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# Understanding the Language Choices of Novice Bilingual Teachers During Sheltered English Instruction

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The theories of practice of four novice bilingual teachers regarding their language choices during sheltered English instruction are presented. The investigation followed participants through their preservice program in an urban public university and their first year of teaching in bilingual classrooms. Findings from this study illustrate how theories of practice regarding the use of the native (Spanish) and second (English) languages during sheltered instruction vary among novices and how they change at different points in their individual journeys to becoming bilingual teachers. The novice bilingual teachers in this study used both languages during their sheltered English instruction in different ways, and these language choices are explored in light of existing research on code-switching and hybrid language practices. Implications of the findings for teacher education programs are discussed.

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Current educational policies in the United States emphasize the teaching of academic content in English as soon as language minority children enter the school system. The hegemony of English in schools and the pressure to have emergent bilingual learners (EBLs)<sup>1</sup> meet content standards in English poses unique challenges for bilingual teachers committed to promoting academic success by providing both native language and second language instruction. Despite decades of research demonstrating that the most effective way to promote learning in a second language is by building upon deep conceptual knowledge in a child's native language (Cummins, 1986; García, 2009), national and state educational policies are promoting programs and practices that focus on English instruction and either limit or eliminate native language instruction.<sup>2</sup> In New York, where bilingual programs have been recommended as one of two approaches to meet the needs of EBLs<sup>3</sup>, testing policies requiring that EBLs take standardized English Language Arts tests after one year have led schools to emphasize English instruction in their bilingual programs. As a result, bilingual teachers are spending significant amounts of instructional time teaching content in English using sheltered instructional practices.

Sheltered instruction generally refers to pedagogy that: (1) makes grade-level academic content accessible for students who do not speak the target language while at the same time promoting target language development; and, (2) highlights key language features and incorporates strategies that make content comprehensible in the target language (Short, Hudec, & Echevarría, 2002). Sheltered instruction is an important component of bilingual program models. Bilingual programs are designed to separate

the native and target languages during instruction either by subject, teacher, or time, and models of sheltered instruction. However, studies of student/teacher interactions in bilingual classrooms have demonstrated that, similar to bilingual communities outside of schools where linguistic norms are established by the members, bilingual classrooms are characterized by code-switching, translanguaging, and multilingual practices (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Ferguson, 2009; García, 2009; Lin, 2008; Manyak, 2002; Probyn, 2009). The findings of the study reported in this article contribute to this literature by offering insights into the language choices of novice bilingual teachers during their sheltered English instruction.

The settings for this investigation were a preservice program in an urban public university and the bilingual classrooms where participants completed student teaching and their first year of teaching. The teacher education program included exposure to a particular model of sheltered instruction and support through conversations around classroom observations and participation in a teacher support group during student teaching and the first year of teaching. The classrooms were in bilingual programs in urban public school districts where the hegemony of English was reinforced through loosely established or poorly defined school policies about native language instruction, proportionately more instructional time allocated to English than to the native language, and a lack of quality instructional materials in the native language. Understanding novice teachers' language choices while learning to teach in these contexts has important implications for teacher education programs that endorse particular models of teacher and student language use during instruction.

### **A Teacher's Theory of Practice**

Novice teachers' language choices during sheltered instruction are revealed through their theories of practice. Johnson (2006) emphasizes that it is critically important for language teacher educators to recognize that teachers are theory builders. The term *theory of practice* is used in this study to describe the relationship between the beliefs and vision a teacher holds about teaching and learning and her enacted practice (Dubetz, 2002). A theory of practice characterizes teacher decision making as context-specific, activist, adaptive, nonlinear, and holistic (Clandinin, 1985; Elbaz, 1991; Genishi, Dubetz, & Foccarino, 1995; Paris, 1993; Rios, 1996). Because classroom teaching is a continuous stream of emergent situations that are problematic, ill defined, and multidimensional (Windschitl, 2002), teachers' theories of practice often reflect contradictions between reported beliefs and enacted teaching practice. They reflect a *negotiation* of personal beliefs, new knowledge, and influences from within the teaching context such as school administrator expectations and characteristics of the students. In the study reported here, this negotiation process was evident in the teachers' theories of practice.

### **Language Choices in the Bilingual Classroom**

The theories of practice of bilingual teachers encompass views and practices that reveal particular language choices unique to bilingual classrooms. Although popular models of sheltered instruction like the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) do not promote the use of the native language by the classroom teacher<sup>4</sup>, both teachers and their students naturally engage in code-switching, hybrid language

practices, or translanguaging when classroom members share a language other than the target language.

Code-switching is a mode of communication first documented by linguists in early ethnographic studies of bilingual communities and is defined as “an alteration of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent” (Poplack, 2000, p. 224). Code-switching can be inter-sentential and/or intra-sentential, and is governed by phonological, morphological, and syntactic rules. The term has been used in a number of studies to describe the social and pragmatic functions of code-switching in classroom interactions in bilingual settings (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Ferguson, 2009; Lin, 2008; Probyn, 2009).

