MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN PRACTICE
It was sad leaving China,
The place where I was born.
A place which gave me love like a mother,
A place which makes me feel warm.
Leaving my grandparents made me very sad.
I had no choice, I had to go.
I look back now,
Grandma’s eyes filled with tears.
A worried look on Grandpa’s face.
I felt like crying,
I must not cry! I must not cry.
At last I gave them a smile.
But I could hardly sleep in the plane.
I was thinking about:
My teacher, my friends, and all my relatives.
All the things they had done for me.
China, Goodbye for now. I’ll come back soon.

Lin, Grade 4

A year had passed, it seemed to be a dream.
When I looked back, the changes surprised me.
The new language I learned, the old language I knew.
I sometimes got mixed up, but I like the funny way.
Learning more in science, what a great thing.
Social studies led our way.
Gym, Music and Art, I had a lot of fun.
English, French and Math, the most important subjects.
Know more about the world, more than anything I want.
People from other countries, make my wish come true.
I like Canada, I am glad that I came.

Lin, Grade 5
Multilingual Education in Practice
Using Diversity as a Resource

Edited by
Sandra R. Schechter & Jim Cummins

Heinemann
Portsmouth, NH
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Acknowledgments

We wish to thank the educators at Floradale and Thornwood public schools for their willingness to enter into the collaborative project that is described in this volume. The initiatives undertaken in the project resulted from dialogue and brainstorming among all the participants and we express our appreciation to the administrators in both schools for the access and support they provided. The work discussed in this book was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for which we are thankful. We would also like to acknowledge the support we have received from our respective institutions, York University and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. In particular, we owe a large debt to Dr. Alison Griffith, Associate Dean of York University’s Faculty of Education (2000–2002), for understanding the significance of the community-situated approaches described here in terms of a model for professional development, and for creating a protected place for this work within the scope of the faculty’s field development agenda. We also take this opportunity to acknowledge the encouragement and help that we have received from the team at Heinemann and want to express our special appreciation to Danny Miller for his good humor and steadfastness throughout. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the influence of Dr. Vivian Edwards, Director of the Centre for Language and Literacy at the University of Reading, England, whose book The Power of Babel stimulated the collaborative brainstorming that gave rise to the projects described in this book.
This book is a result of a school-community-university collaboration that involved practicing teachers, teacher candidates, parents, community members, and university researchers in action research converging on issues relevant to children’s development and use of language. The project, cosponsored by the Peel Board of Education, York University, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, was situated in two schools concerned with the education of primary and middle school-aged children in Ontario Province. The schools serve ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse student populations, many of whom are first-generation immigrants to Canada.

Following were the original goals of the project, outlined by Sandra and Jim: First, participating educators would identify issues related to children’s language learning by engaging in collaborative discussions related to children’s language practices and activities in family, peer group, and school/classroom settings. Second, they would apply the information gleaned from these inquiries and collaborations to the development of strategies for teaching and learning in multilingual and multicultural classroom settings. We hoped, through these endeavors, to create structures that would allow schools to incorporate innovative practices that involve community members in curriculum development; focus on the fostering of collegial environments that are supportive of individual teacher agency; encourage the development of pedagogical policies based on the results of action research initiatives; and build on the interests, circumstances, and resources of students.

However, it soon became clear that times and conditions were not highly conducive to the undertaking to which we had committed. A concrete example: In the fall of 1998, we were confronted by a work-to-rule policy adopted by
the Peel teachers in response to a perceived lack of progress in their contract negotiations with the government. This development impeded the inception of the project by several months. The delay would have been much longer had we not come up with a creative solution to this impediment: at the initiative of motivated teachers, we incorporated the project’s action research agenda within an additional qualifications (AQ) course that teachers could take to earn extra credits and enhance their career standing. The project was under way.

As the collaboration progressed, and as we entered a work-intensive, hands-on stage, it became evident through a variety of reflection formats—project organizing meetings, AQ class sessions, participants’ journal reflections, interview conversations—that the distances that needed to be productively negotiated so that the team could effectively realize their commitments to community-responsive pedagogy involved more than those that existed between school people and community members. Specifically, we realized that teachers, researchers, and administrators did not share the same understandings of their and other stakeholders’ respective roles in and obligations toward children’s learning. This condition was not in itself overly discomforting; it made good sense that our different situations would yield variation in perspectives on educational mandates and priorities. However, these divergent understandings appeared grounded in different, oftentimes contradictory premises regarding our educational mission. Our teacher collaborators were struggling to accommodate pervasive Ministry of Education policies regarding curricular expectations and standards, and many used the language of these texts to justify their commitments to their action research projects. Martha, a teacher participant, explained in her journal: “The Ministry certainly calls for home/school links in order for the child to experience success and we hope to facilitate this with a variety of strategies. Perhaps a survey of parents’ needs and ideas would be a place to start.”

