

Making Sense of Language

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READINGS IN CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

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CHAPTER 46

INDIVIDUAL MULTILINGUALISM

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Bilingualism en casa

Bilingualism is a special case of multilingualism, which is the norm around the world. Bilingual individuals employ two languages in subtle ways, knowing in which situations to use one language or the other. They know, when they converse with fellow bilinguals which topics, or which aspects of which topics, call for which language. This knowledge is gained at a young age, as children move from setting to setting and interact with others.

Ana Celia Zentella conducted a careful study of a Puerto Rican community in New York City, looking at patterns of language use among not only "English" and "Spanish" in a neighborhood in Spanish Harlem (East Harlem). In her book, *Growing Up Bilingual: Puerto Rican Children in New York*, from which this chapter is derived, she identified three different varieties of Spanish (Popular Puerto Rican Spanish, Standard Puerto Rican Spanish, and English-dominant Spanish) and four different varieties of English (Puerto Rican English, African American Vernacular English, Hispanized English, and Standard New York City English), as well as "Spanglish." For a period of about eighteen months, she interacted with and observed numerous families and their children, using participant observation and interviews to get to know intimately how people used language.

What is clear from the complexity of Zentella's account in this chapter is that bilinguals do not simply throw in random phrases or words from one language or another, but they must master a subtle set of patterns and rules for gauging the linguistic capacities and identities of the people with whom they converse. As in many settings where bilingualism is the result of migration, children are more learned in the language of the new society (English, in this case) than their elders are. Although their caregivers might address them in Spanish (as is common), children might respond in either Spanish or English, and they frequently speak English among themselves. Gender, level of involvement in the outside English-speaking world, type of employment, age, and many other factors are involved in people's mastery and use of various codes.

An old view of bilinguals is that they often suffered cognitive deficiency as a result of their bilingualism, but it is evident from more recent data that navigating this complex world calls for detailed social and linguistic knowledge.

It is not only impersonal rules that govern which language should be employed at any given moment but also speakers' individual preferences. Some people are directed inwardly, toward *el bloque*, whereas others spend more time and attention at activities in the English-dominant world.

Ana Celia Zentella, *Bilingualism en casa*. From *Growing Up Bilingual: Puerto Rican Children in New York*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997, pp. 56–79. Copyright © 1997 John Wiley and Sons. Reproduced with permission of Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

The term *code-switching* (also written as *codeswitching* or *code switching*) refers to the movement from one language ("code") to another, whether in different situations or even within the same sentence ("intrasentential code switches"). Scholars accounting for the switches have observed many important things about this phenomenon, including the fact that it follows precise grammatical rules and gives evidence of the speaker's attitude toward what is said.

READING QUESTIONS

- Why do some siblings differ in their linguistic preferences?
- How does gender play a role in determining which language is most likely to be used?
- What rules of politeness come into play when people are deciding which language to use with a new conversational partner?
- What educational experiences do you see described in this chapter?
- Zentella writes of Lolita's "meta-linguistic awareness." What is this? Why does she have it? How might this be channeled into academic success more broadly for other bilingual children?

A knock on the door of any of the apartments that housed the families of *el bloque* was greeted by "WHO?" or "*¿Quién es?*" ("Who is it?"), or both. The lone English interrogative was most popular, even with Spanish-dominant occupants. Children greeted me in English because they knew that I was a teacher, but they ran to call an adult in Spanish. Inside the door, residents addressed visitors predominantly in English or Spanish, in a consistent pattern. The bilingual-multidialectal repertoire of the home approximated that of the block, with some limitations: standard and non-standard Puerto Rican Spanish (SPRS/NSPRS), Hispanized English (HE), and Puerto Rican English (PRE) predominated. The vernacular of African Americans (AAVE) was heard less frequently than on the street, and no one spoke standard English consistently at home. PRS, PRE, and alternating between them, constituted the basic verbal repertoire for the four communication *dyads* at home:

1. the language(s) that caretakers spoke to each other
2. the language(s) that caretakers spoke to children
3. the language(s) that children spoke to caretakers
4. the language(s) that children spoke to each other

Theoretically, a large number of patterns was possible, since each dyad could be realized by one of nine combinations:

Span-Eng	Span-Span	Span-Both
Eng-Eng	Eng-Span	Eng-Both
Both-Eng	Both-Span	Both-Both

In practice, the 20 homes of *el bloque*'s families fell under six major language configurations (see Table 46.1).

The major patterns at home can be described as follows:

1. Caregivers spoke Spanish among themselves and addressed children in Spanish. Children answered adults in Spanish but spoke English and Spanish to each other.
2. Caregivers were fluent in both English and Spanish. They spoke both languages among themselves (except single mothers, #s 2 and 8) and to children. Children responded predominantly in English, and favored English among themselves.
3. Caregivers spoke Spanish to each other. One spoke to the children in Spanish and the other spoke Spanish and English. The children talked Spanish and English to their caregivers and among themselves.
4. All communication among caregivers and children was carried out in Spanish, but the children were too young to speak more than a few words.
5. Caregivers communicated in English with each other and the males spoke English to the children, but mothers talked to them in Spanish and English. The children in 5a in Table 46.1 spoke English to their parents and to each other, but those in 5b distinguished between their caregivers by interacting with the Anglo male in English and with the mother in Spanish and English. They talked both languages to each other.

TABLE 46.1. Language Dyads within *el bloque's* Families

Caregiver(s) to Each Other	Caregiver(s) to Child(ren)	Child(ren) to Caregiver(s)	Children to Each Other
1 Families #4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11			
Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	English and Spanish
2 Families #2, 8, 17, 18, 19			
English and Spanish	English and Spanish	English	English
3 Families #12, 13, 15			
Spanish	One = Spanish, One = Spanish and English	Spanish and English	English and Spanish
4 Families #3, 14			
Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
5a Family #16			
English	One = English One = Spanish and English	English	English
5b Family #20			
English	Anglo = English only	English to Anglo	Spanish and English
(Anglo male)	Mother, Spanish and English	Spanish and English to mother	
6a Family #6			
(mother alone)	Spanish	Spanish and English	English
6b Family #1			
(mother alone)	Spanish and English	Spanish and English	(only child)

6. The mothers were single and Spanish dominant. One mother (#6) spoke Spanish to her children but the other (#1) spoke Spanish and English to her child. Children in both families talked to their mothers in Spanish and English, but they preferred English with their siblings and/or friends.

This overview necessarily obscures many differences among and within families; ultimately there were almost as many language patterns as families because of the unique configurations of several variables, including the number of caregivers and children, and differences in language proficiency, education, bilingual literacy skills, years in the US, gender and age of each speaker. Even if every caregiver-caregiver, caregiver-child, and

child-child communication dyad were specified, other crucial input in the linguistic development of the children would be missing. The following profiles of three families, representative of categories 1, 3, and 5 in Table 46.1, respectively, bring to life the multiple, contrasting, and ever changing linguistic demands that were made on the children of *el bloque* at home.