Code-switching is an element of hybrid language and literacy practices, which involve the strategic use of the multiple language resources by bilingual teachers and students within and outside the classroom community to build relationships with one another that advance literacy knowledge (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Álvarez, & Chiu, 1999; Manyak, 2002). Although code-switching serves a variety of social and pragmatic functions, code-switching as part of hybrid language practice is pedagogically strategic; a teacher’s choice to code switch is consciously driven by her goal of ensuring student participation and learning. Examples of teachers’ strategic use of the native language to advance student understanding can be found in studies of bilingual classrooms (Flores-Dueñas, 2005; Manyak, 2002; Shannon, 1995).

Even when teachers refrain from code-switching, bilingual learners will engage in code-switching. The term “translanguaging” has emerged as a construct used to explain the blending of language integration and language separation in bilingual classrooms, where children “translanguage to co-construct meaning, to include others, and to mediate understandings” (García, 2009, p. 304), even during times when the two languages have been separated by the teacher for instruction. García refers to the appropriation of language choice by children as “transglossic.” Some researchers have used translanguaging to refer to code-switching between teacher and students as well as code-switching among students (Hornberger & Link, 2012). The current study uses the constructs of code-switching and hybrid language practice to explain the language choices of novice bilingual teachers.

### **Teacher Learning Communities and Teacher Theorizing**

Participants in the study met regularly in a teacher support group designed to provide a space for ongoing conversation about practice during their student teaching and through their first year of teaching in bilingual classrooms. One of the assumptions embedded in the current study is that bilingual teachers’ conversations around their practice are important locations for both influencing and investigating their theories of practice. Research focused on monolingual and bilingual teacher learning illustrates that new knowledge about teaching is filtered through an existing frame of reference grounded in personal and professional experiences (Bos & Reyes, 1996; Britzman, 1991; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991; Florio-Ruane, 2001; Galindo & Olgún, 1996; Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Lemberger, 1997). Inviting novices to participate in teacher learning communities can serve as a powerful form of professional socialization in which participants examine their existing theories of practice in relation to new

experiences and new knowledge (Craig, 2004; Dubetz, 2005; Florio-Ruane, 2001; Freeman, 1993; Holt-Reynolds, 2001; Rust & Orland, 2001). These communities share two characteristics: (1) the discourse within these communities focuses on practice and is situated in the day to day work of teachers; and, (2) these communities are structured to be ongoing so that participants have repeated opportunities to consider how new practices compare to existing ones.

### **Description of the Study**

The investigation of novice bilingual teachers' language choices reported in this article is part of a larger study of novice educators' theories of practice during sheltered instruction. The findings reported in this article address the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between a pedagogical preparation that emphasizes the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol and bilingual teacher candidates' theories of practice regarding teacher language choice during sheltered instruction?
2. How do theories of practice regarding language choice during sheltered instruction evolve for novice bilingual educators as they transition from candidates in a preservice teacher preparation program to first year teachers?

For the larger study, data on participants' use of all SIOP categories (e.g., developing content and language objectives, providing comprehensible input, promoting interaction, etc.) were collected. The findings reported in this article focus on the data collected on one element of the SIOP: providing opportunities for students to clarify key concepts in the native language as needed with aide, peer, or text in the native language (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2010). As the researcher, I was particularly interested in this element because, as noted earlier, teachers and learners in bilingual classroom communities frequently blend the two languages even though models of sheltered instruction like the SIOP do not advocate teacher's use of the native language during second language instruction. An investigation of the teachers' theories of practice would offer insights into whether they were adhering to the model of language choice advocated during their teacher preparation, or constructing their own theories about language choice.

The study was conducted using a descriptive, case study design (Merriam, 1988). The study's time frame included participants' preservice and early career teaching experiences because there is evidence that these may be a single developmental period in learning to teach (Kagan, 1992).

### **Participants**

Participants were members of a cohort of teacher candidates in an undergraduate preservice program that was supported by federal funds to address the shortages of certified bilingual teachers in New York City public schools. Data are presented in this article for four of the participants, Diana, Fernanda, Lucia, and Ana (all pseudonyms), who were Latina women between the ages of 20 and 29 when they entered the preservice program. Additional information regarding their language

proficiency, ethnicity, and education as well as the contexts in which they student taught and were hired for their first year of teaching are provided in Appendix A.

