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"We Teach in English Here": Conflict Between Language Ideology and Test Accountability in an English-Only Newcomer School

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Abstract

Ideologies regarding what is "good" teaching undergird common teaching practices and pedagogical decisions, which may support and/or run counter to the broader policy environment in which they occur (Gibson, 1998). Drawing from a six-month ethnography of 10th-grade newcomer students from Mexico and their teachers in a Central Texas English high school English-immersion program, this article explores seemingly contradictory teacher practices regarding the use of English and Spanish in the classroom. I argue that these varying practices represent a tension between the school's official English-only policy and a broader political ideology prioritizing performance on standardized tests that led to allowances of student Spanish language use. These findings add to our understanding of the influence and effects of standardized testing on teacher and administrator priorities and the potential cost to the real-world language needs of newcomer students.

Keywords: language ideologies, high-stakes testing, immigrant education, English language education

On a sunny afternoon early in January of 2010, I was sitting in Ms. Johnson's [2] writing classroom at Literacy High, a Central Texas two-year

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newcomer transition high school.[3] Students had time to work on yesterday's homework: an opinion essay about sex education in schools. The focus was on producing essays with a clear separation between introduction, body, and conclusion. This assignment, and this course, fit into the larger mission of Literacy High: to provide recent newcomers who lacked English language fluency—from across the school district—with opportunities to develop that fluency. The goal being that upon completion of the program, students could return to their traditional neighborhood high schools with the linguistic and cultural skills they needed to succeed during their junior and senior years.

After a brief explanation by Ms. Johnson on how class time would be organized that day, students were given time to work by themselves or in small groups. During that time, I heard Spanish at nearly every table as the predominantly Mexican-origin, Spanish-speaking student population of Literacy High worked together to help find vocabulary words in dictionaries, conjugate verbs, write complete sentences, and correct noun-verb agreement. For about 20 minutes, Ms. Johnson remained at her desk while students engaged in these activities and during this time she made no comments regarding students' use of Spanish in their independent work. Having only begun my observations a week prior, I circulated between tables during this time introducing myself and offering help with the assignment. As the use of Spanish seemed to be tolerated, I began speaking in Spanish myself as I answered students' questions.

After going briefly into the hallway to answer a phone call, Ms. Johnson came back into the room and circulated among the student tables, answering questions and clarifying misunderstandings as she went. When she came to the table where I was sitting, her smiling face became stern when she heard me speaking in Spanish. She tapped me on the shoulder and asked me to step aside to speak with her in private. In the hall, she stated "I know you're still somewhat new, and I appreciate the research you're doing and the help you're providing to the students with their assignment, but I just wanted to clarify." Pausing and lowering her tone for emphasis, she looked me in the eye and said, "We teach in English here."

Not wanting to get off on the wrong foot, I quickly apologized and said it would not happen again. However, I felt confused. Ms. Johnson offered no similar

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[2] This school's name and the names of all participants have been replaced with pseudonyms that are used throughout this article.

[3] In this particular district, a newcomer school was defined as one that targets particular populations of immigrants who have recently arrived from other countries (including all immigrants who arrived in the United States in the last two years) who do not demonstrate a fluent command of English, as measured by the administration of the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test, or W-APT.

correction to students who spoke in Spanish while working on the assignment, and in other classrooms I heard teachers speaking in Spanish at times to clarify misunderstandings or repeat instructions. Yet despite the use of Spanish in the classroom, when asked directly about school language policy, teachers and students universally stated that Literacy High had a strict English-only policy.

This vignette captures the tension that I sought to address with my ethnographic study at Literacy High: What language ideologies—or shared set of beliefs about language that justify (and restrict) particular forms of language use (Silverstein, 1996)—are reflected in the co-constructed activities occurring in Literacy High classrooms between teachers and students? And in what ways do these various ideologies compliment, contradict, and/or complicate one another? In response to the first question, I argue that Literacy High teachers' statements supporting a strict English-only policy represented a language ideology which held English as a linguistic standard (Silverstein, 1996), or a universal norm to which all speakers were expected to adhere. However, as attention to the second question illuminates, at the same time, a common political ideology prioritizing standardized test performance complicated the English-only language ideology. The result was a pragmatic allowance of Spanish in classrooms when such allowance improved students' written work in English. The prioritization of standardized test performance fits within a larger sociopolitical context of high-stakes accountability associated with standardized test results (Au, 2009) and the fact that in the United States written work is more comprehensively assessed, through standardized tests, than oral English proficiency (Menken, 2008). At Literacy High, the mixture of these two language ideologies—English-only and the pragmatic use of Spanish for test performance—resulted in a setting where students predominantly expressed feeling comfortable using Spanish to complete their schoolwork, though confusion existed at times when—as happened to me that afternoon in Ms. Johnson's room—the use of Spanish seemed arbitrarily penalized.

Given the increasing number of Spanish-speaking English learners in U.S. classrooms (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), alongside the continued presence of high-stakes testing across the United States (Valenzuela et al., 2015), the insights provided in this article regarding how one school serving large numbers of English learners wrestled with these competing priorities may be useful to teachers and administrators working in similar settings. To make this argument, I first outline the theoretical framework of language ideologies and then give an overview of my methods. Next, I explain my findings concerning the ways in which a school-level, English-only language ideology conflicted with the larger political reality of high-stakes accountability based on standardized testing. From these findings, I discuss how this conflict had an adverse effect on the ability of the newcomer students to learn English.

Theoretical Framework

In his groundbreaking article, Michael Silverstein (1979) defined *language ideologies* as "any sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (p. 193). Kroskrity (2010) built upon this definition, noting the agendas inherent in language ideologies, as they "often index the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation states" (p. 192).