For their part, administrators representing the collaborating institutions situated their commitments within a framework, or set of efforts, begun in the 1980s to reform North American elementary and secondary education. Indeed, their concerns with issues of sustainability and capacity building revealed their immersion in the technical language of the school reform agenda. While both practicing teachers and university researchers have much stake in these broad reform initiatives, we were nevertheless reluctant to frame our discussions about multicultural education and community-situated pedagogy within this agenda, sensitive that many mainstream educators and policymakers in North America continue to view cultural diversity as an impediment to national unity and competitiveness in the global market. We did not think of our initiatives primarily in terms of a curricular response to the school reform agenda. We viewed multiculturalism and multilingualism as part of the fabric
of North American society and were, therefore, interested in how those concerned with educational restructuring could incorporate best practices as developed through initiatives such as ours into their reform initiatives.

For our part, as university researchers, we were sometimes preoccupied with the democratic nature of the process, as though other university-based colleagues were looking over our shoulders, ready to pounce in the event the school-university-community collaborations did not live up to various idealized versions of these relations. In the end, we are willing to concede that the participation structures that the project developed were more and less democratic at various junctures, and equally that our main concern has not always been here, but rather with evolving a common vision of how caregivers and educators can work together to enhance bilingual children’s language and literacy development.

Over the years our collaborations with school-based colleagues toward developing a common vision, or set of complementary perspectives, have proved both our greatest challenge and, as we hope the essays in this volume will demonstrate, our most rewarding accomplishment. As the contributions make evident, we have found a team approach to be effective because of the complementary talents, abilities, and resources that members have brought to the undertaking. At the outset, our team comprised the two editors of this volume, and Paul Shaw, who represented the school board. Over the course of our collaboration, it has expanded to include the ensemble of creative and dedicated professionals whose work appears in this volume. This cohort—consisting of practicing teachers and school administrators, university researchers, and graduate and undergraduate students in teacher education courses—represents, as well, the broad audience envisioned for this book.

As we write, we cannot assert that the strategies elucidated in the pages that follow have had a significant effect on broader institutional policies concerning teaching and learning in multicultural and multilingual classroom settings. Indeed, we would be remiss if we did not underscore that for the most part, the initiatives we describe resulted from the dedication and perseverance of the individual educator-authors in the absence of adequate structural or fiscal support. And while we continue to struggle for an educational environment that promotes school-based policies premised on diversity as a resource, perhaps the most important lesson that we have all learned from this collaboration is that, with or without favorable conditions and complementary structures, we are nonetheless capable of organizing our pedagogy so as to bring about beneficial outcomes in the learning and school experiences of linguistic and ethnic minority students.
Introduction

In Chapter 1 we outlined a framework for academic language learning that can serve as a useful starting point for interpreting previous research and for generating school-based language policies (see also Cummins 1986, 2001). This framework represents our attempt to distill some central pedagogical elements from a wide range of innovative projects focused on promoting academic achievement among culturally and linguistically diverse students. In this chapter we describe the activities we pursued at Thornwood to develop a school climate that explicitly valued and built on the multilingual and multicultural talents and abilities that children brought to school. We describe these activities from two perspectives: (1) the perspective of a grade 1 teacher who, together with her colleagues at Thornwood, initiated and implemented a variety of projects aimed at enriching students’ literacy experiences and forging stronger home-school connections and (2) the perspective of a university-based researcher who observed these activities in light of their broader implications for understanding children’s literacy development and for developing school-based language policies.

Our goal in this chapter is to bring practice and theory into dialogue with each other. We believe that the Thornwood experience illustrates how collegial dialogue and brainstorming of ideas at the school level can generate practices that, through a spiraling process, engage with existing theory to generate deeper understandings of what can be achieved pedagogically in multilingual school contexts.

At the time the Thornwood project was getting under way, the framework outlined in Chapter 1 had not yet been elaborated in its present form and so
it did not exert an explicit influence on the discussions and brainstorming of
the school-based and university-based participants. However, some of the core
ideas embedded in this framework were very prominent in the assumptions
and mindset that we all brought to the table. For example, we all saw students’
home languages and cultures as potential resources for learning. However, we
were initially vague about how those resources could be acknowledged and
amplified in view of the fact that English appeared to be the only possible lan-
guage of instruction for a student body representing more than forty languages
and cultural groups.

We also believed strongly in the importance of parental involvement in
children’s education. Yet, we found the achievement of this goal daunting in
light of the fact that many of the parents were newcomers and spoke minimal
English.

Around the table, we all shared a commitment to connecting with indi-
vidual children on a personal level as well as at an instructional level. Because
of the diversity of children’s cultural and language backgrounds, and differences
in their knowledge of English, we realized the futility of any attempt at one-
size-fits-all instruction that ignored the richness and uniqueness of background
knowledge presented by the individual children in our classrooms.