### **Preparing for Language Instruction in the Teacher Preparation Program**

The bilingual teacher preparation program in which the participants were enrolled included coursework to develop pedagogy to teach in the native language (Spanish) and in a second language (English) through content teaching methods courses. In these courses, participants studied additive models of bilingual education that promoted a separation of languages to ensure a balanced approach to native language and second language instruction. To prepare the candidates to teach sheltered instruction, candidates completed a course in English as a second language (ESL) methods. In this course, they were introduced to the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), which was used as a framework for planning for and reflecting on sheltered teaching practice. As part of the ESL methods course, participants used the SIOP to plan and implement lessons in bilingual classrooms during a summer internship.

Following methods coursework, participants completed two seven week student teaching placements, one in a transitional bilingual program and one in a dual language program in two urban public elementary schools. Candidates taught lessons in Spanish and English, and the SIOP was used as a framework for discussing their sheltered English instruction with the researcher. After each observation, the participant and I completed the protocol independently from each other. The rating scales in the SIOP were used to encourage dialogue around participants' perceptions of their teaching abilities in sheltered instruction.

In addition, the student teachers participated in a teacher support group that met monthly. The support group was a place for sharing experiences and critical analysis of teaching. The conversations were guided by whatever stories or concerns the participants chose to discuss, and as a result, differed for each meeting. As the researcher, my role in support group meetings was to listen to participants, raise questions to further their thinking or clarify their ideas, and offer support, such as access to additional resources or instructional materials they needed, e.g., information on leveling books in English and Spanish and basic school supplies.

### **Supporting Instruction During the First Year of Teaching**

During the first year of teaching, the support group meetings continued, meeting monthly during the first half of the year and bi-monthly during the second half. These were structured like those held during student teaching. In addition, each participant was observed once in the first two months of the school year and once in the final two months of the year. Again the teacher and I completed the SIOP instrument independently and used results to frame the conversations that followed the observed lessons.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

One of the theoretical assumptions framing this investigation is that language is a tool for constructing reality (Spradley, 1979) and can provide insights that cannot otherwise be observed (Merriam, 1988). To study the evolution of the theories of

practice of the participants, the researcher collected both spoken discourse data (audiotaped support group meetings, post observation conversations between individual participants and the researcher, and field notes of classroom observations) and written discourse data (student teaching journals). Wilson and Berne (1999) note that undertaking research into teacher learning in collaborative forms of professional development such as teacher learning communities is difficult because “the location of the knowledge is unclear” (p. 186). To address this difficulty and investigate the unique theories of practice of each participant, a data set was created for each novice teacher. Each data set was coded for analysis using: (1) the instructional elements of the SIOP; (2) teacher generated practices that were not part of the SIOP but that the teachers used to support student learning; and, (3) sources of knowledge in teachers theorizing and practice, a preliminary set of which included influences from the teaching context (e.g., characteristics of children, school policies) and personal characteristics (e.g., prior experience, prior education). Data were triangulated by: (1) comparing field notes of observations with transcripts of the conversations that followed the observations and support group meetings over a two year period, and (2) representational and presentational readings of the language data, i.e., comparing *what* was said with *how* and *when* it was said in order to move beyond interpreting participants’ comments as direct representations of their thinking (Freeman, 1996).

During the coding process, memos were created to capture emerging patterns or themes, and tensions between different data sources (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Memos were then used to develop propositions, or “connected sets of statements” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 75). Evidence for each proposition was collected and used in developing the individual teacher profiles. Preliminary findings for each profile were then subjected to negative-case analysis (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), meaning that whenever the data contradicted an initial finding, the finding was modified to accommodate the data.

## Findings

The profiles of the theories of practice of the four novice bilingual teachers provided insights into their language choices during sheltered English instruction. The following section is divided into two parts. First, a description of the teaching contexts for all of the participants is provided. This is followed by profiles of the theories of practice for each participant regarding her language choices during her student teaching and first year of teaching.

### The Bilingual Teaching Contexts

The hegemony of English was apparent in both bilingual programs where the participants completed student teaching. The participants believed that the schools supported using the native language in instruction, yet only one cooperating teacher allocated more instructional time in Spanish (children’s native language) than in English, and neither program had the same amount and quality of instructional materials in Spanish as were available in English. In the transitional program, the majority of children in the classrooms were at beginning levels of English proficiency whereas in the dual language program, most of the children were at intermediate and advanced levels of English proficiency.

The bilingual programs where all but one of the participants were hired for their first year of teaching also awarded higher status to English than to Spanish as evidenced by the schools' language allocation policies. Ana taught only two periods daily in Spanish in her dual language third grade class, and was only required to assess children's literacy development in English. Lucia taught all core subjects except math in English in her transitional third/fourth grade class, and Fernanda taught all core subjects in English in her transitional fifth grade class. Only Diana, who was hired to teach first grade in a transitional program, was teaching all core subjects in Spanish and one period of English as a second language. In the second half of her first year, there was a shift to include more instruction in English to prepare children for the state standardized exam assessing English language proficiency.

