use cooperative structures specifically implement Think-Pair-Share events.
- Use open-ended and follow-up questions.
- Provide students with feedback rather than an evaluative response.

Changes in teaching practices require shifts in teacher beliefs about learning and teaching. Students learn in many ways, which have been proven to deviate from direct teacher instruction. Teachers need to address the importance of building a classroom community where Spanish speaking and English-speaking students learn from one another through the use of language and through problem-solving and negotiating situations. A suggestion for teachers relates to culturally responsive pedagogy, which addresses the needs of students coming from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Villegas and Lucas (2002, 2007) proposed six salient qualities for professional development of teachers and teacher educators, including understanding how learners construct knowledge, learning about students' lives, being sociocultural / conscious, holding affirming views about diversity, using appropriate strategies, and advocating for all students. Culturally responsive pedagogy speaks of teaching approaches in which students are given opportunities to engage in meaningful activities where students "learn to think critically, become creative problem-solvers, and develop skills for working collaboratively" (Villegas & Lucas, p. 30). This pedagogy reinforces the fact that all students are capable learners regardless of their cultural or linguistic background and encourages teachers to hold affirming, high expectations for all students.

8. Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Two-way immersion (TWI) is also known as two-way bilingual, dual language, bilingual immersion, double immersion, and two-way schools (Center of Applied Linguistics, 2011). TWI programs will be the term used in this paper.
2. The teacher, students, and school were assigned pseudonyms.
3. The teacher, students, and school were assigned pseudonyms.

4. Parks, B. & Smith, J. (2009). Los Tres Cerditos. Pelham, NY: Benchmark Education Company.

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