Language ideologies are contextually bound. For example, Errington (2001) argued that language ideologies are "situated, partial, and [based in users' interests]" (p. 110). Kroskrity (2010) similarly described language ideologies as being "multiple, context-bound, and necessarily constructed from the sociocultural experience of the speaker" (p. 192). Woolard (1998) argued that such situatedness is inevitable given that language ideologies only arise at "the intersection of language and human beings in a social world …. mediating … social forms and forms of talk" (p. 3). In short, the ideologies enacted by any given language actor at any given moment are dependent on the context in which that actor finds themselves. As a result, actors' enactment of language ideologies changes or varies across contexts.

Lastly, given the varying positionalities of different actors in any particular context, power is a crucial element of the interplay between language ideologies. As language ideologies are rooted in social practices (Kroskrity, 2010) and reflect social positions (Woolard, 1998), the inherently unequal nature of contemporary societies means that language ideologies are often utilized "in the service of the struggle to acquire or maintain power" (Woolard, 1998, p. 7). However, further complicating these power dynamics is the fact that "interlinked and often rival" (Collins, 1998, p. 257) language ideologies can be enacted in the same space, and often by the same actors. In the context of this study, these dynamics help explain why state- and national-level ideologies of high-stakes accountability—represented by policymakers in social positions of power—challenged local ideologies at Literacy High, which prioritized real-world language use and acquisition.

Language Ideologies and Languages of Instruction

Beginning with the work of Shirley Brice Heath (1983), anthropologists of education have come to widely recognize the powerful role of ideology in how language socialization is carried out in schools and then connected to the larger society. As Woolard (1998) pointed out, "ideologies of language are not about language alone …. Rather, they underpin … such fundamental social institutions as … child socialization … the nation-state, [and] schooling" (p. 3). One specific focus within this scholarship is on ideologies of language of instruction, as they

are intrinsically bound to a school's formal context, perhaps even more so in language-focused schools like Literacy High.

Language instruction is inherently linked with power. Languages used by dominant groups tend to be given priority in formal school settings (Wortham, 2008) and used as the language of instruction (Watson, 2007). Curricula can imply superiority of the language of instruction over other languages (de los Heros, 2009). Because of their connection with power, the languages of instruction can hold hierarchical prestige even in the eyes of those who do not (yet) speak them (Hornberger, 1988). Often, students whose first language(s) are not the national or curricular standard (Silverstein, 1996) are marginalized by language ideologies that imply the inferiority of their first language(s) or dialect(s). Even when the dominant language is partially incorporated in student language use, it is still subjected to correction and stigma if it is intermingled with other languages, accents, or non-standardized variants of the dominant language. This stigmatization can obscure student linguistic practices, such as code-switching (Heller, 2010) and translanguaging (García & Wei, 2013).

This phenomenon is present in various cultural contexts throughout the world (de los Heros, 2009; Dong, 2009; Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2011; Hornberger, 1988; Howard, 2007; LaDousa, 2010; Pujolar, 2010). As the language of power intersects with national ideologies and identities, scholars have noted a particular entrenchment of said ideologies. Hornberger (1998) noted, when dominant national language ideologies associate a particular language with a national identity that is assumed to transcend ethnic and cultural boundaries, it is very difficult to promote any form of language instruction in school that is focused on promoting full fluency in languages other than the nationally accepted one.

In the United States, the language of instruction has been a hotly contested issue in education policy circles for both students whose first language is something other than English (Leung & Uchikoshi, 2012; Schmidt, 2007; Shannon, 1999) and students whose first language is a non-dominant variant of English (Brown, 2006; Collins, 1999; Siegel, 2006). California's Proposition 227—passed in the late 1990s, outlawing bilingual education and mandating English-only policies—has particularly shaped the last few decades of U.S. language policy and inspired similar moves by many other states (Stritikus, 2002). The continued dominant status of English within the United States is at the core of language of instruction debates. Schmidt (2007) stated,

> Within [the United States], English is "normalized," and any public actions (by individuals or by social and political groups) that implicitly or explicitly challenge that apparent social reality are experienced as "abnormal" and "illegitimate" by those for whom the English fact has

> been normalized. In this manner, cultural power operates ideologically to legitimate itself. (p. 204–205)

Silverstein (1996) described this dominance by identifying English as "the Standard," a linguistic symbol of the "uniform public Culture" that the U.S. as a nation tries to articulate (p. 284). As Milroy (2000) noted in agreement, "[this] standard is ideologized as a neutral reference point for all descriptions of variation" (p. 82).

Previous ethnographic studies on students whose first language is something other than English in U.S. schools have documented the various ways that this dominance and standardization of English can exhibit itself—particularly in classroom settings focused on English learning (Griswold, 2011; Handsfield & Crumpler, 2013). In some settings, students who are placed in classrooms and programs focused on English language acquisition are described in pejorative terms (e.g., disrespectful, incompetent, impaired) more often than students who speak English as a first language (Talmy, 2009). As this intersects with race, teachers have been shown to treat English learners differently in ways that manifest unspoken teacher beliefs regarding second-language students of color (Razfar, 2012), particularly reinforcing the notion that there is a "correct" way of speaking English through their repeated correction of English learners' speech (Razfar, 2006). In each of these studies, the teacher actions directed toward English learner students reflect a consistent language ideology supporting English as a linguistic standard to which all students should aspire.