### **Profiles of Teacher's Language Choices during Sheltered English Instruction**

In this section, the teacher profiles are presented separately to illustrate the unique characteristics of each teacher's theory of practice regarding language choice during sheltered English instruction.

#### **Lucia.**

When Lucia entered the preservice program, she identified herself as a native/native like speaker, reader and writer of Spanish, a native/native like reader and writer of English, and a proficient speaker of English. During student teaching, Lucia's early preference for separating the native and second languages during instruction was evident in her comments in the support group meetings as well as her enacted practice. In both student teaching placements, the transitional kindergarten class, where most of the children were Spanish dominant, and in the dual language second grade classroom, where all of the children were proficient in English, Lucia spoke only English during her sheltered English lessons. Even when children asked Lucia questions in Spanish during sheltered lessons, she responded to them in English.

Although Lucia entered her first year of teaching holding the belief that a bilingual teacher should separate languages during instruction, her theory of practice changed in response to her school's policy for language allocation. In the school where Lucia was hired, the principal and bilingual coordinator asked her to translate or paraphrase content in Spanish during her English instruction to assist children in learning. Lucia complained about this policy, explaining, "I don't know about giving the lesson in English and then translating it...that's not what I was taught. I don't feel comfortable doing it." To negotiate the contradictions between her existing views on language allocation and those espoused in the school, Lucia developed an approach to her sheltered instruction that included both Spanish and English during sheltered instruction, but did not adhere strictly to the recommendations made by her administrators. During whole class lessons, Lucia began by soliciting children's prior knowledge related to the topic of the lesson in English. Following this, she continued to ask questions and present content in English, but switched to Spanish when she wanted to ensure student understanding of important content, as is illustrated in the following interaction at the end of a mini-lesson during literacy.

Lucia: When you keep a reading log, it will actually be an incentive for you. I read two pages today. Maybe tomorrow I'll even want to read more. I'm going to give each of you a copy of the log and I want [you to use it with] the book that [you are reading...]

Child: *¿Vamos a hacerlo todos los días?* (Are we going to do this every day?)

Lucia: Yes, I want you to keep a log of everything you do in the classroom. I'll give you one to do at home also.

Child: *¿Lo va [unrecorded] para qué estamos leyendo en la casa?* (We're going to ...so that we're reading at home?)

Lucia: *Sí. porque Uds., se acuerdan que tienen la responsabilidad de leer media hora en casa todos los días. . .* (Yes, because you need to remember that you are responsible for reading a half hour at home every day.) [to the class] *¿Por qué? ¿Por qué los van utilizar?* (Why, why are you going to use them [the logs]?)

Child: So you can put the pages...

Lucia: *¿Sí, pero por qué? ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué?* (Yes, but why? Why?)

Child: *Para que Ud. sepa cuantas páginas estamos leyendo.* (So you know how many pages we are reading.)

Lucia: *Esto...Esto es para Uds. No es un exámen.* (Right. . . This is for you. It is not a test.)

Lucia did not use translation or paraphrasing during her whole class sheltered instruction; however, once the whole class portion of a sheltered lesson was completed and children were sent to their seats to work on assignments, Lucia met with individual or small groups of Spanish dominant children, and in Spanish, summarized the content and clarified assignments.

### **Ana.**

Ana entered the program with native/native like proficiency in English and Spanish in speaking, reading, and writing. Ana was an advocate for bilingual programs that separated the two languages for instruction before she began student teaching. At support group meetings, she spoke positively about the model of the dual language program being implemented in her daughter's school, where an equal amount of instruction time was allocated to both languages, and languages were separated by teacher, location, and time. Her beliefs were reflected in her practice in her first student teaching placement, where she spoke only English during whole group sheltered instruction. As recommended in the SIOP, she placed beginning English speakers with bilingual speakers who could support them by translating content and procedures. Once children began working on their assignment, she used Spanish to clarify the assignment for a Spanish speaking newcomer and invited the child to complete the assignment in Spanish.

Ana's theory of practice changed, however, when she was placed in a first grade class in a transitional program for her second student teaching placement. In this classroom, there were many Spanish speaking newcomers, and the classroom teacher

used Spanish for all content instruction to build children's knowledge and skills in their native language. In this context, Ana engaged in inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching during her sheltered English instruction, switching to Spanish to reinforce content vocabulary, translate directions, or manage behavior, as is illustrated in the following interaction.

Child: I'm going to take this one. The gray.

Ana: That's silver.

Child: Silver.

Ana: *Este no se llama gray; este se llama silver.* (This is not called gray, this is called silver.)

Ana: [to the group of children] In the corner you write your name [points to corner of paper]. *En esta esquina, su nombre. Tienen que trabajar calladitas porque* [pointing to the other students] *tienen un examen.* (In this corner, you name. You have to work quietly because they have a test.)

