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# Strategic codeswitching, interliteracy, and other phenomena of emergent bilingual writing: Lessons from first grade dual language classrooms

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**Abstract** This qualitative study investigated the writing processes of eight emergent bilingual children as they composed stories in two languages in a Writing Workshop (WW) context. The research was situated in two grade 1 classrooms in a Spanish/English Two-Way Bilingual Education program in the north-eastern USA. For six months, researchers observed students in Spanish and English WWs, interviewed students about their writing behaviors and understandings, and collected samples from all stages of the writing process. Cross-case analyses of individual bilingual writing profiles revealed similarities and differences in students' cross-linguistic skills, as well as patterns of transfer. Patterns of bilingual writing related to strategic codeswitching, positive literacy transfer, and interliteracy led to the development of a preliminary model of bilingual writing development for English-dominant and Spanish-dominant bilingual learners. This model presents phenomena unique to bilingual writers, relates these to bilingualism and biliteracy, and proposes anticipated expression of the phenomena for developing Spanish-dominant and English-dominant bilingual writers.

**Keywords** bilingualism; biliteracy; dual language education; emergent writing; process writing; two-way immersion

Over the past 20 years, knowledge about young children's use of written language in mainstream US educational contexts has increased dramatically. In contrast, the topic of emergent bilingual writing development in children from minority language and Anglophone communities has not

been widely studied. A review of published literature revealed little research on early bilingual writing development in classroom settings. In the case of English language learners, most writing research has looked at one language or the other, but not both. The main research focus has been on the development of English writing (Ammon, 1985; Halsall, 1986; Hudelson, 1984, 1989; Peyton, 1990; Seda and Abramson, 1990; Urzua, 1987). Grosjean (1985, 1989) has criticized research that focuses on one language only as supporting a fractional, or monolingual, view of the bilingual. He argues that the prevalence of this view is due to the 'monolingual bias' in the language sciences, where 'monolinguals have been the models of the "normal" speaker-hearer, and the methods of investigation developed to study monolingual speech and language have been used with little, if any, modification to study bilinguals' (Grosjean, 1989: 4).

The influence of a monolingual view on the study of the writing process of bilinguals is substantial. Many second language (L2) writing studies compare their findings to those suggested by the monolingual writing literature. Krapels (1990: 53) has recognized this characteristic of L2 writing research as an important limitation, noting that 'L2 process writing research does not as yet typically include comparable data on the participants' level of native language (L1) writing. Without such information, any conclusion on L2 composing competence is tentative, at best, because research thus far hints that L1 composing competence affects L2 composing' (Krapels, 1990: 53).

Of the few research studies that have examined both L1 and L2 writing of school-age bilinguals, an overwhelming majority limit their analyses to written products without focused attention on the processes of creation (Canale et al., 1988; Edelsky, 1982, 1986, 1989; Garcia and Colon, 1995; Howard and Christian, 1997; Kuhlman et al., 1993; McCarthey et al., 2004; Reyes, 1991, 2001). Although they are informative, product-based studies fail to provide a complete picture of students' abilities, perceptions, and strategies used in writing. Understanding the processes by which developing bilingual children develop writing in both languages is critical to the design of instructional and assessment practices that are linguistically, developmentally, and culturally compatible (De Silva, 1998).

Research in bilingual writing has traditionally ignored English-dominant children's development and focused instead on the language and literacy learning of students who speak a home language other than English. As a result, we know very little about how English-dominant children develop writing in a bilingual situation. In the last two decades, academic programs promoting biliteracy and bilingualism for native-English speakers have become increasingly popular in the USA. One such program, Two-Way

Bilingual Education (TWBE), purposefully integrates native-English speakers and speakers of a minority language with the goals of bilingualism, biliteracy, high academic achievement, and cross-cultural understanding for both groups of students. Although some researchers have documented TWBE students' academic success and positive attitudes toward bilingualism (Alanís, 2000; Christian, 1994; Lindholm-Leary, 2001), the development and processes of biliteracy among students in such programs has not been thoroughly investigated (sample studies include Freeman, 1998; Howard, 2003; Pérez, 2004; Smith et al., 2002). In general, further research is needed in the dual language writing processes of young, developing bilinguals from minority and majority language backgrounds to help advance our understanding of bilingual children's language and literacy development, as well as the potential intellectual, cognitive, and cultural consequences of biliteracy (Dworin, 2003).