Finally, when we started the project and began multiple rounds of brain-
storming about how we could respond in a positive way to the diversity of
students and communities incorporated in the broader learning community
of the school, it became clear to all of us that we shared a view of literacy that
went beyond merely the acquisition of skills in English. We saw literacy as
multidimensional and integrated with all aspects of students’ lives inside and
outside the school. We knew that students were exposed to literacy experiences
and practices in their first languages (L1) outside the school in addition to
their English literacy experiences in school. However, we had little idea of how
extensive or significant these L1 literacy experiences were. We also knew, intu-
itively, that literacy acquisition belonged as much to the affective realm as to
the cognitive realm. But we had not discussed in any systematic way how we
could encourage all students to join what Frank Smith (1988) has called the
Literacy Club, where socialization into a literacy community might become as
natural as socialization into our first-language communities.

Discussion of how to pursue powerful approaches to teaching literacy
and other subject matter was facilitated not by abstract theory but by reading
together Dr. Viv Edwards’ (1998) book *The Power of Babel*, along with a variety
of other readings, in group meetings that took place every other week on aver-
age. This short book describes a variety of initiatives that teachers and school
communities undertook in the United Kingdom to translate the diversity of
their student bodies into resources for learning and enrichment of all students. This excerpt will give a sense of the kind of possibilities that were opened up to us as a result of reading this book:

While it is clearly very difficult for language learners to write in English in the early stages, there is no reason why they cannot draft, revise and edit in their first language. This approach allows them to develop their skills while joining in the same activity as their peers. It can also enhance their status in the class. Instead of emphasizing what they cannot do, the focus shifts to their achievements. This is precisely what happened with Julia, a ten-year-old girl who had recently arrived from Russia. Classmates—and teacher—were fascinated by the appearance of the Cyrillic script on the page and very impressed by her beautiful handwriting. A Russian-speaking member of staff provided a translation so that she was able to share her story with the class. (67)

In what follows, Patricia describes the action research process that teachers at Thornwood pursued while Jim links these initiatives to the framework elaborated in Chapter 1.

**Multilingual Action Research Initiatives at Thornwood**

Six primary-grade and ESL teachers at Thornwood (Nicole Baron, Valerie Dale, Anita Kelly, Brenda Solomon, Brenda Wong, and myself, Pat Chow) formed an action research group to work in partnership with the York University and University of Toronto participants. Early on we identified some core beliefs and goals:

- We are committed to forging a stronger home-school connection.
- We believe that reading in any language develops reading ability.
- We want to engage parents in reading with their children at home and to encourage discussion and sharing of experiences between parents and children.

In order to pursue these directions, we decided to create book bags so that the children could bring dual-language books between school and home. We also hoped to provide audiocassettes with the stories recorded in both English and the L1 so that children and parents could listen to the stories as well as read them. As we discussed the project, additional goals and possibilities emerged:

- Non-English-speaking parents could enjoy reading the stories to their children in their own language and expand on the ideas, values, skills, and concepts they encountered in the books.
Through the use of audiocassettes, ESL students and parents would be exposed to basic English vocabulary, common grammatical structures, and conventions of English text.

The dual-language books would permit students to access prior knowledge through their L1, thereby providing a framework for transfer of this prior knowledge to English.

By means of the project, the school would be communicating to parents and students that we value their language, their prior experiences, their knowledge, and their culture as important resources for the curriculum and the community. We anticipated that this positive communication would foster active collaboration between parents and teachers in a variety of areas of mutual interest related to their children’s education.

By acknowledging to students that their L1 represents a significant accomplishment, we would encourage them to express themselves more fully through their L1 in both oral and written communication. This home language communication is particularly important during a time when they may feel inadequate about their English proficiency or frustrated by their inability to express their needs, thoughts, ideas, and knowledge.

In short, we set out to enhance the status of multilingual children by creating a context within the school where they would have ample opportunities to demonstrate their skills and to share aspects of their cultures, countries of origin, and personal experiences with their peers and teachers. We also wanted to support parents’ efforts to develop their children’s skills in their L1 and to maintain lines of communication across generations. We also anticipated opening up possibilities for greater social participation by parents as they became involved in activities such as translating and recording books, using multilingual word processors, helping out in school, and becoming more active in the community. Finally, as teachers, we expected to expand our own awareness and appreciation of other languages and cultures represented both by the community and by our own unique experiences and backgrounds.

As we discussed the dual-language initiative further, however, we realized that we knew very little about the home literacy practices and beliefs of parents in our community. Therefore, we developed a questionnaire to explore the literacy practices of the parents and to assess the extent to which they would support the kinds of home-school literacy initiatives we were discussing. We also asked parents if they would be willing to tell some of their favorite stories to small groups of children within the school setting, either in English or in their home language.
In the following sections we describe these initiatives—the home reading survey and the dual-language books/stories project, including the dual-language storytelling day. We also describe an additional initiative involving mathematics that came about serendipitously in Patricia’s grade 1 class.