[Child asks in Spanish for clarification of directions about labeling the butterfly cycles.]

Ana [to one child]: *Quiero que lo aprendas en inglés.* (I want you to learn it in English.) *Sí quieres,* I have crayons. (If you want, I have crayons.) But you first have to write your name, then write each cycle of the butterfly. [to the group] *Tienen qué trabajar calladitas.* (You have to work quietly.)

Ana justified her decision to code switch by explaining that, "in Spanish, I felt more comfortable because I thought they were going to understand me better, and that was my main concern, the fact that they didn't understand the second language." Evidence from her journals and comments during meetings demonstrated that there was a tension between Ana's belief that language allocation should include equal amounts of instructional time in both languages and the language allocation practices in this first grade classroom, where most class instruction was in Spanish. To negotiate this tension, Ana incorporated code-switching in her theory of practice while in this classroom.

When Ana assumed responsibility for her own classroom as a first year teacher in a dual language program that awarded higher status to English, she returned to separating Spanish and English during instruction. She used only English in her sheltered English lessons, which was consistent with her early commitment to separating languages during instruction. Although she did not code switch during her whole group instruction, she did continue to use Spanish to clarify English content or tasks for a Spanish speaking newcomer after the whole group lesson ended.

### **Fernanda.**

Fernanda entered the preservice program with native/native like proficiency in English and Spanish in all skills but writing. She believed she was proficient in writing in Spanish, but could not write like a native. Despite her proficiency in Spanish, Fernanda expressed concern when entering her first student teaching placement that she did not have enough academic Spanish to be able to teach in Spanish. She also

stated in an early support group meeting that she was confused about how to use the two languages in her sheltered lessons and wondered whether she should be “translating” during her lessons. She seemed to be unclear about how she could teach in English and at the same time ensure that her children could understand the content she was teaching.

Early in her first student teaching placement, Fernanda was observed engaging in frequent code-switching in both her sheltered English and Native Language Arts instruction. During her sheltered English lesson, she engaged in inter-sentential code-switching to present content, and also inserted key content vocabulary words in English in the middle of a Spanish sentence, as is illustrated in the following exchange during a math lesson.

[Fernanda has introduced the attributes of quadrilateral, and she takes a block shaped like a rhombus and shows the class.]

Fernanda: This is called a trapezoid. *Y éste ya lo saben. Dejame hacer un dibujo de un trapezoid para que lo vean.* (And this you already know. Let me draw a trapezoid so you can see it.) [She draws a house with a square at the base and a triangle for a roof.] *Casi como un triángulo pero le falta algo.* (It’s almost like a triangle but it [the triangle] is missing something.)

[She now draws a new shape on the white board: a circle with a diamond shape on it like a ring]

Fernanda: *Es un shape que Uds. lo ven todos los días. Un anillo. Un diamante.* (It is a shape you see every day. A ring. A diamond.)

Fernanda: Everyone together, say diamond.

Children: Diamond.

Fernanda: *¿Y?* [pauses and points to a triangle she drew earlier]. It has another name. What’s the other name?

Child: Triangle.

Fernanda: A triangle has three sides. *Quiero que Uds. lo dibujen. Les voy a dar un papel* (I want you to draw. I’m going to give you a piece of paper), and I want you to draw a picture with it.

In their conversation following the lesson, the researcher recommended that Fernanda try staying in the language of instruction as described in the SIOP during her next sheltered lesson. When Fernanda was observed teaching the same group of children two weeks later, she spoke in English during whole group instruction, and when children began working on an assigned task at their tables, she spoke in both English or Spanish when asking comprehension questions or clarifying the directions for individual students. Her choice seemed to be based on the language dominance of the student, i.e., she spoke Spanish with beginning English speakers. She told the researcher after the lesson that she thought she did “a better job staying in English.” She explained that “sticking to the one language...makes it less confusing for me also.”

This change in her theory of practice remained consistent during her first year of teaching in a transitional fifth grade classroom, where Fernanda continued to speak

only English during her whole class sheltered English instruction and only switched to Spanish to clarify tasks for individual students who were newcomers during independent practice following the whole group lesson.

### **Diana.**

When Diana began the preservice program, she reported having native/native like proficiency in all skill areas in Spanish, native/native like speaking abilities in English, and proficient skills in English in reading and writing. During her first student teaching placement, Diana's perceptions of children's English proficiency levels guided the language choices she made in her sheltered instruction. In her first student teaching placement, where the children were Spanish dominant, Diana expressed a concern about the level of participation of beginning English speakers in lessons taught in English; "I feel like I am leaving them behind," she explained.

In her sheltered English instruction, Diana code switched to clarify or reinforce content to the class as a whole and to individual children, and to manage instructional transitions, as illustrated in the following exchange during a math lesson in her first student teaching placement.