Profile I: Paca and Herman at Home with Magda

The ideal Puerto Rican family includes at least one *parejita* ("couple"), a boy and a girl, born in that order approximately two or more years apart. Very few women wanted more than two or three children, but

some who bore only males or females continued to have children until a girl or a boy was born. Magda was fortunate; two years after she had Herman at age 20, her daughter Paca was born. In 1979, Magda was living apart from her husband, Paca was six years old and had just completed one year of half-day kindergarten in the local public school, and eight-year-old Herman had completed third grade in the same school's bilingual program. During the following year, a number of changes in their home and school lives produced contrasting language experiences which alternately strengthened their English and weakened their Spanish, and vice versa.

Paca and Herman were the only children on the first floor of the building sandwiched between one of the *bodegas* and the pinball storefront. . . . Their two-bedroom apartment was at the end of the hall—a dangerous location because their windows faced the back alley—but advantageous in other respects. They did not have to climb stairs, and all who went up or down the five flights were forced to pass their door, so they knew everyone's whereabouts. Also, children played in the hall all year long; its narrow passageway was ideal for a junior version of baseball, learning how to maneuver a bicycle, and racing battery-operated toys. No traditional Puerto Rican games were known to the children, and all play was carried on without adult participation, in English with some Spanish code switches.

The next door neighbors were elderly Spanish speakers, whom Paca and Herman greeted with short Spanish phrases. When the children were drafted to help carry groceries or strollers, those interactions occurred in Spanish and English. On errands to the *bodega*, they repeated the adult's Spanish request. The different language backgrounds of the people Paca and Herman encountered in the hall, the *bodega*, and on the street required constant code switching in accordance with the addressee's dominant language.

Because Paca and Herman had excellent access to the main areas for congregating, they spent a good deal of time with other children. In fair weather they were often outside until 9 p.m. after Magda returned from work and on weekends. Herman was allowed to go around the corner to the pizza shop, because he was older and because he was a boy, although he was supposed to ask permission to do so. As the year progressed, Herman roller skated and rode his bicycle further distances on forays away from *el bloque*. On one

occasion Paca petulantly pointed out that her brother was not restricted as she was, but her older cousin Dylcia said, "*Déjalo, él es macho*" ("Let him, he's a male"). Paca usually was with a female adult; Herman often was nowhere in sight.

Paca and Herman underwent dramatic changes in their daily routine in the course of one year. They changed apartments three times, they changed baby sitters twice, and Paca changed schools. One person remained constant—their mother Magda. Due to her efforts, their schooling proceeded with few interruptions. Their daily routine began at 7 a.m.: Magda woke, fed, and dressed them as the Spanish radio warned her of the fleeting time at five-minute intervals. Magda dropped Paca off at school on her way to her job as housekeeper for a shut-in who lived ten blocks away. Paca was picked up from school at 3 o'clock by her baby sitter, with whom she stayed until about 6 or 7 p.m. when her mother called for her. Herman walked the three blocks to another school in the morning with children from the block. He was in a bilingual class and attended an after-school program conducted in English. Magda picked him up on her way home from work at 5.30 p.m. Paca's baby sitter also looked after Herman during the summer and on all school holidays.

When the study began, the household also included Magda's 23-year-old niece Dylcia, who had migrated from Puerto Rico with her 12-month-old daughter Jennie seven months earlier. Dylcia, a high school graduate, was three months pregnant, spoke no English, and had no job or income. She helped her aunt with the chores and the children, and in turn Paca and Herman helped with Jennie. Dylcia could not be counted on as a permanent baby sitter because her future plans were up in the air. Four months later she moved into an empty apartment on the fifth floor with Luís, the college student who had introduced me to *el bloque*.

For five years, Paca and Herman were looked after by one of the block's most beloved residents, Dolores, a good-natured woman in her forties who had raised six children of her own and 13 others over a period of 20 years on the block. Dolores was credited with having nursed Paca to health after doctors had given her slim chances for survival shortly after birth. Magda trusted and loved Dolores as if she were an older sister, and she lavished the best gifts on her that her limited salary allowed. To Paca and many other children Dolores was *Mamá*. The children she helped raise dropped by

regularly and three of her former charges came from Puerto Rico to spend their summer vacation with her. During the years when she was taking care of Paca and Herman, Dolores' apartment—really two apartments with a wall broken through to connect them—was constantly full with some of the 22 members of her family who were part of *el bloque*. Participation in this setting demanded rapid alternation of Spanish and English. Paca and Herman learned the **intra-sentential code switching** that was common among the second generation, but they also got practice in speaking Spanish to Dolores.

When the city began a limited housekeeping service for indigent shut-ins, Dolores began to clean and cook for some of *El Barrio's* senior citizens, a paying job which could be performed in Spanish. Dolores had worked at home raising others' children along with her own, but she did not always charge for her services. Magda, for example, had not been able to pay her a regular salary because she could not find a steady job. She had completed three years of high school in Puerto Rico and had lived in NYC for eight years, but like Dolores, Magda had never carried on a conversation in English. Stable employment was out of her reach until the housekeeping program hired her upon Dolores' recommendation. When Dolores and Magda found jobs, Paca and Herman had to be left with a new baby sitter, one who was trustworthy, available, and nearby. One of Dolores' daughters-in-law, 20-year-old Vicky, fulfilled the prerequisites. She lived in the same building with Dolores' son, Güiso, and was known to take good care of their three-year-old boy, Eddie. Vicky was unable to work outside of the home because she was expecting another baby.

Several aspects of the new baby sitting arrangement were different. Paca and Herman were no longer immersed in an extended Spanish-English family; Vicky and Güiso, both US born, spoke English to each other and to their toddler (see Profile III). Afternoons and school vacations were spent playing with Eddie in English, watching English television programs, and singing along with the radio's English lyrics. The importance of Spanish in their lives diminished further when Dolores' long-standing application for public housing was granted, and she moved seven blocks away. Paca and Herman no longer saw her every day, although they spent some weekends with her. Eight months later, a fire set by a disturbed alcoholic left many apartments uninhabitable. Magda and her children were relocated in a

hotel across town, and then they moved three more times: to another hotel, to the father's basement apartment, and to Dolores' project apartment. Traveling was expensive, time-consuming, and painful in the cold, but they made daily trips to the block to watch over their belongings in their burned-out home. After three months, the city began to repair the building, and Magda, Paca, and Herman returned to the block. During this period of upheaval, the children missed several days of school despite Magda's strenuous efforts to get them to class every day and to get to her own job. Vicky took care of them after school. Paca became Vicky's little helper, carefully dressing and feeding the boys. She was gentle and patient with demanding Eddie, who at three years of age weighed more than Paca and tended to grab and punch a lot. Herman and Paca always spoke to the boys in English, and their English vocabulary and syntax increased notably over the year. As the school year progressed, Paca and Herman spoke more English than Spanish to each other.