This qualitative study builds upon and extends research on emergent bilingual writing processes and development (Dworin, 2003; Homza, 1995; Pérez, 2004). Specifically, the study investigated the writing processes of young, developing bilingual and biliterate children as they composed stories in two languages in a Writing Workshop (WW) context. The research was situated in two grade 1 classrooms in a TWBE program in the north-eastern USA. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do first-grade English-dominant and Spanish-dominant students develop as writers in a TWBE program that employs a process writing approach?
2. What are the trends and patterns of bilingual writing processes and skills?
3. What is the nature of the transfer of writing skills and processes from one language to the other?
4. How are first and second languages used by these developing bilingual writers?

## **Theoretical and research framework**

Developing biliteracy is an emerging aspect of our contemporary socio-historical context. Biliteracy is defined as mastery of the fundamentals of speaking, reading, and writing (e.g. knowing sound/symbol connections, conventions of print, accessing and conveying meaning through oral or print mode, etc.) in two linguistic systems (Reyes, 2001). It also includes constructing meaning by making relevant cultural and linguistic

connections with print and the learner's own lived experiences, as well as the interaction of the two linguistic systems to make meaning (Reyes and Costanzo, 1999). For students who speak a home language other than English, the development of biliteracy is associated with academic achievement (Collier and Thomas, 1989; Lindholm and Aclan, 1991; Ovando and Collier, 1998). For students who speak minority languages, research has demonstrated the importance of biliteracy for full development of proficiency in academic language and subsequent academic success (Collier and Thomas, 1989; Crawford, 1995; Cummins, 1979, 1981b, 1986, 1991; Thomas and Collier, 1997; Wong Fillmore and Valadez, 1986), as well as high levels of self-confidence (Huang, 1992; Wright and Taylor, 1995).

The study is informed by Cummins' (1991) 'Linguistic Interdependence Principle', in which a bilingual's academic development (including language, literacy, and concept formation) is interdependent. That is, knowledge gained in one language serves as a foundation and facilitates learning in the second language. Investigations of the reading process in bilinguals show certain aspects of that process to be the same regardless of the language in which one is reading (Flores, 1981). Based on this notion, a growing body of research suggests that L1 writing forms the basis of new hypotheses for L2 writing (Au, 1993; Bialystok, 1991; Cummins, 1996; Edelsky, 1982; Pérez, 2004; Pérez and Torres-Guzman, 2002; Snow, 1990; Tinajero and Ada, 1993).

Vygotsky's (1986) understanding of the relationship and interdependency of a bilingual's two languages further suggests a theoretical basis for investigating the linguistic and literacy processes of bilingual students. Research in bilingualism (Muñoz-Sandoval et al., 1998) indicates that the bilingual student brings to learning a linguistic repertoire that cannot be measured in a single language. Regardless of the language they are using and their particular proficiency level, bilinguals are influenced by their knowledge of another language and their cross-cultural experience. This understanding of the bilingual as 'an integrated whole which cannot be easily decomposed into two separate parts' (Grosjean, 1989: 6) is based on what Grosjean has called the holistic view of the bilingual.