Diana: So we can group by color. Now let's group by shape. Can we put these together? [Diana shows the children two attribute blocks of the same shape but different colors.]

Students: No.

Diana: Yes, they are the same colors. *Podemos ponerlos juntos porque son cuadrados. Recuerden este también* [showing red and blue triangle blocks]. *Están juntando mucho.* Move back. Now, *ahora los niños de la mesa uno, a la mesa. De la mesa tres, a table three. Los niños a la mesa cuatro.* (We can put them together because they are squares. Remember this also. You are too close together. Move back. Now, the children from table one, to the table. Table three, go to table three. The children to table four.)

[Children move to their seats.]

Diana: *Tienen que poner sus nombres.* [She is distributing work sheet.] (You have to put your names [on your paper].)

[During the next few minutes as children are working on their worksheets, Diana goes to each table and interacts with individual children in English or Spanish, clarifying or commenting on their work, e.g., "¿Cuáles son iguales? (Which ones are equal?) Is there another shape?" "Draw a line. Okay, that's good. Show me more;" and "En este número, (in this number) can you show me two that are alike?"]

Perceptions about students' ability to understand her again informed Diana's language choices during sheltered English instruction in her second student teaching placement in a fourth grade dual language class. In this new setting, Diana chose to speak only in English during her sheltered instruction because "everybody's talking in English and even amongst each other, it's in English." Interestingly, she noted after her first observed sheltered lesson that she had forgotten to provide immediate individual attention to a Spanish speaking newcomer in the class to ensure he was able to

undertake the task. Reflections from her student teaching journal illustrate that she worked with the student in subsequent weeks to help him complete his writing piece in Spanish while the others students were writing in English.

When Diana entered her first year of teaching, she was hired to teach first grade in a transitional bilingual program where all of the children were Spanish dominant and where all but one period of instruction each day was taught in Spanish. In this setting, Diana returned to code-switching during her sheltered English lessons. She used Spanish to clarify content for particular students as illustrated at the beginning of a read aloud, where she said to a Spanish dominant child seated on the floor in front of her, " *Jaime, cuando estoy leyendo un libro y no sabes una palabra, puedes mirar la foto para entender que está pasando. ¿Verdad?* (Jaime, when I am reading a book and you don't know a word, you can look at the picture to see what is happening, right?) She also switched from English to Spanish to elaborate on children's comments in Spanish as illustrated in the following exchange in a sheltered English lesson about differences between the past and the present.

[Diana displays pictures of a modern stove and a coal burning stove.]

Diana: [pointing to the picture of a coal burning stove] What is this?

José: *Estufa*. (Stove)

Diana: How do we say *estufa* in English?

José: *Estufa vieja*. (Old stove.)

Diana: Raise your hand. *Levante su mano. ¿Por qué?* (Raise your hand. Why?) . . .

Child: Fire comes out.

Diana: *Bien caliente como brasas que usan en la playa*. (Very hot, like the coals that they use on the beach.)

[One of the children explains in Spanish they have a coal stove in his house in the Dominican Republic.]

Diana: *Pero depende. Puede ser que en el campo*. (But it depends. It can be [true] in the country.) Do you remember how we say charcoal in Spanish?

Child: *Carbón*. (Charcoal.)

Diana's theory of practice reveals that her language choices during sheltered instruction were guided by the language proficiency of her students. She code-switched during her sheltered English instruction when she was teaching children whose preference for Spanish was reflected in their choice of Spanish during the lesson to respond to Diana's questions or to elaborate on an idea being discussed.

In the profiles of Lucia, Ana, Fernanda, and Diana, similarities and differences emerge in their theories of practice about a teacher's language choices during sheltered instruction. These comparisons are explored in the following section.

## Discussion

The investigation described in this article had two purposes. The first was to explore the relationship between pedagogical preparation in a particular sheltered

instructional model, i.e., the SIOP, which discourages teachers from using the native language during sheltered English instruction, and the theories of practice of novice bilingual teachers during their student teaching and in their first year of teaching. The second purpose of this investigation was to explore how their theories of practice regarding language choice during sheltered instruction evolved as they transitioned from teacher candidates in a preservice teacher preparation program to first year teachers. Each question is discussed separately.

### **The Impact of Preparation in the SIOP on Theories of Practice**

During the early stages of their entry into the teaching profession (student teaching and first year of teaching), the participants in this study did not adhere to a strict interpretation of the use of the native language during sheltered instruction as recommended in the SIOP even though it was the model endorsed by their preservice program. During student teaching, Ana, Fernanda, and Diana code-switched between Spanish and English during sheltered instruction. Only Lucia chose to speak only in English during her sheltered instruction. In their first year of teaching, Lucia and Diana code-switched in Spanish and English during whole class sheltered English lessons, and although Ana and Fernanda did not use Spanish during their whole class sheltered English lessons, both used Spanish when clarifying content one-on-one with individual students during independent practice following the lesson.