After six years of predominantly Spanish-filled days, Paca participated in a full school day in English in the local Catholic school's first grade. She stayed with Vicky until Magda completed her errands after work, and did her homework under Vicky's supervision in English. When winter darkness and cold set in, Paca and Herman spent more time indoors, playing with separate groups of friends or alone, but rarely with each other. Paca went to bed by 9 P.M. but Herman stayed up late watching television in English. When his mother had visitors, he played with toys or watched television, never participating in the conversations. Dylcia dubbed him "*el rey de la casa*" ("the king of the house") because he had few responsibilities and generally determined his own schedule.

Magda's day began at 6 A.M. and often ended after midnight. After work, she shopped, cooked, swept, washed and ironed clothes. Paca and Herman always were smartly and neatly dressed in the latest fashions, which—along with baby sitting fees—ate up a good part of her salary. Her cramped two-bedroom apartment had no closets, little furniture or decorations, many leaks, cracks, and roaches, and her chores took most of her free time. She rarely sat, except to see a *novela*. She was interested in many topics, but was a quiet woman who listened more than she spoke, perhaps because of a speech impediment. Neighbors who dropped by stood in the kitchen doorway while she went on with tasks similar to the ones she did all day for an invalid.

The tiny kitchen had no table, so each child was given a plate of food and ate in the living room, often at different times. Paca was a poor eater, and received weekly injections for anemia; the refrigerator door was full of her medicines. Magda usually fed her frail daughter to make sure she ate, and those feedings included mother-daughter chats in Spanish. When visitors came, Paca often sat and listened to the women talk. Magda spent blocks of time with her children only on weekends. She never played with them, but she took them to visit Dolores or their father, and on shopping trips downtown. She also sought out organized excursions and was the only parent who ever joined my outings to zoos, beaches, puppet shows, and parks. On those trips she was constantly concerned for their welfare and safety getting on and off subways or crossing the street. She did not take on a "teacher" role, that is, expounding, explaining, comparing, or asking questions meant to instruct, and she depended on Herman to interpret for her. A good reader, he read signs, asked questions and directions, made purchases and explained procedures to his mother. Magda was left out of the conversation when the children competed for my hand and attention with constant questions in English. Whenever Paca and Herman played with other children, they spoke in English, and she did not understand what they were talking about. They spoke Spanish only when addressing her, usually for short comments or requests. Magda was a concerned, responsible, and hardworking mother whose Spanish monolingualism left her at the periphery of most of her children's activities; she was more a provider and a watchdog than a participant.

Magda chose Catholic school for her daughter because Herman had been in several fights in the public school, and after looking into [the incidents] she characterized the school as lacking in discipline. Fearing that the diminutive Paca would not be well protected there, she sacrificed to pay for Catholic school. Paca cried often during the first three weeks in her English-only classroom, and said she had no friends there. By October she seemed to have adjusted, although Catholic school did not turn out to be a totally safe environment. There were schoolyard incidents in which others took advantage of her slight build, but she defended herself and claimed victory in at least one instance. Those narratives were vividly reported in Spanish to her mother and in English to her playmates. She was getting so accustomed to English that she even called

to her mother in English one day, asking her to corroborate her age; "I'm six [said five times], Mami, right I'm six?" No one commented on the fact that Paca had addressed her mother in English, and I never heard her do it again.

The nuns sent Paca home with a preliminary progress report which indicated she was about average in most areas, although she had not kept up with all homework assignments. The report became the only wall adornment in the apartment; it was taped near the entrance and visitors commented on it. Paca's given name was written at the top—Ivón. A few months later Paca said she preferred Yvonne /ivan/, i.e., the English spelling and pronunciation. On the block, everyone continued to call her by her nickname, Paca, with its Spanish pronunciation. Once a friend jokingly used exaggerated English phonology (/pha:kha:/); Paca looked amazed and repeated it in a disbelieving tone. Still, she continued to prefer the English /ivan/ over the Spanish /ibon/, just like her friends Lolita, Isabel, Blanca, and Elli preferred the English pronunciations of their names. Toward the end of the year Paca also commented on Puerto Rican nicknames: "*¿Por qué la gente en español tiene funny names?*" ("Why do people in Spanish have funny names?"). Her code switching was increasing along with her awareness of dominant cultural norms, and her distancing from those of the home culture. During the first months of taping, Paca rated herself a better Spanish than English speaker, "or both a little." She used to greet me and other bilingual adults in Spanish, and adhered to the community norm by responding in Spanish if she was addressed in it. By the summer of the following year, she greeted us in English and she did not always switch to Spanish if it was directed at her, unless the addressee was a monolingual Spanish speaker.

A house guest from Puerto Rico, Magda's sister, offset the English avalanche. The older woman often played with her young niece, and she was an articulate speaker with captivating narratives about family incidents and superstitions in their home town. Paca was an eager listener, and she asked about topics or words unknown to her, for example, "*¿Qué son 'leyendas'?*" ("What are 'legends'?"), "*¿Qué es 'cariño'?*" ("What is 'affection'?"), and "*¿Qué es 'relación'?*" ("What is 'relationship'?"). Paca made developmental errors, for example, "*juegaba*" and "*sueñé*" instead of *jugaba* ("I used to play") and *soñé* ("I dreamt"), which went uncorrected. A few of her errors caused laughter, for

example when Magda told the group: "*A Herman le gusta más Puerto Rico porque quiere que le compre un caballo.*" ("Herman likes Puerto Rico better because he wants me to buy him a horse"), Paca piped up with: "*Uy mami! ¿Tú me puedes comprar una caballa?*" ("Oh mommy! Can you buy me a horse-feminine?") Her aunt laughingly commented "*porque es femenina*" ("because it's/she's? feminine"), but no one explained the joke to Paca, and she did not ask why everyone had laughed.

When Paca sat in on the conversations of her Spanish-speaking elders, she behaved according to appropriate Puerto Rican norms for children. She did not break into the conversation precipitously, often waiting up to six turns, tentatively attempting to speak at turn exchange points with "*y-y-y*" ("and-and-and"), softly calling the names of the speakers, and asking permission, e.g., "*con permiso*" ("excuse me"). Despite her increasing preference for English with me, Paca honored the language of adult Spanish conversations by addressing me in Spanish when she intended to participate in such a discussion. Switching languages for parts of sentences was rare in either her Spanish or English contributions in that setting. Her short exchanges in English either were not related to the adult topic or were asides meant specifically for someone who was English-dominant.