Because a monolingual perspective does not suffice for understanding bilinguals, bilingualism, and biliteracy (Moll and Dworin, 1996; Valdés, 1992; Walsh, 1991), the current study applies a multilingual perspective in order to understand the dual language and literacy development of young bilingual writers. A multilingual perspective is based on a holistic view of the bilingual learner, including validation of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as resources for learning, an understanding of the role of primary language (including literacy) in the acquisition of a new language,

and a consideration of sociolinguistic, socio-historical, and sociocultural factors that contribute to the child's development and experiences. This perspective acknowledges and encompasses students' linguistic, literacy, and cultural repertoires including languages, dialects, functions, and uses of language and literacy in different contexts.

## **Method**

### **Setting**

The study was situated in two first grade classrooms in a Spanish/English TWBE program, in an urban, culturally diverse, K-5 elementary school in the north-eastern USA. Spanish and English are heard throughout the community, although English dominates in most public and business spheres. The school served the highest percentage of limited English proficient students (41.8%) in the district. The ethnic make-up of the student body was 45 percent Anglo, 53 percent Latino, and 2 percent African-American. Forty-one percent of the school's 300 students participated in the free/reduced lunch program, representing one of the city's highest percentages of low-income students. Students in the TWBE program reflected the district's cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity.

The TWBE program is one of two academic programs housed in the school, and one of two such programs in the district. It is a controlled choice program that attracts students from the neighborhood and other parts of the district. The main goals of the TWBE program are to promote high levels of oral and written language proficiency in both English and Spanish for all students, to establish a strong academic base in two languages according to each student's ability and grade level, and to encourage positive cross-cultural understanding between students while nurturing pride in students' own heritage. There are two classrooms per grade, a Spanish classroom and an English classroom. At times classes are scheduled to be composed of all L1 speakers, all L2 speakers, or integrated L1 and L2 speakers. Spanish and English are used as mediums of instruction and students are deliberately integrated for academic instruction in a language-immersion method.

For example, when an integrated class is in the Spanish classroom the teachers speak only Spanish and encourage responses in Spanish, with the native Spanish-speakers serving as linguistic role models. The student ratio in the Two-Way classrooms at integrated times is always close to 50 percent native English- and 50 percent native Spanish-speakers. These ratios are believed to: (1) maintain an environment of linguistic equity, (2) facilitate linguistic exchange and cross-learning for both language groups, (3)

encourage social interaction among Spanish and English speakers, and (4) promote cultural understanding among all students. At the lower grade levels, teachers exchange students daily. Upper grade levels exchange students weekly. This enables students to identify one particular teacher and classroom environment with English and one with Spanish, increasing their need to use the target language with each teacher.

The language of instruction varies by grade level, beginning with an emphasis on L1 and L1 literacy for each group in the early grades. All students receive increasing amounts of their second language at each new grade level. Formal L2 literacy instruction does not begin until second grade, although children are exposed to literacy activities in L2 informally in integrated and L2 groups from early on. Kindergarten students receive 75 percent of instruction in L1 and 25 percent instruction in L2. Instruction in first grade shifts to 70 percent L1 and 30 percent L2. Third grade has a 60/40 ratio of L1/L2 instruction. In the fourth and fifth grades, instruction is split evenly between the two languages.

The study focused on the WW in each of the two classrooms, a 45–60 minute period of the day in which students wrote in either L1 or L2. Ten to 12 students participated in the WW at a time, while the other half of the class attended either Spanish as a Second Language (SSL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) class. The Process Writing Approach employed during the WW was closely aligned with the teachings of Graves (1983a) and Calkins (1983, 1986). The implemented approach stressed the notion of writing as a craft in which the writer engages in a number of individual and interactive stages to develop an idea and express it in writing.

Such an approach has the advantage of offering a range of practices and ideologies about biliteracy (Smith et al., 2002). All children chose their own topics and produced original writing samples. Most stories focused on a personal narrative or the recounting of an event a child had experienced and wanted to share. The particular classroom in which the activity occurred (i.e. English or Spanish room) determined the language of instruction and, therefore, the language of children's texts. Although adults modeled and remained in the language of the classroom and encouraged children to do the same, children used both languages flexibly depending upon their particular proficiency levels in each language. In general, but especially in the earlier grades and in L2 and integrated contexts, children in the TWBE program were encouraged to communicate using all their language systems and registers as they developed bilingual proficiency and learned when to use each language appropriately.