Despite the SIOP's recommendation that the native language be used as a resource by peers or bilingual aides to clarify content, all four novice teachers in this study drew upon their knowledge of the two languages and used code-switching as an instructional resource and communication medium in their classrooms. Linguistically, all four novice teachers exhibited an extensive knowledge of both Spanish and English language systems, engaging in inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching that were syntactically correct (Poplak, 2000). Functionally, their use of Spanish during their sheltered English served multiple pedagogical purposes: to verbally scaffold academic content, promote student participation, signal transitions, manage student behavior, explain learning tasks, and gather evidence of student understanding. These purposes add to an existing set of purposes identified in earlier research on code-switching in bilingual and foreign language contexts, where teachers have used code-switching to give rhetorical emphasis, offer parenthetical comment, gain learners' approval, communicate solidarity, contextualize academic English terminology, and relate new learning to students' everyday experiences (Ferguson, 2009).

The analysis of the four teachers' profiles reveals some subtle but important differences among their theories of practice regarding code-switching. Even though her administrators had recommended she "translate" and "paraphrase" to support student understanding, Lucia's enacted language practices illustrate a theory of practice where "translation" was limited to summarizing content at the end of the lessons for some students, and "paraphrasing" was substituted with strategic shifts to Spanish for an extended interaction with the students when she wanted to ensure their understanding. Her language choices are similar to those of the teacher who engaged in the hybrid literacy practices described by Manyak (2002) because they were purposely focused on increasing comprehension.

In contrast, much of the code-switching of Fernanda, Ana, and Diana appeared less pedagogically strategic. Although they offered a general rationale for using Spanish during their sheltered English instruction as a way to ensure that children understood the content, the specific choices they made were somewhat random and sometimes unnecessary, which is characteristic of teachers who do not consciously control the language choices they make (García, 2009). Fernanda, who was initially confused about whether or how to use both languages when teaching in English, engaged in random code-switching even though the children responded to her in English, until she found an approach to language separation that was less confusing for her. Ana's code-switching in her second student teaching placement was not a practice she personally endorsed, but convinced that her students would not understand her without translation, she code switched without critically examining whether her specific choices, particularly her intra-sentential code-switching, were effective or necessary. Finally, while some of Diana's code-switching was purposeful, e.g., extending an explanation in Spanish of a child's response, her simultaneous translation of routine directions for managing behavior (e.g., *Levante su mano*. Raise your hand.) was unnecessary because children appeared to comprehend these kinds of commands in either language since they were repeated daily across lessons.

### **Changes in Theories of Practice**

The profiles of the participants' theories of practice reveal compromises in their language choices that grew out of their attempts to negotiate tensions between their existing beliefs and the demands of their teaching contexts. During their journey from student teacher to first year teacher, changes in theories of practice occurred for three of the novice teachers. Ana's early commitment to language separation in her enacted practice shifted to include code-switching, when she began student teaching in a classroom where Spanish had high status among teachers and students. However, in her first year of teaching, once she returned to a program where English had higher status, she resumed her practice of keeping the languages separate. Lucia's theory of practice changed during the transition from student teacher to first year teacher to conform to the expectations of her school administrators. Whereas she entered her first year having demonstrated during student teaching that her theory of practice demonstrated a complete separation of the two languages during her instruction, she engaged in strategic code-switching during lessons to ensure her students understand the task she was presenting. Finally, Fernanda started out the student teaching experience by code-switching because she was unclear about how to ensure that her students could access academic content if she stayed in one language. Her theory of practice shifted, however, after her first lesson, and she began teaching in English during whole group instruction and then clarified information for individual students during independent work. This revised theory of practice remained constant throughout her first year of teaching.

Of the four participants, only Diana's theory of practice regarding language choice remained consistent from student teaching through the first year of teaching. Her theory of practice was not grounded in a particular model of language allocation but rather her knowledge of the children she was teaching, and so she made her

language choices based on what she perceived to be her students' needs. Furthermore, unlike Lucia or Ana, Diana's theory of practice was never challenged by a contradictory policy on language use from more powerful individuals in the teaching context, e.g., cooperating teacher or school administrator, and thus allowed her to maintain her theory of practice even when the teaching context changed.

Cenoz and Gorter (2011) noted that even though most schools officially endorse the separation of languages for instruction in bilingual programs, classroom practice does not match official policy. The findings from this study of novice teachers' theories of practice as reflected in their language choices during sheltered instruction support this claim and offer insights for teacher educators and educational researchers regarding the preparation of effective bilingual teachers.