Paca's turn-taking behavior and the pitch of her voice during the Spanish discussions contrasted sharply with her English contributions in group settings. The latter were often high-pitched or shrill, and competitive; she interrupted others in a loud demanding tone. Since most of the English conversations in which she participated were with children (because she was not exposed to similar gatherings of monolingual English-speaking adults), we can assume that her more aggressive linguistic behavior in English was a function of what Philips (1972) called the "participant structures," that is, Paca learned that interacting with female adults required not only Spanish but certain respectful behaviors regarding the way Spanish was spoken, but she talked with peers in English and in a more contentious manner.

Herman always referred to himself with the English version of his name and spoke more fluent English than Paca, but he too had the opportunity to strengthen his command of Spanish during 1979–80. He was in a bilingual class, and he had Spanish monolingual friends for a while when three boys emigrated from Puerto Rico, with

whom he communicated easily. After four months, however, two of the families returned to Puerto Rico, and the father of the remaining boy severely curtailed his son's activities. Herman resumed hanging out with long-time block residents who spoke more English than Spanish. By the end of the year, Herman, like Paca but even more so, initiated Spanish and responded in it only when he had to talk with a diminishing number of Spanish monolinguals. Nevertheless, Herman's mother was proud of the fact that he could read and write Spanish and English, skills learned in the bilingual program. He read the Spanish newspapers and cards and letters that arrived from Puerto Rico. His English reading ability was at grade level in school, and he read comic books, game instructions, subway signs, and Monopoly Community Chest cards with ease. Herman himself claimed he spoke both languages equally well, and this appeared to be the case; he was a more balanced bilingual than Paca. After observing them for two years, I thought that both Herman and Paca would grow up to be English-dominant bilinguals, but that Paca's skills in Spanish would be better than Herman's as he became more disconnected from the family and *el bloque* and Paca became more immersed in the Spanish-dominant female networks. . . .

No Spanish-speaking adult ever stopped Herman and Paca from speaking English to each other, and only rarely did they ask for translations of what was said in that language. The implicit rule seemed to be that if the children had anything to say that concerned the adults, they would say it in Spanish. English was another "channel" for children and their activities. This acceptance of English at home contradicted Magda's response to a question concerning the appropriate domains for Spanish and English. When she was asked whether there were any times or places when the children should speak only Spanish or only English, she answered that they should speak Spanish at home and English outside whenever there was anyone around who did not understand Spanish. In fact, Magda never insisted that the children speak only Spanish at home, but they were expected to speak it to her and to their relatives from Puerto Rico. Most of the parents expressed a greater concern for accommodating English speakers who could not understand Spanish than for accommodating Spanish monolinguals. This imbalance may be interpreted as an indication that the need to speak Spanish was a given, especially *en casa*, but the repeated concern for the predicament of English monolinguals pointed to the symbolic dominance exerted

by English. It paralleled the frequent refrain that "It is important to know English" or "Everybody should know English"; similar expressions about the importance of knowing Spanish were rarer. Paca's family spoke positively about being bilingual, but they referred to it in terms of adding English to one's linguistic repertoire, not in terms of adding Spanish.

Profile II: Lolita and Marta at Home with Armando and Lourdes

Lolita, eight years old, was born and raised on the block and lived with her 16-year-old sister Marta, her mother Lourdes (36), and her father Armando (40). Armando had lived there for several years before his 17-year marriage and was one of the best-known members of the community. He was a high school graduate, had some college credits, had been an army officer, and was a skilled electrician, but because of the massive layoffs that occurred when the city almost declared bankruptcy in the mid-seventies, he had been unemployed for four years when we met. His problems with alcohol worsened as the years went by. Armando spent most of his time with Spanish-speaking men in the *bodega* network, but he was fluent in English and was the only block resident who spoke of extensive contacts with Black residents of the projects across the street.¹

Lolita's father was recognized as a good speaker of standard Spanish and he held strong opinions about language; for example, he was very vocal about the value of being bilingual: "*Son dos personas en una.*" ("They are two people in one.") His pride in his own fluency in both languages, and that of his children, was stated often. Armando reproached Puerto Ricans for a lack of linguistic ability and language consciousness, claiming that Puerto Ricans did not speak real Spanish ("*el español verdadero*"), and that they did not prepare for tomorrow's world. He laid special blame at the feet of Puerto Rican parents; if their children did not speak Spanish, parents should stress it: "*Los padres no hacen énfasis.*" ("The parents don't emphasize it.") Armando reported that he required Spanish at home, and that he corrected his daughters often. As for the disparity in the girls' abilities ("*Marta mata el español, ésta no. Esta lo lee, lo escribe, todo bien.*" . . . "Marta kills Spanish, but not this one [Lolita]. She reads it, writes it, all well."), he credited the difference to school programs. Lolita

had learned her skills in three years of bilingual classes, but Marta had never been in a bilingual program and was now in a public high school outside of *El Barrio*. She spent her free time off the block, and her language abilities and preferences reflected her position outward, toward the external, English-dominant, world. Lolita's activities and networks were confined to *el bloque*.

Armando exerted a tight rein on his daughters' movements and behavior. Lolita requested his permission to go anywhere, visit anyone, do anything—even to put on the television in the morning if he was listening to a Spanish radio station. She was on constant alert for his distinctive whistle; it meant that she had to leave whatever she was doing and run to his side. When she spoke in his presence, her father corrected her for how she carried herself more than for what she said. He was concerned about her posture ("*Párate bien.*" . . . "Stand up right."), her mouth ("*Cierra la boca.*" . . . "Close your mouth."), her attentiveness ("*Te están hablando.*" . . . "They're talking to you."), and her grimaces ("*Los monos están en el circo.*" . . . "Monkeys are in the zoo."). In contrast, he did not correct her when she alternated Spanish and English ten times in one half-hour tape, although Marta reported that her father disapproved of code switching and insisted that she speak one language or the other.

In his own speech, Armando usually kept both codes strictly apart despite frequent switching for **interlocutors** who spoke Spanish or English. Only three intra-sentential code switches by him were recorded throughout the study—all directed at his daughters:

1. Tú share *con los demás*. ("You share with the rest.")
2. *Tráeme un flashlight*. ("Bring me a flashlight.")
3. *No me gusta ese* neighborhood. ("I don't like that neighborhood.")

In these sentences the switches to English were for single words, not the larger constituents or whole phrases that characterized the switching of the second generation [see Zentella (1997), Chapter 5, Honoring the Syntactic Hierarchy]. Armando usually spoke to his children in standard Spanish, but he addressed them in English too. The girls heard their father speak English most often when he talked with the Anglo male who lived on the block.