The Multilingual Reading Survey

The survey was designed to elicit information about children’s reading experiences and habits, the sources of children’s literature that parents had access to, parents’ willingness to share their cultural experiences and multilingual expertise, and families’ access to a cassette player. The survey was also an opportunity to communicate with parents about our attitudes as educators to the languages and cultures that their children brought to school. We introduced the two-page questionnaire as follows:

The Thornwood staff treasures the multilingual and multicultural aspects of our school population. We are aiming to develop a program that will help our families maintain their own culture and language and also support the acquisition of the English language. We are asking for your support by completing this survey.

We received 291 completed questionnaires. The responses were encouraging. Parents expressed an interest in a program that would support their children’s acquisition of the English language and also support their desire to have their children maintain their first language and culture.

As outlined in Figures 3–1 through 3–11, we discovered that the majority of the schoolchildren had stories read to them at least three times a week. Almost half the respondents reported reading books in English to their children and almost as many read both English and L1 books. Only a relatively small percentage of parents (13 percent) were reading only L1 books. We were encouraged to see that a large majority of parents talked about the books and stories with their children. Parents reported extensive use of the public library for English books, while the majority of their L1 books came from their personal home collections. A large majority of parents reported telling stories to their children, with about equal numbers using English and the L1. Many expressed a willingness to tell stories to small groups of children in the school context. About two-thirds of the parents indicated having access to a tape recorder and about one-third owned cassettes of stories in their L1.

Although we were by no means experts in questionnaire design, we learned a lot of important information from the parents’ responses. For example, we had initially thought that there were about fifteen different languages
spoken in the children’s homes. From the questionnaire we came to realize that more than forty languages were represented; the most prominent languages after English (93 respondents) were Arabic (33), Tamil (28), Hindi (21) and Urdu (3). We also learned that the majority of families would welcome the opportunity to read and listen to dual-language books and we got information on how feasible it might be for families to listen to audiocassettes that would accompany the printed texts. We became aware of a small number of bookstores and heritage language schools that might be useful sources for these books and tapes. We also discovered from the survey that many families had L1 books that they would consider sharing with small groups of students.

The Dual-Language Books and Stories Project

Selection

We were fortunate that the project had some independent fiscal support and that Sandra and Jim had set aside a portion of the funds for the school to use at participants’ discretion. After we had identified some book suppliers who focused on multicultural/multilingual books, we were faced with the challenge of what to order. Many factors went into the selection of our dual-language books. Although we could not assess the quality of translation before purchasing the books, we did take into consideration the cultural sensitivity of various subject matters. For example, *Charlotte’s Web*, where the central character is a pig, was clearly not a good choice for our school because of our Muslim population. In addition, some popular children’s books (e.g., the Dr. Seuss series) are written in such a unique style that we feared something would be lost in the translation.

We were mindful of Viv Edwards’ (1998) comment in *The Power of Babel* that repetition, rhythm, and rhyme will help children internalize the vocabulary and structures of English as well as to predict what comes next. This consideration was influential in leading us to choose *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (by Eric Carle) and *It’s Mine* (by Rod Campbell). The repetitive language of these books, the appealing visual support, and the embedded mathematical and scientific concepts made them perfect choices.

We believed that it was important to provide our students with positive models from a variety of cultures. *Babu’s Day* (by Mira Kapur), about the life of a Tamil boy in Bombay, is excellent for initiating discussions about life in another country. *A Baby Just Like Me* (by Susan Winter) features a young girl of African descent who is coming to terms with the addition of a new baby to her family. This book is especially worthwhile because it deals with an issue
Do you read to your child/children in your first language? English? Both?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Language</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3–1

Do you read with your child/children?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every night</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 times/week</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 3 times/week</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3–2

Do you talk about stories with your children?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3–3

Where do you get your English books and reading material?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public library</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3–4

Figures 3–1 to 3–11.
The multilingual home reading survey.
Where do you get your books and reading material in a second language?

- School: 18
- Public library: 66
- Home: 125
- Other: 25

Do you tell favorite stories to your child/children?

- In English: 152
- In a second language: 148

Where do you get these stories?

- Personal collection: 167
- Library: 100
- Other: 28

Would you be willing to tell some of these stories?

- In English: 87
- In a second language: 79

*continues*
Do you own cassettes of stories in your first language?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>102</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>177</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have access to a cassette recorder?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>194</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you be interested in hearing stories in other languages?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>175</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 291

Figure 3–9

Figure 3–10

Figure 3–11
that is potentially relevant to many students. Students also relate to *Anna Goes to School* (by Kati Teague), a story about a young girl who learns to adjust to a new school environment and overcomes her reluctance to attend school.

**Student Created Books**

We eagerly waited for the dual-language books that we ordered to arrive. However, the delays in delivery eventually made us so impatient that we decided to make our own original dual-language stories. I (Pat) had gone to the Mississauga Central Library to check out dual-language books for my class to provide models of what we were aiming for. My students were fascinated with them and enthusiastically took up the challenge to make their own.