The present article builds upon this previous work by identifying language ideologies present in a school setting with large populations of recent newcomers and analyzing how contextual political pressure can lessen or complicate the degree to which language ideologies are enacted by both teachers and students. As Collins (1998; see also Hertzberg, 1998) has pointed out, in any given cultural context "interlinked and often rival" (p. 257) language ideologies can be pushed by different actors, or at times through conflicting actions by the same actors. In the present study, I argue that such "interlinked and rival" (Collins, 1998, p. 257) ideologies can be simultaneously held by school-level actors, such as teachers and administrators, whose actions can in one moment promote authentic student language acquisition and in another promote short-term solutions that undercut language learning for the sake of improved standardized test performance. Such ideological disjuncture is of particular interest in educational settings, due to the potential consequences of such on students' school experiences and achievement.

Method

I used ethnographic methods in this study, specifically semi-structured interviews (with students and teachers) and participant observation (of students and teachers within their classroom contexts). In total, I conducted 21 classroom

participant observations (35 total hours of observation) and 57 interviews with teachers and students at Literacy High during 28 school visits over a six-month period.

Participant Selection

The primary study population consisted of fourteen 10th-grade Latinx newcomer students from Mexico and eight teachers and administrators who taught and worked with Literacy High students. I also interviewed all seven teachers at Literacy High who taught classes with students from my primary population, as well as one administrator. All relevant teachers and administrators were willing to participate. For more details on the faculty interviewed, see Table 1.

Table 1

Literacy High Faculty Participant Demographics

Faculty name	Gender	Ethnicity	Position	Spanish fluency
Ms. Carter	Female	Latinx	Principal	Fluent
Ms. Hall	Female	Latinx	Teacher (geometry)	Fluent
Mr. Walker	Male	White	Teacher (U.S./art history)	Fluent
Ms. Johnson	Female	White	Teacher (writing)	None
Mr. Robinson	Male	Black	Teacher (English)	None
Ms. Stewart	Female	White	Teacher (reading)	Basic oral capacity
Ms. Allen	Female	White	Teacher (biology)	Basic oral capacity
Mr. Nelson	Male	White	Teacher (technology)	Basic oral capacity

All 14 student participants had been in the United States for less than two years and were in their second year of coursework at Literacy High. I recruited participating students from an official list of Literacy High's students who were enrolled in 10th grade. All 10th-grade students who had immigrated from Mexico were given a chance to participate. The study was limited to Mexican newcomers to limit extraneous factors that might come into play should the population be more broadly defined. The study was also limited to the 10th grade because ninth-grade students at Literacy High were predominantly very new arrivals to the United States and had not been in the school long enough to have much depth of

experience in their new school setting. Fourteen eligible students returned signed consent forms and were interested in participating for the full six months.

The 14 students had varied levels of experience in Mexican schools prior to arriving in the United States. Raymundo, the student with least previous school experience, had finished the first year of *secundaria* (roughly the equivalent of grade seven in the United States, as Mexican *secundarias* typically correspond to grades seven to nine), whereas some students had finished one year or two of *preparatoria* (which typically includes grades 10 to 12). Interestingly—though outside the scope of the present study—all students self-identified as middle-class, despite the fact that some came from rural agricultural backgrounds and attended small public schools, whereas others were able to attend expensive private schools in metropolitan areas. For a detailed description of all participating students, see Table 2 below.

Table 2
Literacy High Student Participant Demographics

Student name	Gender	Self-identified social class	Area of origin in Mexico	Years of schooling in Mexico (last year completed)	Private or public schools
Beatriz	Female	Middle	Rural area	10 (finished first year of *preparatoria*)	Public
Celio	Male	Middle	Rural area	9 (finished *secundaria*)	Public
Claudia	Female	High-middle	Urban area	11 (finished second year of *preparatoria*)	Private
Dolores	Female	Middle	Urban area	8 (finished second year of *secundaria*)	Public
Esteban	Male	Middle	Urban area	9 (finished *secundaria*)	Public
Eva	Female	Middle	Rural area	9 (finished *secundaria*)	Public
Hector	Male	Middle	Rural area	9 (finished *secundaria*)	Public
Isabel	Female	High-middle	Urban area	10 (finished first year of *preparatoria*)	Private
Jorge	Male	Middle	Urban area	9 (finished *secundaria*)	Public
Josefina	Female	Middle	Urban area	10 (finished first year of *preparatoria*)	Private
Mercedes	Female	Middle	Rural area	9 (finished *secundaria*)	Public
Ofelia	Female	Middle	Urban area	8 (finished second year of *secundaria*)	Public
Raymundo	Male	Middle	Rural area	7 (finished first year of *secundaria*)	Public
Teresa	Female	Middle	Rural area	11 (finished second year of *preparatoria*)	Public

Data Collection

As mentioned above, I visited Literacy High 28 times over a six-month period. Observation formats varied depending on teacher and student attendance, periods when teachers asked not to be disturbed for testing, and the like. As a result, although I did not visit every classroom nor every participant during each school visit, I ensured, to the degree possible, that I observed and interviewed all participants an equivalent number of times, as I outline below.

I conducted two to three semi-structured interviews with each of the 14 students and their eight teachers and administrators. One student, Josefina, changed schools during the course of the study and thus was only interviewed twice. I interviewed all other students (n = 13) three times. I interviewed all teachers and administrators twice. Teacher and administrator interviews included questions on their impressions of each of the participating students, their beliefs regarding the use of English and Spanish in the classroom, and their perceptions and opinions of Literacy High and its policies in general. Similarly, student interviews included questions on their impressions of their teachers, their experiences with the use of both English and Spanish in Literacy High classrooms, their beliefs regarding the use of English and Spanish in the classroom, and their perceptions and opinions of Literacy High and its policies in general.