The girls spent less time with their virtually monolingual mother because of her long day, first at a factory in New Jersey and then at beauty school in the Bronx. A baby sitter picked Lolita up after school and took her to the block where she played within earshot of her father until her mother returned. In cold weather, Lolita went home with the baby sitter and played with her daughter in English, but she spoke Spanish with the child's mother, as she normally did with her own mother.

Lourdes had remained Spanish-dominant despite having lived for 17 years in NYC because her daily activities did not provide opportunities to participate in English conversations. She knew enough English to buy what she needed, as recordings of two exchanges with monolingual English-speaking merchants revealed, but otherwise she never initiated speaking it on her own. Unlike her husband, she had never been in a job or a classroom that developed her proficiency and her self-confidence in English. For the previous 14 years, her factory job in New Jersey, where her co-workers were Spanish speakers, required her to leave the block before 7 A.M. and return at 5.30 P.M. Three nights a week and on Saturdays she travelled to a Beautician's Academy in the Bronx where classes were conducted in Spanish. Her time on the block was spent cooking, washing clothes, and shopping for food, clothes, and school supplies for the girls. She was a quiet person and rarely had time for standing around with the other women, but they all expressed admiration for her as a hard worker, a loyal wife, and a devoted mother. Everyone could see that Lourdes' relationship with her children was close and warm, despite the fact that her obligations restricted her time with them.

Lourdes, like her husband, produced a few examples of the community-wide practice of code switching:

1. *¿Costó* dollar seventy two? ("It cost dollar seventy two?")
2. *Allí*, across the street. ("Over there, across the street.")

Switches by Spanish-dominant but long-term residents of *el bloque* like Lourdes and Armando reflected the influence that constant interaction with code-switching children had on their parents' language behavior.

Lolita and Marta spoke to their mother in Spanish, often followed up with English. [However], Lolita and her mother communicated in Spanish on occasion, but

they were more likely to engage in non-reciprocal language dyads. Lolita understood everything her mother said in Spanish and Lourdes understood what her daughters said in English, but each preferred to respond in her stronger language. Lourdes did not insist that the girls speak to her in Spanish; she concentrated on the content instead of the form of their messages. In contrast to her husband, she never held forth on the importance of Spanish, but she was a more consistent source of uninterrupted Spanish in their lives than he was. Also, because of her close ties to her siblings and mother in Puerto Rico and the fact that she was the one who accompanied the girls on visits to the island, Lourdes embodied her children's most intense link between Spanish and Puerto Rico. That connection did not necessarily translate into an overt expression of Puerto Rican identity for Lolita and Marta when they were young.

Lolita's very first words to me reflected the identity conflict faced by second and third generation Puerto Ricans that has been the subject of some research and much debate (Seda Bonilla 1975; Fitzpatrick 1971). When I told Armando (with Lolita at his side) that I was interested in observing his daughters and other children in order "to understand how Puerto Rican children learn to speak two languages," Lolita's reaction was, "But I'm not Puerto Rican, I'm American." Her statement reflected the popular notion that Puerto Ricans are those born on the island of Puerto Rico, but those born in the United States are "Americans." Lolita identified herself as a US American, but her environment and behavior, linguistic and otherwise, would not have been deemed characteristic of the "typical American child" by anyone who subscribed to the "Leave It to Beaver" or "Family Ties" television models. The extent to which Lolita was representative of eight-year-old, island-born-and-raised Puerto Rican girls cannot be ascertained because of the lack of contemporary ethnographies of children's socialization in Puerto Rico. I once visited with Lolita and her cousins in Puerto Rico and did not note any dramatic differences, but prolonged observation undoubtedly would have revealed behaviors in addition to language that distinguished her from her island cousins. Lolita was, after all, a product of both worlds—her parents' Puerto Rico and her *bloque* in NYC—and both were reflected in her ways of speaking and everyday activities.

Lolita was attractive, outgoing, bright, talented, and respectful, and she was selected for activities

which marked her as special both in and out of school and which expanded her bilingual/multidialectal repertoire. Her third grade bilingual class at the local public school was labeled IGC—for Intellectually Gifted Children. A prestigious African American dance company had selected her for its weekly classes, and Lolita's petite frame was also in the front line of her school's baton twirling troupe. Her tiny stature and her dependence on her parents made her seem younger than her years. Still, she was not anemic like Paca, and she danced, sang, and partook in many physical games. Her linguistic abilities were among her principal accomplishments; she was proud of and confident in her ability to speak, read, and write both English and Spanish. My observations and taping corroborated that she was adept at the following:

1. switching rapidly from one language to another;
2. describing the language dyads in all the block families, that is, she knew who spoke what to whom;
3. determining whether a stranger was bilingual or not;
4. correcting the English and Spanish of peers;
5. knowing the linguistic limitations of others and translating to meet them;
6. meeting a variety of reading and writing demands for herself and her friends;
7. combining the **morphological** and **phonological** systems of both languages for comic effect.

Lolita, a quick and accurate judge of the linguistic abilities of those who addressed her, generally accommodated others by speaking to them in their dominant language, especially if their English was noticeably weak. She spoke Spanish to her father's friends, the older women, and the infant children of Spanish-dominant parents. Conversations with her sister, peers, the block teenagers, and the infant children of English-oriented parents, were in English. The ability to shift from one language to the other developed as a natural consequence of constant interaction with members of different networks, which demanded rapid alternation between English and Spanish, as in the following episode:

[Context: Lolita (L) was in the *bodega* with another eight-year-old, Corinne (C), who barely spoke and understood Spanish. The

two-year-old daughter of a recent migrant, Jennie (J), followed them into the store. The *bodeguero* (B) belonged to her father's network of Spanish-dominant men.]

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| C to L: | Buy those. |
| L to C: | No, I buy those better. |
| L to <i>bodeguero</i> : | <i>Toma la quora.</i> ("Take the quarter.") |
| L to C: | What's she doing here?
[referring to Jennie] |
| L to J: | <i>Vete pa(-ra) dentro.</i> ("Go inside.") |

The three switches in rapid succession in this excerpt accommodated the linguistic abilities of three different addressees. Lolita spoke to her nearly monolingual English friend in English, to the Spanish-dominant male in Spanish, and to the child of a recent immigrant in Spanish. Her control of the pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary of each segment was native, that is, she sounded like a native PRS speaker in Spanish and like a native PRE speaker in English. Switching without hesitation from one language to another when they interacted with members of different networks became a mark of in-group community membership. Ultimately, the switches were not limited to accommodating addressees who had distinct levels of linguistic proficiency; bilinguals switched with other bilinguals in the same conversation or sentence to accomplish a variety of discourse strategies [see Zentella (1997), Chapter 5, *Conversational Strategies*]. Toddlers like Jennie who were exposed to this bilingual style from infancy could be expected to acquire the same ability.