## The teachers

The teachers in these two first-grade classrooms were experienced elementary educators, who held views about literacy learning reflective of emergent literacy and process writing perspectives. At the time of the study, the Spanish teacher had been teaching first grade within the TWBE program for a period of seven years. She had used a WW approach throughout this time, fine-tuning her craft through experience and professional development workshops. This teacher held a Master's Degree in Bilingual Education, with teaching certification in the areas of elementary, bilingual, and English-as-a-Second-Language education. She is of Mexican and Anglo descent, and a bilingual Spanish/English-speaker from birth.

The English teacher is a native English-speaker of European descent, who had been teaching first grade for over 10 years. She transferred to the TWBE program from the mainstream program one academic year before the study began. Like her colleague, this teacher had used a WW approach for several years. She had a basic understanding and command of the Spanish language and was knowledgeable of second language acquisition theory, processes, and teaching methodology. She held a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education with licensure to teach Kindergarten through sixth grades.

Both teachers provided regular opportunities for students to write authentic texts for a variety of purposes and audiences. The teachers planned all instruction together and worked as collaborative partners in the education of their developing bilingual/biliterate first-grade students. This ensured that both classes were working on similar thematic activities and that instructional strategies were consistent. Further, they encouraged and expected students to share ideas through talking, reading, and writing. Given the collaborative approach to learning and literacy development in these WW contexts, the students themselves became primary resources for their learning.

These first-grade classrooms provided a unique opportunity to document bilingual writing in its emergent stages. Although the TWBE program focused on developing native-language literacy in the lower primary grades (K-1) and formal L2 literacy instruction did not begin until the second grade, these teachers believed that children who had achieved grade level literacy in their native language would benefit from earlier exposure to writing experiences in both languages. This belief is supported by research on the early literacy experience of children learning a L2, in particular the finding that children can begin to acquire literacy in their L2 early in their exposure to the new language (Hudelson, 1984; Manyak, 2000; Moll and Dworin, 1996; Reyes and Constanzo, 1999). Thus, the teachers offered those students who demonstrated grade-level to high-L1 literacy skills the

opportunity to write in each of their languages in similar WW contexts, beginning in the second half of the academic year. These children became the focal participants in the study.

### The children

With the help of the classroom teachers and the school's biliteracy specialist, four English-dominant students and four Spanish-dominant students were selected for this study. Selection was based on students' L1 literacy levels and L2 proficiency levels. Students' language dominance, or language of greater proficiency (Baker, 2000), and program placement were determined by performance on the Language Assessment Scales-Oral (Duncan and De Avila, 1990), a school administered standardized language proficiency test. Native language literacy levels (high, average, low) were determined by classroom assessment measures and teachers' ratings of students' general literacy skills, and supported by student work to date. Teacher ratings, although subjective and relative, are quite reliable and based on a wide variety of experiences with the children, and they relate strongly to grades and to decisions about promotion (Lanauze and Snow, 1989).

The Spanish teacher rated each child in Spanish and the English teacher rated the children in English. Based on these measures, four grade-level L1 literacy students were selected from each language group for participation in the study; no low L1-literacy students were selected for participation due to the program's policy to delay L2 literacy instruction until the second grade, or until students reach grade level literacy in L1. Participants' names (pseudonyms), ages at beginning of data collection, native and dominant languages are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1* Participant information

<i>Name*</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Native language (initial language(s) learned at home)</i>	<i>Dominant language (language of greater proficiency)</i>
Lucy	6:3	Spanish	Spanish
Katherine	6:8	Spanish	Spanish
Brian	7:0	Spanish	Spanish
Jennifer	6:10	Spanish	Spanish
Jeremy	6:11	English	English
Steven	7:1	Bilingual English/Spanish	English
Jose	6:11	Bilingual English/Spanish	English
Barbara	6:5	Spanish	English

*Note:* \*Names given are pseudonyms.