All teacher and administrator interviews were conducted in English. Student interviews were conducted in Spanish, with the exception of one student who insisted on being interviewed in English for language practice. Interviews lasted between 40 and 70 minutes, with most lasting around an hour. Throughout this article, individual interview and observation fieldnote citations can be identified by the dates that follow them. For example, a citation that refers to Jorge (5/14) refers to an interview conducted with Jorge on May 14th, and a citation that refers to Walker (3/12) refers to either an interview or classroom observation of Mr. Walker conducted on March 12th.

For classrooms observations, my intentional focus was to observe teachers' instruction and how students participated in day-to-day classroom activities. I documented all classroom participant observations through handwritten fieldnotes (written in English). These were jottings written at the time of observation that I then fleshed out and collected in a typed Microsoft Word document each evening after returning home. I audio recorded my interviews and then transcribed them, typically within several weeks of conducting them. Every month, I used open coding (Burnard, 1991) to code my most recent interviews and observations according to dominant themes that arose within the data. In this process, I read through all transcripts and fieldnotes, highlighting lines in the interviews and fieldnotes thematically as different ideas, or themes, recurred. Twice during the six-month period of data collection, I recoded all observations

and transcriptions to allow for the emergence of new trends and new codes within the larger set of fieldnotes (Emerson et al., 2011). I also did this to confirm trends I thought I was seeing within the data by revisiting the entire dataset to ensure those interview portions and/or fieldnote vignettes that struck me as representative really were repeated, and not just arbitrarily selected to confirm presumed findings. I was especially cognizant of the need to do this to work against my inherent biases that derived from my positionality (as I explain in more detail below).

Positionality

I am an upper-class, white male, born and raised in the United States. At the time of this study (2010), I was a graduate student. Though I had spent a great deal of time in my professional life working with Mexican immigrants, gaining some familiarity with Mexican culture through previous academic projects and professional experiences, inherent differences in positionality kept me from fully understanding their experiences as students at Literacy High and their daily lived realities as recent newcomers from Mexico. Language was also likely a source of some of this cultural distance, as despite years of Spanish language study, I am not a native Spanish speaker. I know this inevitably affected my data-collection abilities among the 14 students in this study, as my positionality meant I had no access to the "cultural intuition" (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 563) that Chicana scholars (such as Huber, 2009) have used to ground their research among Latinx populations. I recognize the "inherent intersubjectivity" of ethnographic work (Cruz, 2006, p. 38) and the reality that my personal biases and experiences color the interpretation, coding, and analysis of my interviews with both teachers and students.

Findings

The following section documents the enactment of various teacher practices regarding the use of English and Spanish in the classroom in Literacy High, often done in ways that appeared to work at cross-purposes. Specifically, I first explore instances in which Literacy High teachers allowed their students to speak in Spanish while engaging in coursework, along with instances in which teachers who spoke Spanish used that Spanish in their teaching. Second, I document instances of when teachers more explicitly modeled English and corrected students' use of Spanish. Last, I explore how students perceived these different pedagogical approaches to Spanish to be contradictory, and how they, at times, felt confused when trying to navigate classroom situations involving Spanish.

Allowance of Spanish

In nearly all classes I observed, teachers allowed students' use of Spanish among themselves during independent work. I provide two explanatory examples: one of a class in which Spanish was allowed by a Spanish-speaking teacher (Walker, 3/9), and one in which Spanish was allowed by a teacher who did not speak Spanish (Robinson, 3/24).

On the day of the first example, I was already seated in the back of Mr. Walker's (3/9) U.S. history class as students came in before the bell. Teresa, one of this study's participants, came in with several friends, all laughing and joking in Spanish. Though one Spanish-language joke Teresa told under her breath led Mr. Walker (who spoke Spanish) to warn, "Hey, watch your mouth," the continued conversation in Spanish was allowed.

As students finished filing in and the bell rang, Mr. Walker began his lesson, part of a larger unit on World War I. Putting up a slide showing soldiers in trenches, Mr. Walker asked, "What event caused World War I?" Various students shared answers. Celio, another student in the study, yelled out, "*La triple alianza*."[4] Mr. Walker corrected him for calling out without raising his hand and for providing an incorrect answer but did not correct or redirect his use of Spanish. Later in the lesson, Mr. Walker called on Teresa, who had continued to chat with her friends in Spanish while taking notes, asking her to stop chatting and focus on her notes. Again, no correction was given for speaking in Spanish.

As Mr. Walker continued through his lesson, students regularly asked questions in Spanish. At one point when the projector stopped working and the screen turned blue, Teresa asked, "*¿Por qué es así?*"[5] to which Mr. Walker responded in English that he did not know. At several points, students asked in Spanish for permission to go to the bathroom. After the presentation, students were asked to complete a worksheet, and one student asked if they should summarize the lesson, stating "*¿Debo resumir o que tiene aquí en el texto?*" Responding in English, Mr. Walker said that doing a summary would be great. In each case, Mr. Walker answered students' questions in English, and at no point did he correct students' use of Spanish or ask them to speak in English. In fact, at several points Mr. Walker used Spanish himself, referring to a soldier in one picture as a *pobrecito*[6] and repeatedly asking if students had questions, stating "*¿Hay preguntas?*"

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[4] Known in English as the Triple Alliance, or the alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy that lasted from the end of the 19th century through the beginning of World War I.

[5] English: Why is it like that?