### Implications

In a recent description of effective teacher education for bilingual teachers, Flores, Sheets and Clark (2011) suggest that teacher education programs be designed so that *aspirantes*<sup>5</sup> "experience a personal evolution that questions existing beliefs, enhances ethnic identity, initiates teacher identity, and promotes efficacy" (p. 15), which they refer to as *iluminación*. The participants in the current study were characteristic of most aspiring teachers in that they entered the preservice program with differing set of beliefs about the role of language in educating emergent bilingual learners, and these became evident in their theories of practice when they were in a classroom. In preparing bilingual teachers for sheltered instruction, teacher educators who want to influence the theories of practice of novice teachers need to create opportunities in the preservice program and in the first years of teaching for them to investigate the factors that are influencing their language choices and to examine critically how their choices are affecting their students' learning. Opportunities to observe and critique practice are built into preservice teacher education, but most induction programs for first year teachers are detached from preservice preparation. The opportunities for the participants to discuss their practice, including the use of the SIOP, during their first year of teaching helped them determine how to adjust their existing understanding of sheltered instructional pedagogy to changes in their roles and teaching contexts.

Preservice programs for bilingual teachers must be guided by a clear vision about language choice and must offer strategies for helping its candidates enact that vision. The findings of this study led to changes in the local preservice curriculum. The preservice program continues to encourage its candidates to separate languages in bilingual programs to ensure that children receive adequate exposure to the native language, but candidates now engage in a critical examination of the SIOP's recommendation about native language support in their ESL methods course. They now learn ways to adapt the model to benefit their bilingual learners. Preservice teachers analyze examples of teachers' use of Spanish and English during sheltered instruction to identify pedagogically strategic applications of code-switching that can promote student learning.

Finally, there is the popular assumption among individuals outside bilingual communities that code-switching reflects a limited knowledge of two languages and is detrimental to learning. Evidence demonstrating the positive impact of code-switching on student learning is, at present, limited to anecdotal evidence from descriptive studies. Building a case for the value of pedagogically strategic code-switching will require more systematic investigations of the relationship between classroom discourse and student learning in bilingual classrooms.

### Conclusion

This article began by making a case for investigating bilingual teacher's language choices during sheltered English instruction because of the emphasis being placed on English instruction in bilingual programs in response to pressures from state and national policies. However, teacher educators and novice teachers must engage in a critical examination of the larger issue of the language status in schools. Though this study suggests that teachers can (and do) use code-switching in pedagogically strategic ways, Manyak (2002) warns that simply endorsing hybrid practices as the way to address the low status of the native language in bilingual programs will not serve all EBLs, especially those who have limited prior academic experience. Teacher educators, then, must assume the additional responsibility of helping novice bilingual teachers develop strategies for improving the status of native language instruction in their programs and schools.

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## Appendix

### Participant Characteristics

<b>Name</b>	<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Self Reported Language Proficiency</b>	<b>K-12 Education</b>	<b>Student Teaching Placements</b>	<b>First Year of Teaching</b>
Ana	Puerto Rico	Native/native like speaker of Spanish proficient Speaker/reader & writer of English	Came to US at age of 19. Attended school in Puerto Rico.	1. Dual language, third grade 2. Transitional first grade	Dual Language Third Grade
Diana	Puerto Rico	Native/native like speaker and reader/writer of English and Spanish	Entered US public school in 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	1. Transitional Kindergarten 2. Dual Language, Fourth Grade	Transitional First Grade
Fernanda	Dominican Republic	Native/native like speaker and writer of English Native/native like speaker and reader of Spanish Proficient writer of Spanish	Entered US as an infant. Attended public schools in US	1. Dual Language, Fourth Grade 2. Transitional Kindergarten	Transitional Fifth Grade
Lucia	Dominican Republic	Native speaker of Spanish. Proficient speaker of English Native reader and writer of English and Spanish	Entered US public schools in high school at age 15	1. Transitional Kindergarten 2. Dual Language, Second Grade	Transitional third/fourth grades bridge class

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## Notes

- 1 The author has adopted the term emergent bilingual learners as opposed to English Language Learners to emphasize that the goal of bilingual educators is to promote academic success and fluency in more than one language (García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008).
- 2 Examples include the federal policy No Child Left Behind, which emphasizes high stakes testing in academic subjects in English after one year of schooling (United States Department of Education, 2001, Title III, 2002, 115 STAT. 1690), and state initiatives like Proposition 227 in California, Proposition 203 in Arizona, and Question 2 in Massachusetts.
- 3 New York State has developed a Language Allocation Policy that outlines two program approaches to meet the needs of EBLs: bilingual or English as a second language programs. EBLs who do not pass the state language proficiency tests must be serviced in one of these two program options.
- 4 Even though the SIOP recommends the teacher stay in the target language during sheltered instruction, the model recognizes the value of using the native language during sheltered instruction by an aide, peers, or the use of bilingual resources.
- 5 The term used by the authors to refer to individuals preparing to become bilingual teachers.