Lolita knew what every member of *el bloque* spoke because she had been a part of it all her life, but she also deduced which language newcomers were most comfortable with. Like a "junior ethnographer" (Fantini 1985), she determined how to address them guided by three observables:

1. Physical features: Spanish for Latinos and English for others.
2. Gender: Spanish for women and English for men.
3. Age: Spanish for infants and the elderly, English for others.

Because these factors determined who spoke what to whom on the block, all older Latinas were expected to

speak Spanish, and young African American or Anglo-looking men were expected to know English.

Lolita seemed incredulous of those for whom this process of deduction was not second nature. Doris, a nine-year-old who, like Lolita, was born and raised in *el bloque*, listened to my description, in English, of my interest in bilingual children and asked:

- D to ACZ: You talk two languages?
 L to D: Of course she does!
 D to L: Some people don't. [said defensively]
 L to D: I know, like this girl in my class. . .

Whereas Doris hesitated to assume that I was bilingual, Lolita was surprised that Doris could not tell that I spoke Spanish—given my gender, looks, and age—just as she was surprised that a Puerto Rican classmate of hers, in a bilingual class, was not bilingual. Lolita was very sure of herself, albeit not very clear, when she told me another way she could tell if someone was not bilingual:

- ACZ: How do you know if somebody doesn't talk two languages?
 L: By the looks sometimes.
 ACZ: How come?
 L: Because sometimes English people don't look like they were um—like if they were too glad to talk—if they wasn't glad—if they ain't glad because they won't talk Spanish. That's one way. And every time we go to Spanish in class, they say that Spanish is cancelled. And everybody says "Yaaa, that's good!" because they don't like Spanish.
 ACZ: Who?
 L: The children in my class. And my teacher says that you should be proud because like that if you go to Puerto Rico and you don't know Spanish you won't be able to talk their language, and to other places.
 ACZ: How come the children don't like it?
 L: Because they got mean teachers. I got Ms.—, she's meean! She pulls hair, and pulls ears too.

Despite Lolita's difficulty with the verb ("if they were too glad," "if they wasn't glad," "if they ain't glad"), her first point is that "English people" do not like to be

addressed in Spanish. Her second point is that the other third graders in her bilingual class did not enjoy Spanish, presumably because of the teacher's harsh methods. She went on, however, to disassociate herself from their negative attitudes: "But I like Spanish because sometimes she tells us stories, about what she used to do in Cuba."

Lolita not only reported on the attitudes of schoolmates toward English and Spanish, she also described the abilities and attitudes of most of the members of *el bloque*. While Paca was mulling over what language she spoke to whom, Lolita anticipated her answers and, in one instance, corrected her:

- ACZ to Paca: ¿Qué me hablas a mí? ("What do you speak to me?")
 P to ACZ: To you? In Spanish.
 L to P: And in English.
 P to L: No, in Spanish.
 L to P: You just spoke to her in English!

Lolita's **meta-linguistic awareness**, which exceeded that of her friends, was heightened by her father's preoccupation with language standards and her participation in a bilingual class; both made explicit references to language and bilingualism that she adopted.

Lolita had a special mentor-like relationship with her two closest friends, and language caregiving was part of it. She spent most of her time with Isabel, who was her age but who had been left back and spoke both languages with non-standard and unique forms [see Zentella (1997), Chapter 6, Standards, Constraints, and Transfers]. Lolita often translated for Isabel; she tended to interpret anybody's "What?" or questioning look in response to a statement by Isabel as a request for a translation. She helped Isabel with her homework, and took over most of her reading and writing tasks. When I gave each child some pictures of our trip to the zoo and suggested they write the date and comments on the back, Lolita realized that Isabel was not up to the task. Immediately, she offered to write whatever Isabel wanted to say on another paper, from which Isabel could copy onto her pictures. Isabel spoke, Lolita wrote down, and Isabel copied: "It was fun. We saw lots of animals. Ana was the one who took me." For Valentine's Day, Isabel's valentine to a friend was written with Lolita's help. In March, Isabel's birthday party invitations were filled in by Lolita and another girl; Isabel signed them. When we play-acted a visit to the

doctor, Lolita wrote out the diagnosis ("ulcers"), the prescription ("mylanta"), and the appointment slips for "Dr. Isabel." She added a note from "Walfar" [Welfare] for me, the patient: "Ana is too poor to pay. So don't acks for money." It was unclear whether Isabel's literacy was aided by her friend's efforts as much as Lolita's own literacy was.

Lolita's translations for Isabel were most often from English into Spanish, while Corinne required translations from Spanish into English. For example, Lolita translated the quoted price of a mango for Corinne because "sometimes she doesn't understand numbers." In deference to Corinne's limitations, Lolita's code switching was curtailed whenever Corinne joined the otherwise bilingual group of children. In contrast, Lolita was more likely to initiate Spanish with Isabel; for example, in one tape, the only Spanish utterance she initiated (total $n = 169$) was directed at Isabel. It took the form of a solicitous "*¿No quieres?*" ("Don't you want any?") after Isabel turned down her offer of candy, made in English. Switching to Spanish for the purpose of mothering exemplified one of the role-changing strategies that the children accomplished by alternating languages with the same speaker [see Zentella (1997), Chapter 5, Footing].

Lolita met school and community literacy demands in both languages confidently. She beamed when she reported a fifth grade reading score in Spanish at the end of the third grade, and 3.9 in English. On the block, she read everything that came her way, including record album covers, greeting cards, advertisements, and prayer cards in Spanish, and joke books, birthday invitations, game instructions, report cards, product labels in English. On one occasion she switched **phonology** with ease when she read a bilingual announcement aloud despite words such as "hospital," which often trip up bilingual readers because they are spelled alike in English and Spanish but pronounced differently.

Never hesitant about writing in either language, Lolita frequently asked for paper and pencil when she wanted to entertain herself, and she took on little writing projects such as labeling my tapes with the date, time, and names of speakers. On Christmas and Valentine's Day she made her own impromptu cards, and she wrote out my *bloque* Christmas card list including name, address, and apartment number of each family. Occasions to write Spanish arose less frequently, but they presented no problems when they did. When I described—in Spanish—the pattern for a blouse with

the aid of folded pieces of paper, Lolita wrote *manga* ("sleeve"), *frente* ("front"), and *espalda* ("back") on the papers with no help.