[6] English: A person deserving of pity

In Mr. Robinson's (3/24) English class, the second example, Spanish was also allowed, evident mostly in students' interactions with each other, as Mr. Robinson did not speak Spanish himself. In this particular class, the focus of the lesson was on several irregular English verbs. Mr. Robinson's lecture focused on how each verb should be conjugated in the present tense, after which he explained how students should independently fill out a practice sheet of sentences and verb trees containing those same verbs.

During this lesson, several students—including Eva, one of the students I was following—who were sitting next to Mr. Robinson's desk were chatting under their breath in Spanish. At one point, Mr. Robinson looked up from his overhead projector and said to Eva and her friends, "I understand some of you are quicker with these verbs than others. I ask for a little of your patience as I go over them again." Again, as in the case of Mr. Walker's classroom, students speaking in Spanish were corrected or redirected for their behavior when it violated class norms but not for their use of Spanish.

As the lecture finished and students began filling out their worksheets, I could hear Spanish spoken in low tones at nearly every table. As I circulated between tables, one girl who struggled with English asked Eva to help explain Mr. Robinson's lecture, asking "*¿O que estaba diciendo?*" At another table near the front, one boy asked another about a particular vocabulary word used in an example sentence. Not sure he understood or recognized the word "earthquake," the boy asked his neighbor, "*¿Como se dice* earthquake *en español? ¿Terremoto?*" The neighbor confirmed that the boy was right, and they both continued their work. At each of the other two tables in the classroom, similar Spanish-language dialogues also occurred, with students asking each other for help and clarification regarding the assignment and particular words or phrases.

Throughout this independent work time, Mr. Robinson sat at his desk, watching students as they worked and occasionally calling out to remind them of how much time was left before the end of class. At several points, he called out to specific tables where conversation was getting loud and said, "Talking is okay if it's about the work." Though Mr. Robinson's lack of Spanish fluency kept him from fully enforcing this rule (as he had no idea whether conversations in Spanish were focused on the work or not), his repetition of this statement did make his particular language policy clear: so long as students were doing work and complying with particular behavior expectations, speaking in Spanish was okay.

Teachers Using Spanish

In addition to teachers tolerating Spanish as Mr. Walker's and Mr. Robinson's examples illustrated, Spanish-speaking teachers often used Spanish themselves for instructional purposes. When their own knowledge of Spanish was

insufficient, teachers also occasionally called on students to act as translators. I explore these instances here.

In Ms. Hall's geometry class, a good deal of instruction took place in Spanish, though typically only after students had trouble understanding in English. For example, at the beginning of one class, Ms. Hall (3/9) asked students in the back to move closer to the front. When asked why, she responded in Spanish: "*Para que puedan participar mejor.*"[7] As the lesson began, Ms. Hall tried to practice some vocabulary words with students. Putting two triangles next to each other on her overhead projector, she stated, "Let's move on to the word adjacent, what is the meaning of adjacent?" When no one answered, she followed up: "Have you never heard of that word?" One student replied in Spanish, "*Sí, pero necessito que me digas otra vez*." [8] In response, Ms. Hall provided a Spanish translation for the word "adjacent": *contiguo*. Continuing with vocabulary, Ms. Hall put an isosceles triangle on the projector and asked, "What kind of triangle is this, according to the sides?" When again no one responded, Ms. Hall joked with the students in Spanish, stating, "*Ay, Dios mío, ¿que voy hacer con ustedes?*"[9] Throughout the rest of the lesson, Ms. Hall continued to use Spanish, both to clarify when students did not understand a concept and to occasionally make a joke.

Other teachers went further than quick jokes or clarification and used Spanish grammatical examples directly in their lessons to teach English concepts. For instance, in her reading class (3/10), Ms. Stewart used Spanish language examples to explain how English grammatical mistakes sound to the ears of native speakers. Writing "*Voy a el casa*"[10] on the board, Ms. Stewart stated,

> When you write a paper and make simple mistakes, it hurts an English speaker's ears. This example is for all you Spanish speakers—imagine if I said this to you, "*Voy a el casa*." It hurts, right? It's the same when you don't use correct grammar in English.

In addition to using Spanish-language elements in their instruction and interactions with Spanish-speaking students, several Literacy High teachers used students as translators for one another when their own knowledge of Spanish fell short. For example, in one art history class, Mr. Walker (3/3) asked his students for help in translating words like "salon," "baroque," and "canvas." Similarly, in

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[7] English: So that they can participate better.

[8] English: Yes, but I need you to tell me again.

[9] English: Oh my God, what am I going to do with you guys?

[10] This example purposefully misuses a masculine definite article "el" with a feminine noun "casa" and breaks a grammatical rule of combining "a" with "el" to form "al."

one biology class Ms. Allen (1/29) had trouble explaining the concept of mitosis to several students who particularly struggled with English. In response, she offered, "You can say it in Spanish if you want. Hey, does anyone here know what the word for mitosis is in Spanish?" After one student found the cognate word in a dictionary and shared it with the class, the lesson continued. Like the example in Ms. Stewart's class, these instances focused on Spanish as a tool for work completion, though in doing so they also drew on and built from students' prior knowledge.

Modeling English and Correcting Spanish

Although the fieldnotes illustrated many instances of students being allowed to speak Spanish in Literacy High classrooms, there were also many occasions in which teachers explicitly modeled English and corrected the use of Spanish. This pedagogical practice followed the school's English-only policy, thus enforcing a language ideology in which English was seen as the standard (Silverstein, 1996). This practice was especially common among those faculty members who did not speak Spanish; however, it was not exclusive to them.