The stories were written in English by my grade one students and translated by their parents or by older bilingual students in the school. By creating these books with the help of teachers, friends, and family, the students had the opportunity to explore their language and English in a developmentally appropriate way. The parents were wonderfully supportive!

Care was taken to ensure that the layout of the books allowed both languages to enjoy equal prominence. On each double-page spread, the illustration was set above two columns of text—English on the left, and the first language on the right. Duplicates were made so that the children could have a keepsake and the school could keep a copy for its dual-language book bag collection. Ilia, the author of *Alien Explorer* (see Figure 3–12), sent his copy to his grandmother back in Russia. His parents were gratified because Ilia enjoyed this unique way of nurturing the bond he had with his grandmother, and he continued to send her dual-language stories throughout the year.

One parent, Mrs. Ismail, acted as the Arabic word processor expert for some of the students in the class. She also created wonderful props to assist in the telling of a story in Arabic for our dual-language storytelling day, organized by our ESL team at Thornwood. Other parents solicited extended family members to translate, handwrite the words, or audio-record the story. This was truly a collaborative effort—a pooling of expertise!

To celebrate the students’ accomplishments, all books—both dual-language and English-only—published by my class during the month of May were displayed in the school’s showcase outside the main office (see Figure 3–13). They served as visible evidence of the value our school placed on the diversity of our student population. We hoped that they were a welcome sight for new registrants to the school during June and September.

Another exciting development took place in June. A newly immigrated Korean student joined our class. Chang Woo was sociable and immediately well-liked. Day after day, he listened politely during story time and worked
independently on work supplied by his ESL teacher, Brenda Wong, and the ESL kits developed by Lynda Sliz and her team. After a week, it occurred to me that he might enjoy listening to a story in Korean. I was aware that Zube Patel, a colleague who taught grade 5, had encouraged one of her Korean students to do some creative writing in his native language. Another Korean student with a basic mastery of the English language acted as his translator. Through this opportunity to demonstrate their true competence, both boys gained status among their peers and self-esteem in the process.

In preparing my students for the surprise reading, I highlighted how attentive Chang Woo had been on the carpet even though he did not understand English. Now it was their turn to experience listening to a story in a language that they might not understand. I encouraged them to observe Chang Woo’s reaction to the language of the story. On cue, the boys came in and the author started to read. It took a few seconds for Chang Woo to register that he was hearing a story in his own native language, and the smile that crept across his face thrilled his classmates. Then the translator read the story in English. Out of curiosity, I asked Chang Woo if he could read the Korean story. He took it

Figure 3–12.
Ilia, the author of Alien Explorer, sent his copy to his grandmother in Russia.

So he came to Earth. He found some gold. He was happy.

Ilia, the author of Alien Explorer, sent his copy to his grandmother in Russia.
and, to our amazement, began to read confidently and fluently. His classmates gasped in admiration. Later, he readily wrote a story in Korean. We arranged for this story to be translated into English by another Korean bilingual student in grade 5 (see Figure 3–14). We learned that Chang Woo was highly literate in his first language. The story’s spelling was accurate and the story structure, elaborate. Moreover, he had excellent penmanship.

In order to extend the audience for our student-authored dual-language stories, my colleague Mr. Wilson and I created a website (www.peel.edu.on.ca/thornwood) on which the stories could reside for a prolonged period of time. Teachers can access the stories online to teach and inspire their ESL students or to showcase student-made multilingual stories. Two of the students’ stories—in Chinese and Korean, respectively—are shown in Appendices A and B.

**Parent Recording of Dual-Language Books**

The commercially produced dual-language books finally did arrive. Working with the parents in our community has been rewarding. They found creative
ways to enliven the recordings. For example, Mrs. Ding, a Mandarin-speaking parent, played a recording of “Moonlight Sonata” in the background to set the mood for her reading of *Peace at Last* (by Jill Murphy). The effect was superb!

Colleagues in the school often access the dual-language books for their new ESL students during their first few weeks of school. The enthusiastic responses of students, parents, and classroom teachers have made our investments in commercial and homegrown dual-language books highly worthwhile and rewarding.

In an ongoing effort to ensure that ESL students feel a greater sense of belonging and emotional support and develop high self-esteem, our group continues to focus on providing native language support. The initiative has allowed us to discover and access knowledge, expertise, and energy in our students and community that we were largely unaware of in previous years. We have gotten to know our students better, and in the process discovered more of our own potential as educators.