Lolita was the only child in the study who played with Spanish and English for special effects. She comically exaggerated a request that her friends not grab a package of candy she was about to open by imitating a US American speaking Spanish: "No touch-ey, Es-pear-uh-tay" (*No toque. Espérate. "Don't touch. Wait."*). On another occasion, she demonstrated that she was attuned to the role of Spanish phonology in expressing politeness. The *bodeguero* made an elaborate gesture to take Lolita's money for a purchase, and carefully enunciated "*GraciaS*" ("Thank you"). In keeping with his exaggerated formality—obvious because of his emphasis on the syllable-final -s—Lolita's response was "*De nadaS*," that is, she added and stressed a final -s in a phrase that does not have one (*De nada. "You're welcome."*). Puerto Rican jokes often derive their humor from the same **hypercorrection** that Lolita captured with "*de nadaS*"; the juxtaposition of formal and informal styles for comic effect is part of every native speaker's knowledge of the sociolinguistic rules of his/her language.

It appeared that Lolita would continue to develop her proficiency in English and Spanish for several reasons. She was promoted to the fourth grade bilingual class for gifted children and looked forward to three more years in a school with many bilingual teachers and pupils, she spent two weeks in Puerto Rico after six years of not visiting and her family planned to return on a yearly basis, and life on the block continued to require both languages. By the end of 1980, however, her future bilingual development was in question. Lolita's mother astonished *el bloque* by leaving her husband unexpectedly. Lolita left *El Barrio*, its bilingual school, and her lifelong friends, and she was not allowed to reveal her new address or have visitors. Her new neighborhood, school, friends, and baby sitter were predominantly English-speaking. Asked whether her ability in Spanish was Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor, she chose Fair; 15 months earlier she had rated it as Good. . . .

Profile III: Eddie and Davey at Home with Vicky and Güiso

Vicky and Güiso, both 20 years old, were the youngest couple with children. They had lived together for four years and had two boys: three-year-old Eddie, and

Davey, born three months into the study. Güiso said he wanted to have two more children but Vicky was reluctant, although both of them longed for a girl. Each came from a large family: Vicky was one of five children and Güiso had one older brother and four younger sisters, all of whom had been born in *el bloque* and had never been to Puerto Rico. Until his mother Dolores moved to the projects and a fire forced out two married sisters, most of Güiso's family lived in his building. Even after the fire, he could count on various kin among his neighbors, and whenever his mother or his sisters visited, the clan gathered in his apartment. These gatherings were characterized by conversations that alternated rapidly between English and Spanish, especially among the younger women. One sister accurately observed that the girls often spoke Spanish to each other and to their mother, but that the boys "stuck to English."

Güiso spoke English to all his siblings; when he spoke to his mother, he struggled with his limited Spanish. Dolores gave this version of her son's attempt to explain what he would do if he were to have a third child and it did not turn out to be a girl:

Me estaba hablando en español. El habla mucho español pero algunas palabras se le—que él cogía una nena y que la adoptaba. Ve, entonces cuando me dijo así, que si iba a tener otro nene, otro, y si le salía nene cogía "girls y lo adopt," tú sabe(-s), eso me lo metió en inglés.

("He was talking to me in Spanish. He talks a lot of Spanish but some words [escape] him—that he would take a little girl and adopt her. See, when he told me that, that if he was going to have another baby, another, and if it came out a little boy he was going to get 'girls and adopt it [masculine singular],' you know, that part he stuck in in English.")

Güiso was insecure about his Spanish, and reported that as a child he stuttered and "wouldn't talk at all." It is unclear to what extent his problems were normal, or whether they contributed to the acting-out behavior that led to his removal from the fourth grade. After a few years in one of the notorious 600 schools for discipline problems, he dropped out when he was 15.

In addition to extended family, Güiso had lifelong friends on the block, especially among the young dudes who whiled away most summer evenings and winter

weekends discussing and playing sports, drinking, and listening to *salsa* music until the wee hours. Güiso's newfound sense of responsibility as a father did not allow him to "break night" anymore, but he still socialized with his *panas* ("buddies") for long hours. Their conversations were always in English—either PRE or AAVE.

Ironically, Güiso rated himself a poor speaker of Spanish but it was his ability to speak Spanish that landed him his job, guarding the wares at a local Korean-owned market and serving as interpreter. The job helped reinforce positive attitudes nurtured as an adolescent when he had longed to "rap to the beautiful Spanish-speaking girls," mainly recent immigrants. As an adult, he defended the benefits of bilingualism to his African American friends: "This is a Spanish-speaking community, you need both." Güiso and Vicky, both dark-skinned Puerto Ricans, identified with the racial concerns of their African American friends, but they identified with Puerto Ricans culturally. Consequently, Güiso was trying to learn to speak better Spanish, and he practiced reading bilingual advertisements and palm cards. Despite proclaiming that his children would be bilingual and that "it's up to the parents," all of his conversations with his wife and children were in English.

Vicky shared Güiso's confidence in their children's bilingual future, but she too helped maintain the English-speaking atmosphere of their household. Her television was always on English channels, as was her radio. She spoke English to Güiso, the old girl friends who visited, her two sons, and her baby sitting charges. Vicky reported that she spoke Spanish to the children most often when she was angry, and observations bore her out. Most of her Spanish comments to the children were commands or threats that followed the English version and served to underscore them, as in the following example:

V to Eddie: See that chair over there, go squash your seat in it. Go sit down, go.
¡Deja eso y sién-ta-te!
("Leave that and sit down!")

Most often she addressed her sons in English only.

Outside her home, Vicky had many occasions to speak Spanish, for example, when she picked up or dropped off Paca, when she visited Güiso's mother, aunt, or cousin, when she stopped to chat on the stoop with the first-generation women, or when she made a

new friend of a recent arrival from Puerto Rico. Vicky's first language as a child had been Spanish, but she had learned English quickly from her brothers and sisters because she was the youngest of the brood. She still spoke Spanish to her parents, but English to her brothers and sisters. Unlike her husband, she had close relationships with several Spanish monolinguals, including two of her seven *comadres*. As a result, although Vicky's Spanish included non-standard forms and she asked help for unknown words, she was a much more confident Spanish speaker than Güiso. But she could not read or write Spanish because she had dropped out of school at 16 and had never had a job that required literacy skills in any language. A year after we met, she replaced her husband at the vegetable stand while he recuperated from a lingering foot ailment; that job increased her oral proficiency in Spanish, but made few demands on literacy in Spanish or English.