Teachers employed a number of techniques to model the use of English in the classroom. Several teachers modeled how to do class presentations (Johnson, 3/1; Walker, 3/9) prior to students giving class presentations. One teacher, when breaking students into small groups that contained both Spanish and non-Spanish speakers, modeled how to introduce oneself and get to know each other in English (Nelson, 2/24). Several teachers—when students used Spanish-language vocabulary—modeled the English equivalent (Walker, 1/27; Hall, 3/9; Stewart, 3/10). For example, when one student repeatedly asked in Spanish for a *lápiz*, Ms. Stewart (3/10) in response slowly modeled the phrase, "Can I borrow a pencil?"

Teachers correcting the use of Spanish was also fairly common (Walker, 1/27; Robinson, 1/27, 3/24; Allen, 2/3; Johnson, 2/3, 3/3) and was typically accompanied by the stated rationale that students needed to practice their English to effectively learn it. For example, in response to one student's continued questions in Spanish, Ms. Johnson (2/3) replied, "Please, speak in English—you'll have trouble writing in English if you're speaking in Spanish. You can ask for clarification in Spanish but focus on English." In a later writing class, several of Ms. Johnson's (3/1) students were making presentations. Esteban was making a presentation on gangs, and Mercedes, another student in this study, noticed a spelling error on his slide. She told him in Spanish that he misspelled "gangs" as "gags." In response, Ms. Johnson chastised Mercedes, saying, "You need to speak in English. Also, you're interrupting his train of thought. It's hard for him to move forward in his thinking when you're talking to him in Spanish." In both of these examples, Ms. Johnson's pedagogical practice of correcting students when they spoke Spanish and asking them to speak in English (re)inforced Literacy

High's language ideology in which English was upheld as the linguistic standard (Silverstein, 1996).

This kind of correction against Spanish use occasionally resulted in teachers misunderstanding student speech, especially among teachers who did not speak Spanish. For instance, in one of his English classes, Mr. Robinson (1/27) was leading a discussion on a book. Mr. Robinson asked, "What did the main character's father do for a living?" In response, one student called out, "*campesino*!"[11] Mr. Robinson, speaking slowly for emphasis, seemed to correct the student, saying, "He was a *farmer*." Looking somewhat confused, the student replied, "Yeah, that's what I *told* you, Mister. *Campesino*!" The class broke out laughing. Another student explained the misunderstanding to Mr. Robinson, which led Mr. Robinson to apologize for correcting the student: "Okay, you were right. But it's important you know the word in English, too." By correcting students' language use even when apologizing, here Mr. Robinson again (re)inforced the school's explicit and official English-only language ideology.

Simultaneous Allowance of Spanish Use and English-Only Instruction

In the preceding vignettes one can note differences in the approach to language practices among Literacy High teachers. Teachers like Ms. Johnson, Mr. Nelson, and Mr. Robinson appeared to more strictly push English, whereas teachers like Mr. Walker, Ms. Allen, Ms. Stewart, and Ms. Hall seemed more tolerant of Spanish. However, though these were observed patterns in my classroom observations, it is important to note that even the most Spanish-friendly teachers at Literacy High had moments in which they made it clear to their classes that practicing English was important, and that English was the standard (Silverstein, 1996) that they should model (Walker, 1/27, 3/3; Allen, 1/29; Hall, 3/9) when at school.

In one of his U.S. history classes, Mr. Walker (1/27) routinely interacted with students in Spanish (e.g., offering behavior corrections, helping students find cognates in their written work), but also repeatedly emphasized that students should be practicing their English. When students were speaking in Spanish while working on an assignment independently, he approached them and said, "You should be speaking in English. These words will be on your test and you need the practice." At another point, he called out to the entire class, "Remember, I need to hear you speaking English for you to get your interactions grade!" Yet during this same class, in between these English-use reminders, Mr. Walker also addressed individual students and answered their questions about their assignment in Spanish nine times. Through this mixture of pedagogical practices—using

[11] A word in Spanish typically associated with peasants or rural farmers.

Spanish at times for clarity while also explicitly encouraging the use of English—Mr. Walker illustrated the tension between an English-only language ideology and a pragmatic focus on improving written student work in preparation for standardized tests that ran throughout Literacy High.

Student Perceptions of Language Policy

These multiple and contradictory language approaches to Literacy High's English-only policy did not go unnoticed by the students. Despite teachers' assertions regarding the importance of English (like those shared above), Literacy High students who spoke Spanish as a first language were quite aware of teachers' allowances for student use of Spanish. They were also aware of the advantage they had over other newcomer students at Literacy High who did not speak Spanish in being able to sit together and help each other with their work. The forms of peer help I observed included translating teachers' instructions for classmates (Allen, 1/30; Walker, 2/15; Hall, 3/13), translating unknown words in handouts and worksheets (Robinson, 2/25; Allen, 3/5), and asking the teacher questions on behalf of a classmate (Johnson, 2/27; Stewart, 3/15).

Many students who spoke Spanish as a first language depended on this peer support to do well in their classes. Esteban (3/1) specifically noted that he would often not understand or be able to finish his assignments unless his friends were able to help him and explain in Spanish. He and others admitted that many students who spoke Spanish as a first language did the same, relying on friends to translate and explain assignments in Spanish (Esteban, 3/1; Hector, 3/1; Celio, 3/10).

Students felt comfortable using this support network of fellow Spanish speakers because they could gauge the degree to which various teachers would allow Spanish to be spoken in the classroom. As Eva (2/10) noted,

> If you want to talk in English, you can, but all of your friends speak Spanish, so it's more normal to speak Spanish. They let us talk if we keep our voices down, since many don't understand what we're doing, and we can help pass on the material to others. It would be better if we all spoke English, but we don't know it, and we already know Spanish.