**Dual-Language Storytelling**

At the end of the school year, we planned a half-day storytelling session to celebrate multicultural books and the diversity of languages in the school. One
Adding in Chinese

二 + 三 = 八 + 二 =
五 + 三 = 七 + 三 =
二 + 二 = 六 + 七 =
六 + 一 = 十 + 四 =

一 = 1
二 = 2
三 = 3
四 = 4
五 = 5
六 = 6
七 = 7

An Abacus
A Chinese Calculator

Figure 3–15.
Patricia’s Chinese arithmetic activity.
teacher in the group, Brenda Wong, volunteered to do storytelling in Cantonese and English, and we invited an Arabic-speaking parent, Mrs. Ismail, who had been very supportive of the school program, to tell a story in Arabic and English. We chose Arabic because our survey had shown it to be the most frequently spoken home language (other than English) of the school community. We discussed with Mrs. Ismail the choice of the dual-language book to use as the basis of the storytelling and together decided on *It’s Mine*, a book with elaborate illustrations and appealing story content for young readers. Mrs. Ismail offered to make large cardboard animals to represent the characters in the story. We arranged for a trial run in a kindergarten class. The young children were enthralled by her visual displays and by her narrative in Arabic. Many of the kindergartners spoke Arabic as their home language and therefore understood her account of the story.

On the day of the storytelling, we set up four storytelling stations in the school. Students were divided into four groups that rotated through the stations in the course of the morning. We videotaped the sessions in order to gain feedback for future planning.

The sessions were received enthusiastically by a large majority of the students. Brenda Wong reported that her Cantonese-speaking students told her afterward that they were surprised and thrilled to hear a story told in Cantonese in an “English” school. They were proud that their home language could be heard by their teachers and peers. In some of the sessions, children showed curiosity toward other languages by asking for equivalents of familiar English vocabulary terms such as *good morning*, *family*, *school*, and *friends*.

We learned from this project that parents and teachers can work together in a partnership to organize storytelling sessions. On the basis of our experience, we suggest grouping the students according to grade level so that the stories can better match students’ age and interest level. Also, when producing audiotapes of dual-language books or telling stories based on these books, it may be advisable to read each page first in one language and then in the other so that bilingual and monolingual children can listen together without losing interest.

**The Multilingual Mathematics Activity**

Being of Chinese descent, and having grown up in French-speaking Quebec, I am in a position to share my knowledge of both Chinese and French with my students. I attempt to increase students’ awareness of other languages and cultures in a variety of low-key and unobtrusive ways, especially in the first term of school. For example, I say hello or good morning in other languages when taking attendance, sing songs in French, and ask students to share their bilingual skills when counting. In addition, I put posters with a variety of lan-
guages represented on the class bulletin boards. The students love to see their languages displayed in this way and understand that their languages are acknowledged and valued in the classroom. They are therefore not inhibited in displaying their knowledge of additional languages and take pride in their linguistic expertise.

During the second term, we celebrate Diwali, Chinese New Year, Ramadam, and Black History Month. Included in my Chinese New Year activities is an addition activity sheet requiring students to do simple computation using Chinese numerals (see Figure 3–15). I was surprised and delighted when my students spontaneously started creating their own arithmetic sheets using numbers written in Arabic, Gujarati, and Tamil (see Figures 3–16 to 3–18). What started as a simple activity to provide grade 1 students with extra practice in addition became not only a new and motivating way to practice simple computation but also an opportunity for bilingual students to share their expertise and to challenge each other.

Figure 3–16.
Arabic arithmetic sheet.
In one of the meetings of the research team during the fall of 1999, Patricia shared with the group the mathematical problems her students had created in their home languages. She was somewhat surprised at the level of interest and enthusiasm her university-based colleagues showed in what the students had accomplished. Jim promised to put in writing what he perceived as the significance of the activity observed from the perspective of a university-based researcher. On January 19, 2000, he sent the following email to Patricia.

Hi Pat

You’ll be surprised to get this after so long but I didn’t forget that I promised to let you know why I thought the math activities you did with your students in Chinese, Tamil, etc. were so inspired and inspiring.
It’s obviously a simple activity that doesn’t take any major resources to carry out but it does several things that are important for culturally and linguistically diverse students. I’ll list these in no particular order of importance:

1. It communicates to students from different language backgrounds that what they know and their prior experience are important. Their knowledge of another language is an accomplishment that should be acknowledged, respected, and celebrated. It raises their status in the eyes of other children and this is important because as English language learners, they may have felt inadequate about their English proficiency at some points.

2. It communicates to children that you, the teacher, are interested in what they are bringing into the classroom and that you regard their language and culture with respect as important resources.
3. The same message is communicated to parents of the children, who presumably helped some of them to do the project.

4. It integrates math with language development and awareness. Students carry out math activities in a new and motivating way.

5. You could follow up the activity by identifying the countries where children come from on the map and have children/parents bring in cultural artifacts, photos, or just talk about their countries, thereby building multicultural awareness, geography knowledge, etc.

I could probably go on but you get the drift. What you and your colleagues have done is very impressive (not just this project but the others too).

Anyway, I look forward to seeing you next time we meet. I hope 2000 is going well so far.