With their father in charge, Eddie and Davey heard almost no Spanish at home, and very little was directed to them outside of their home; everyone on the block knew them to be English speakers. Nonetheless, their parents overrated the children's language abilities and were optimistic about their future as bilinguals. Vicky was counting on the school's bilingual program, unaware that its classes were off limits to English monolinguals. Her claim that Eddie understood Spanish and that he spoke to Güiso's aunts and mother in Spanish conflicted with my observations: I never heard him speak it and he looked blank whenever someone addressed him in Spanish. In fact, much of what Eddie spoke was garbled until he was four years old. Paca translated for Eddie when she understood him. Vicky did not express alarm over her son's speech, perhaps because of her own pronounced lisp and her husband's similar language history, but her concern surfaced in her unwillingness to interfere in his choice of language. She was the only parent who felt that there were no situations which should require that her child speak only English or only Spanish:

"It's really up to him. I can't tell him just speak to this person in Spanish, this person in English. That's really up to him. The language that he understands best, that's the one he should speak."

Vicky and Güiso were the first of *el bloque's* parents to favor English at home with each other and their

children, although they voiced a strong belief in the importance of being bilingual and were convinced that their children would be able to speak, read, and write both Spanish and English. Because the principal settings, social networks, and activities in which the children participated were dominated by English, their parents' aspirations seemed unrealistic. Still, it was possible that the boys' lives might change in ways that would bring them into closer contact with Spanish monolinguals, or otherwise expand their limited knowledge of Spanish. That, after all, had been the case with their parents, whose ability to speak Spanish strengthened as they took on parental roles and jobs in *El Barrio*. . . .

Conclusion

The larger socio-political context in which bilingualism *en casa* was enmeshed pitted the children's strong, intimate links with Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans, and Spanish-speaking elders against the ever expanding and authority-laden role of English. Given the "symbolic domination" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) of English, English became the language not only of the children's channel, it also seeped into their parents' formerly monolingual Spanish channel. Together, old and new generations forged a joint way of speaking that "spoke to" the experiences of both. Like the push-pull forces that propel the NYC-Puerto Rico circulatory migration pattern, the increasing power of English in the homes of *el bloque* is a statement about the economic, social, and political forces propelling children towards English.

At the beginning of the 1980s, *el bloque* was between stages five and six on Fishman's (1991) eight-level measure of community **language shift**, the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), and there were signs that it was moving in the direction of greater **language loss** (at GIDS eight, only a few old speakers are left). Principal among these were the reluctance of parents to insist that they be addressed in Spanish, and the widespread use of English in all children's activities. Even when second-generation parents resurrected their childhood Spanish via participation in adult networks, they used it more for communicating with their elders than with their siblings or children. If Fishman (1991: 91) is right that, for **language maintenance**, nothing "can substitute for the re-establishment of young

families of child-bearing age in which Xish [Spanish in this case] is the normal medium or co-medium of communication and/or of other culturally appropriate home, family, neighborhood, and community intergenerational vernacular activity," then the likelihood of maintaining Spanish beyond the second generation in the NYPR community looks bleak. Ethnography provided a complex portrait of the factors that made parents and children favor English or Spanish.

In *el bloque*, six principal communication patterns existed among the 20 families with children; they differed in terms of the language(s) that parents spoke to each other, the language(s) parents spoke to children and vice versa, and the language(s) children spoke among themselves. The presence of Spanish was related to the migration history of the caretakers, as follows:

1. In the majority of families (12/20 in Table 46.1), children heard their parents speak Spanish at home to each other and were always spoken to in Spanish by at least one parent. Those parents had migrated to the United States after spending their youth, including early adolescence, in Puerto Rico.
2. When one or more parents was Puerto Rican born but had migrated before late adolescence, Spanish and English were alternated in the home. This occurred in six families which included 14 children.
3. English was the predominant language among parents and children in two families, with two children each: in one there was an Anglo male who could not speak Spanish and in the other both parents, Vicky and Güiso, had been born and raised in *El Barrio* and had never been to Puerto Rico.

Children's English increased in proportion to the amount of English understood and spoken by their parents. Parents who had migrated to the US as adolescents or young adults continued to speak to their siblings in Spanish. This held true even for sisters and brothers who had lived more years in NYC than in Puerto Rico, so that many of those who had arrived at 14 and 16 years old still spoke Spanish to each other at 42 and 44, at 62 and 64. When they spoke to their children, however, some used English and those who did not allowed their children to respond in English as they came to understand it more. As a result, children's

comprehension skills in Spanish and parents' comprehension skills in English outdistanced their ability to speak, read, or write their second language. Every adult knew some survival English, but there was already one child who did not understand enough Spanish to participate fully in the life of the community.

Schooling was the most important promoter of English dominance, whether children were in an all-English class or in a bilingual program. After one year in school, young children spoke to each other increasingly in English, even when their primary caretakers had not made any visible improvement in their knowledge of English. The children in bilingual programs had one major advantage: they were the only ones who learned to read and write in Spanish as well as English, skills that were valued and useful in the community.

Despite the impact of family migration histories and schooling, children from the same type of background could differ markedly in their ability to speak, read, and/or write Spanish or English. Some visited Puerto Rico more frequently or for longer stays than others, some were enrolled in a bilingual program or in an English-only class, some were allowed to spend many hours out on the block whereas others were confined to their apartment and female networks, some identified more with African Americans than with Puerto Ricans, some participated in religious activities that required literacy in English or Spanish, etc. As the profiles of three families proved, specifying the language dyads, or who speaks what to whom in each family, as listed in Table 46.1, provides a limited view of children's linguistic input. *El bloque's* children were not raised behind closed doors in nuclear families isolated from their neighbors. It is incorrect to assume that children with monolingual Spanish parents did not speak English with adults, or that those whose parents spoke only English heard no Spanish conversations. The presence of overlapping networks guaranteed constant visiting, sharing, and exposure to both languages. Children could emerge from any number of apartment doors, behind which they might have been taking part in English, Spanish, or Spanish and English conversations.

More than anything else in their lives, the frequent interspersal of sentences and words from both languages was the primary symbol of membership in *el bloque* and reflected the children's dual cultural identification. . . .

Note

1. Only "Black" was heard in the community; I use "African American" when I am not quoting community members.

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Critical Thinking and Application

- Why does Zentella focus on families rather than individuals? How are linguistic practices learned by a researcher?
- Zentella herself is bilingual, having grown up in a New York Puerto Rican community. Do you think that a person without this membership could have learned what she did? Why or why not? She writes that being a member of the group under investigation brings with it both assets and liabilities. What kinds of liabilities do you think this would have?
- Zentella identifies six principal communication patterns among the 20 families with children that she knew best. List the factors that make people

more likely to use Spanish and those that make people more likely to use English.

- Interview someone who is bilingual and try to figure out what the uses of each language are (as reported by the speaker). How does your subject feel about his or her languages?

Vocabulary

AAVE
dyad
HE
hypercorrection
interlocutor
intra-sentential code switching
language loss
language maintenance
language shift
meta-linguistic awareness
morphological
NSPRS
phonological, phonology
PRE
SPRS

See Glossary pp. 611–624.

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