In an interview conducted together, Beatriz (1/29) and Dolores (1/29) noted the same trend. Beatriz stated simply, with Dolores nodding her head in agreement, "In class, they ask you to speak English, but no one does."

However, this allowance of Spanish in the classroom had its limits, as teachers were occasionally punitive in their enforcement of English-only norms. For example, at the beginning of one English class (Robinson, 2/25), Mr. Robinson asked students to work independently on a grammar handout. Students worked on their own at one of four tables, though occasionally they asked each other for help under their breath. After about 15 minutes of independent work

time, Mr. Robinson noticed two students (Celio and a friend) speaking quietly in Spanish as they completed the worksheet. This was common practice among students in Mr. Robinson's other class periods that I had observed. Mr. Robinson then chastised them in front of the class for not speaking in English and sent Celio to work at another table by himself.

After class, I approached Celio and asked him why he thought the teacher had acted that way. Celio merely shrugged and said, "Sometimes Mister does that, and I don't know why. He usually lets us speak in Spanish, but sometimes he'll yell at one of us for it, send us to the library, make us stay after. We don't know why." When I asked whether they were ever chastised or punished for speaking in Spanish, several other students (Esteban, 3/1; Hector, 3/1; Isabel, 3/22; Josefina, 3/23) said similar things had happened to them with Mr. Robinson and three other teachers. When asked why they were chastised or punished, none of these students felt they understood why they were singled out in particular instances when Spanish was so widely used by both students and teachers. In Esteban's (3/1) words, "They let us speak in Spanish until suddenly they don't. When they correct us, it is for doing the same thing they let us do the rest of the time." This seemingly arbitrary punishment for speaking in Spanish, along with the contradictory teacher practices regarding allowing use of Spanish in the classroom, led to a great deal of confusion among students in this study regarding the acceptability of speaking Spanish in the classroom.

Some students were also troubled when they thought about their lack of oral English proficiency and the prospect of returning to their neighborhood school. As Eva (2/24) stated,

> I don't feel very well-prepared to return to a normal school. I need to practice what I've learned, to put it in practice. Like knowing how to speak. I know how to write well in English, but I don't feel comfortable speaking.

Numerous other students shared similar misgivings about their transition to mainstream schools, especially displaying concern about their abilities to speak English with the same degree of proficiency as their native-speaking colleagues. For example, Ofelia (1/27) said, "I feel comfortable here. I can make mistakes, and it is okay because I am learning. But there [her neighborhood school] I do not think it is the same. I think they will expect me to know." Or as Celio (2/24) simply put it, "What if they make fun of me for trying?"

In summary, though students generally were happy to take advantage of instances when teachers would allow them to speak in Spanish in the classroom to assist them in their immediate coursework, the arbitrary enforcement of Literacy High's English-only policy and the contradictory classroom-level practices regarding use of Spanish led many students to feel confused and anxious regarding possible punishment and their relative lack of English oral proficiency.

This increased their already existent anxiety over what they perceived to be their lack of English language fluency.

Discussion

Given the multiple and conflicting approaches to language policy in Literacy High classrooms, several important questions remain: (a) What ideologies motivated teachers' different approaches; (b) how had students and teachers internalized and experienced these ideologies; (c) where did these ideologies originate, and why did they persist; and (d), more to the point, whom do these language ideologies serve?

The existence and origins of an English-only language ideology in which English is seen as the standard (Silverstein, 1996) are easily identified in the literature (as noted above), as they are the most explicitly structural in nature. Literacy High was created specifically to act as an English immersion school for students who speak other languages, with the aim of developing sufficient English language fluency among students to facilitate assimilation into their English-only neighborhood schools upon completion of the program.[12] Above and beyond this stated mission of the school itself, multiple structural pressures provided incentives for teachers to encourage acquisition of English: like all other schools in the United States after the passage of No Child Left Behind, Texas schools—like Literacy High—were required to annually assess students classified as English learners. In this case, students were assessed through the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS), an English language exam that evaluates written and oral proficiency (Texas Education Agency, 2011). All Texas teachers of English learners (including Literacy High teachers) were required by state core content standards to promote the oral proficiency of their students (Texas Education Agency, 2011). A result of these structural forces promoting the acquisition of English among newcomer student populations, as well as the status of English as the hegemonic, naturalized standard (Silverstein, 1996; see also Milroy, 2000; Schmidt, 2007), is pressure for teachers to push an English-only language ideology.

What is perhaps more interesting was the contradictory practice of allowing for use of Spanish, and even Spanish instruction, in the classroom. When asked, Mr. Robinson (2/24) noted the commonality of students speaking Spanish in class but said it was hard to avoid given the large number of Spanish speakers. Also, Mr. Walker (3/3) explained that it was hard to persuade children of the

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[12] By assimilation, I primarily refer to their ability to satisfactorily complete written work in English, as that was the primary means by which students were assessed (in both their coursework and on state standardized tests).

importance of speaking English when they are able to do everything they need to do within their own community without it. This suggests that teachers were able to see that speaking English was not something students needed to do to get by outside of school tests, so—with the exception of several students who truly desired to practice their English literacy—most were content not to do so.

One staff member stated that she felt oral proficiency in English was not being taught enough because teachers had no structural motive to push it (Allen, 3/23). Interestingly, especially given the policy structures just mentioned, most Literacy High teachers did not grade students on English speaking (beyond the inclusion of English in students' participation grade) and were not required by school administrators to do so. As a result, students' opportunity to practice English oral proficiency often lost out to items that were structurally graded and assessed, like English language writing samples and English language multiple choice questions from state tests. One administrator summed up the school's philosophy succinctly in stating that the school was focused on children passing written English tests. In her view, oral English proficiency would be supported with the eventual development of academic language, but academic language needed to remain the focus of instruction (Carter, 3/3).