Best wishes,
Jim

The Role of Theory

This exchange brings into focus some issues that cannot be addressed fully from within the scope of one particular project. For example, why is it important to communicate to culturally and linguistically diverse students that what they bring to the classroom is important? Why is it important to integrate language with academic content across the curriculum? As teachers we may intuitively sense the validity of these approaches, but our intuitions will be validated and reinforced when we connect our experience with the larger body of research and theory that exists on these issues. By the same token, when we connect the realities of our individual situations to theory, we put the theory to the test. If a theoretical framework cannot account for the pattern of observations in any particular context, then it is inadequate as a theory and requires revision.

From this perspective on the role of theory and its relationship to practice, how useful is the theoretical framework in Chapter 1 for interpreting the significance of the multilingual initiatives carried out by Patricia and her colleagues? Does it provide a language that helps us see the deep structure of the change processes that educators in Thornwood pursued? As we have discussed, every school situation is unique in many respects and, thus, the specific projects and activities initiated at Thornwood are not necessarily directly appropriate or applicable in different school and community contexts. However, when we delve beneath this surface structure, we should see considerable commonality between the Thornwood initiatives and the more abstract deep
structure elaborated in the theoretical framework. This deep structure is one way of interpreting the large body of research on successful projects involving culturally and linguistically diverse students and is consistent with this research (Cummins 2000, 2001). However, it is not the only way in which this research has been, or can be, interpreted. Thus, if the framework does not contribute to a clear interpretation of the Thornwood initiatives and their impact on students and communities, then the framework may not be particularly useful and should be modified. By the same token, if the framework can highlight within a broader context the pedagogical significance of the Thornwood projects, then the validity of the framework as a useful tool is strengthened.

The Multilingual Initiatives from the Perspective of Academic Language Learning

If we consider the central sphere in Figure 1–1 (Chapter 1), we can ask what kind of interpersonal space was created in the interactions between teachers and students at Thornwood with respect to both cognitive engagement and identity investment. Consider some of the academic tasks that Patricia’s grade 1 students, many in the process of learning English, carried out. They read extensively in dual-language books using the totality of their linguistic repertoires rather than just English. Through the dual-language books, they connected meanings in their L1 and L2 (English). They created their own literature and art in two languages and published their writings in a form accessible to their parents, their peers, and potentially the entire world. The dual-language books they created were incorporated into the multilingual literacy resources of the school to be shared with future students from the same language backgrounds. They progressed from the typical student role of solving math problems and calculations posed by their teacher or a textbook to actually generating math problems for other students to solve. They did this in a way that utilized their unique linguistic knowledge and generated curiosity among other students about their languages, cultures, and national backgrounds.

These forms of creativity, inquiry, and problem solving represent the kind of rigorous cognitive engagement that we might expect among university graduate students rather than among grade 1 ESL learners. Yet, the experience at Thornwood shows that first-grade students are eminently capable of these forms of learning. This high level of cognitive engagement was made possible by the fact that teachers created a learning environment where

- students’ prior knowledge of their L1 was acknowledged and validated;
- the funds of knowledge represented in the community were sought out and incorporated actively as an integral part of students’ learning environment; and
students created products (writings, illustrations, L1 math problem sheets) that reflected a positive image of who they are linguistically, cognitively, and personally, and of who they might aspire to become.

In other words, teachers created an interpersonal space or environment that encouraged students to invest their identities in learning. Their knowledge of additional languages was a resource to be shared rather than an impediment to be overcome. Consider the probable reaction that Jane received when she displayed her Math in Tamil problem sheet for her peers to solve. The complexity of the Tamil script (to non-Tamil speakers) is immediately evident and yet Jane, who is still in the process of acquiring English, has command of this script. Her image is elevated in the eyes of her peers, in her teacher’s eyes, and in her own eyes. Similarly, Chang Woo’s fluent decoding of the Korean story written by his older compatriot elevates both his status and the perceptions of his peers and teacher of his intellectual abilities.

With respect to the conceptions of language pedagogy explicitly articulated in the theoretical framework, it is not hard to discern evidence in the Thornwood multilingual initiatives of a focus on meaning, a focus on language, and a focus on use. Students were encouraged to read extensively in both their home language and English, with dual-language books serving as a link between home and school support for literacy. Books were chosen for their literary and artistic merit and attractiveness to children rather than on the basis of an arbitrary one-size-fits-all phonics scheme. Awareness of language was interwoven into the fabric of classroom interactions, from greetings and songs in a variety of different languages to multilingual literacy and numeracy experiences contributed by the students themselves. And finally, students and parents were encouraged to create their own dual-language books and stories and to share these with a wide audience.

In all of these initiatives and interactions, the affective dimension is as significant as the cognitive dimension. In order to create a positive affective interpersonal environment, teachers at Thornwood had to be prepared to challenge powerful sentiments or discourses in the wider environment. They were prepared to affirm the value of students’ and parents’ multilingual abilities in the face of widespread opinion in the society that immigrants should abandon their languages of origin in order to integrate successfully into the society. They were prepared to forgo the illusionary security of one-size-fits-all instruction in favor of a pedagogical approach that valued and built on what each child brought into the classroom. They were prepared to use their individual and collective imaginations to explore uncharted territory in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students. They did this despite increasing to-
down pressure for accountability in raising students’ academic achievement and for conformity in instructional approach (see Pacini-Ketchabaw and Schecter, in press).