Through the use of the classroom Spanish-language social networks and specific study techniques learned in previous school settings, most students found that they were able to complete their required work without gaining oral proficiency in English (Ofelia, 2/1; Hector, 3/1; Celio, 3/10). As Mr. Nelson (2/2) noted,

> In my classroom in which there's a lot of class discussion and small group work, there's a lot of necessary oral communication, but you'll see the Spanish speakers all clump together and do their work in Spanish, and then the product will be in English. … I see it in other classes, that they don't need to speak English to do well. (Nelson, 2/2)

Likewise, from these interviews, it is clear that despite Literacy High's structural mission to teach English, teachers perceived that students performed better on written work and tests when they were allowed to rely on each other using Spanish. As noted by Ms. Carter (3/3), an administrator at Literacy High, this insight led to a pragmatic acceptance of Spanish in the classroom to the degree it improved test performance:

> We all want to see our students learn English. One of the main reasons this school exists is so that our students can learn English, and we're committed to that. That said, this school doesn't exist if our students don't perform to a certain standard on state tests. They will close us down, and then these students won't have anywhere to improve their language skills. So, if letting students use their current language skills to build their new ones helps, why not?

The concern expressed here by Ms. Carter about school closures potentially triggered by standardized tests reveals the ideological source of the faculty's pragmatic acceptance of Spanish: the heavy emphasis placed on standardized test scores as an accountability mechanism in the current neoliberal U.S. educational policy climate (Giroux, 2004).

Similar faculty concern with student performance on standardized tests has been documented extensively in the extant ethnographic literature. Since the rise of the No Child Left Behind Act and its state-level, assessment-heavy predecessors in Texas (Johnson, 2009; Salinas & Reidel, 2007), a number of researchers have qualitatively documented the "intensified surveillance" (Anderson, 2001, p. 323) of teachers that such neoliberal policies (Burch, 2009) have brought with them. Others have noted the increased concern of teachers with student test performance that has accompanied state-driven emphases on test results (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; Sloan, 2006, 2008).

As noted in the comments of Ms. Allen (3/23) and Ms. Carter (3/3), within Literacy High, a curricular and pedagogical focus on test performance has resulted in less instructional time for other priorities—specifically, oral English proficiency. Previous ethnographic studies of teachers in accountability-driven schools have documented similar trends of narrowing the curriculum to focus on what is covered by standardized tests (McNeil, 2002; Smith, 1991). In one study of teachers in a Texas elementary school, Pennington (2004) found that teachers felt forced to put aside their knowledge of nuanced, culturally responsive ways to teach literacy and instead focus on that which is structurally assessed on state tests, what Kris Sloan (2007) called "test reading" and "test writing" (p. 27). This is effectively the same trend documented among the staff of Literacy High, who focused on test reading and test writing, English-language skills assessed by standardized tests at the expense of oral English fluency.

In the present study, this political ideology prioritizing standardized test performance—which was perceived by Literacy High faculty to be assisted by oral use of Spanish in the classroom—led to a school-level de facto policy of Spanish language allowance, as displayed in teachers' documented instructional behavior in this article. This de facto policy, combined with the school's stated language ideology of English-only instruction, resulted in a complicated and nuanced mixture of cross-linguistic classroom interactions that simultaneously tolerated, encouraged, and disincentivized Spanish language use. This mixture of ideological signals regarding Spanish use in the classroom led to students feeling confused, which complicated and problematized their ability to acquire the real-world English language skills for which they had ostensibly enrolled in Literacy High in the first place.

Conclusion

This study illustrates the ways in which Literacy High teachers were not only agents of enacting an English-only language ideology in the classroom but were simultaneously the enacting agents of a contradictory political ideology regarding accountability and standardized testing that indirectly promoted Spanish language use. As previous scholarship (Collins, 1998) has made clear, any particular cultural context is typified by multiple, and often opposing, language ideologies. This study builds upon this concept by noting how individual teacher actors can support and enact multiple contradictory ideologies, whether language-driven or not, due to varying contextual pressures. Though nearly a decade has passed since the data for this study were collected, Literacy High is still operational, with the same mission regarding English acquisition. Likewise, the larger neoliberal policy environment continues to shape schooling. More generally, these findings are depressingly pertinent in a contemporary educational climate in which standardized testing continues to drive teacher and administrator priorities more than the real-world language needs of recently arrived newcomer students.

Perhaps the most troubling finding of this article is the confusion experienced by students in this study as they witnessed and experienced the classroom-level contradictions created by this dynamic. In the classrooms of Literacy High, for students the choice to use Spanish or English was not always clear. Though further scholarship is necessary to shed light on what concrete consequences this type of learning environment has on students, such uncertainty regarding language use in a setting focused on language acquisition could have effects on learning outcomes, both within Literacy High and during students' later progression through the U.S. school system. It could also have effects on students' self-perceptions and identity development, as students continue to be exposed to, and potentially internalize, language ideologies which stigmatize the languages they speak at home. What stories about Spanish use are being told to these students, and how are those stories affecting their own belief systems and identity development? These questions merit further and continued consideration in education research.

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The author would like to thank Drs. Paul Kroskrity and Katie Anderson-Levitt, as well as the thoughtful and attentive staff of the Berkeley Review of Education *for their invaluable feedback on this manuscript. The author has no known conflict of interest to disclose.*

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