In short, these teachers were prepared to challenge aspects of the broader power structure in the society by affirming the centrality of students’ cultural and linguistic capital as a foundation for learning and, of equal importance, affirming the centrality of teacher imagination as a foundation for pedagogy. They initiated a school-based language policy approach that positions them as researchers as well as teachers. It is important to remember that language policy is a process rather than a product. It is always dynamic and evolving, based on previous experience and collaborative discussion at the school level. To illustrate this process, we conclude with some of the future directions that Thornwood teachers have discussed to help make their school into a genuine learning organization.

**Future Directions**

We recognize that our efforts at providing native language support are only in their infancy. However, we are encouraged by the fact that new ideas emerge in a relatively spontaneous way now that our collective mindset is oriented in this direction. For example, during provincial grade 3 testing (occupying a two-week period), when all ESL teachers were occupied providing accommodations for the grade 3 ESL students who were taking the test, a teacher gave her exempted newcomers the challenging project of creating an illustrated bilingual dictionary. She supplied a commercial illustrated dictionary as a template and as a reference. The students demonstrated a strong sense of independence and pride in compiling their bilingual dictionaries.

We are convinced of the feasibility and value of engaging in many more such initiatives. Among the future projects we have discussed are the following:

- create illustrated bilingual phrase books (with transliteration of non-Roman scripts);
- augment our supply of multilingual books, both commercial and student-authored;
- encourage parents to relate cultural narratives (e.g., folktales), written down and audio-recorded, to add to the school’s literature collection;
- post multilingual signs around the school (e.g., in areas such as the main office and bathroom);
- teach multicultural games and promote their use in the classrooms and during indoor lunch recesses;
• initiate the use of bilingual students and/or parents to relay important school announcements over the intercom;
• invest in multilingual word processing software and train parent volunteers to use this resource;
• enhance communication with parents through the translation of important notices;
• continue with our multicultural and multilingual storytelling initiative; and
• develop relationships with adult ESL students in English acquisition programs or with high school or university language students to contribute to the school curriculum.

We are very much aware that we are unlikely to find many of these directions explicitly recommended in provincial or school board curriculum guidelines. We are also aware that those guidelines typically imply a generic student (white, monolingual, middle-class) who looks and sounds very different from those we teach at Thornwood. Our project and ongoing language planning endeavors have attempted to go to the deep structure of our pedagogical mandate by affirming the identities of the students we teach, involving parents as powerful contributors to their children’s learning, and ensuring that all students become cognitively engaged in the learning process. There is no one-size-fits-all panacea that will achieve these goals.

For both school-based and university-based participants, our discussions and collective initiatives in the course of this project have sharpened our image of where we stand as educators—what our goals are and what we believe we can accomplish by working with students and communities from diverse backgrounds. We have also been, in many cases, surprised at the abilities and talents of our students and parents, talents that would not have become evident had we confined our instruction and interactions within an English-only orientation. Our image of the present identities of our students and the messages we communicate about how these identities might evolve have changed significantly since we began the project. Similarly, our image of how students might contribute to their multicultural and globalized society, with its myriad social and environment problems, has changed in light of what students have accomplished. The intellectual excitement and personal affirmation reflected in the eyes of our students as they engage in exploration of the wonder of dual-language stories, the creation of literature, and inquiry into languages and cultures fuels our collective motivation to continue our own exploration and learning as educators.
References


Appendix A to Chapter 3

THE LITTLE RABBIT

Once upon a time in a far away land, there were a lot of little rabbits.

从前，在一个很遥远的地方，住着很多小白兔。
All the rabbits were so cute. But there was one rabbit who was really dirty and lazy. His name was Sam.

One day, all the rabbits planted vegetables at the farm. They planted carrots the most because it was their favourite vegetable.
Everyone worked, but Sam did not do anything. He just went to sleep. Sam's parents told Sam to take a bath and work with the other rabbits every day.

So Sam listened to his parents. He took a bath every day and helped the other rabbits plant and pick the vegetables every day. Sam thought of how he was like before. Sam told everyone, "From now on, I'll be nice and work together!"
Appendix B to Chapter 3

(A Dual Language Book)

Rover Gets a Treat

By: Sara

One sunny day, a girl bought an ice cream cone from the market.

어느 화창한 날, 한 소녀가 슈퍼마켓에서 아이스크림을 샀다.
As she was eating her ice cream, she saw a dog.

The dog's name was Rover. Rover wanted to eat ice cream too.
Rover did a trick. He stood up and begged.

The girl laughed. She gave Rover some of her ice cream.
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