Seven of the eight participants were born in the USA. Katherine was born in the Dominican Republic and came to the USA at the age of two. Lucy, Katherine, Brian, Jennifer, and Barbara are native Spanish speakers, who speak Spanish at home. Steven and Jose are bilinguals from birth who continue to speak both languages at home. These seven children are of Dominican descent and their families maintain strong ties with the Dominican Republic. The eighth child, Jeremy, is a native English speaker whose mother is a native of Peru and a Spanish/English bilingual. Jeremy's father is a monolingual English speaker of European descent. The family speaks English at home, although Jeremy's mother uses Spanish with Jeremy to support and review Spanish homework.

Six of the eight children had been enrolled in the TWBE program since Kindergarten. Steven and Barbara attended Kindergarten in an English only program, subsequently enrolling in the TWBE program as English-dominant speakers at the beginning of first grade. The dominant language and language of initial literacy instruction of seven of the eight participants was also their native language, with the exception of Barbara whose L1 is Spanish but was English-dominant at the time of the study (as determined by TWBE program placement tests). Jose attended an English only Head Start program prior to enrolling in the TWBE program in Kindergarten. Prior to the study, all children had received formal literacy instruction and participated in the WW in their dominant language only.

### **Data collection**

A case study approach was used to document specific students' dual language and literacy development (Merriam, 1998; Spradley, 1989; Yin, 1984). In the role of participant observers, the author and two research assistants (all fluent Spanish/English bilinguals) observed focal students in the two WW contexts, conducted semi-structured interviews, and collected writing samples for a period of six months. Like many of the classroom and support teachers in the TWBE program, children perceived researchers as bilingual and biliterate individuals and generally addressed them in the language of the classroom. Research assistants received training in qualitative data collection methods and procedures. The author, research assistants, participating teachers, and school biliteracy specialist systematically reviewed and verified data collection methods for consistency during bi-weekly research meetings. Following are more specific descriptions of the data collection process.

**Classroom observations** Researchers systematically collected data three times per week for each focal child: either twice in Spanish WW and once

in English WW, or vice versa. During 45 to 60 minute classroom visits, researchers observed focal children in all aspects of the act of writing, focusing on what they did and said. Researchers took detailed field notes of participant activities and audio-taped participant, peer, and teacher conversations, while avoiding potential interference with regular classroom instruction, normal patterns and routines, and general student participation in the WW.

**Interviews** Researchers interviewed the focal children systematically once every two weeks at the end of a WW session in the language of the corresponding WW session. During an interview each student reviewed his or her story in progress and reflected on his/her writing processes, behaviors, and language use during the particular WW session as well as future plans and ideas for the story. Interviews were conducted in one of the school's resource rooms or the library and were audio-taped for future transcription. On average, interviews lasted between 15 and 20 minutes.

**Artefacts** Researchers photocopied all student drafts and other writing artefacts in L1 and L2 created during the six-month study period. Thus, data sources collected throughout the study included: student writing samples; audiotapes of individual focal students in Spanish and English WWs (containing student-to-student talk about the writing process, student-to-teacher talk, student 'think alouds', student talk during Author's Circle, teacher instructional talk during mini-lessons and writing conferences, and teacher-led small and large group focused discussion about writing); field notes of observations during activities mentioned earlier; audiotapes of formal and informal interviews with focal children; and field notes of observations during student interviews. Data sources included audiotapes and field notes from a total of 126 classroom observations (64 observations in the Spanish WW and 62 observations in the English WW), 327 student writing samples, and audiotapes and field notes from 73 student interviews.

### **Data preparation**

The author and research assistants transcribed all audiotapes. Data sources were sorted by context (i.e. Spanish or English WW) and, within each context, were organized and reviewed chronologically. Each transcript was assigned an individual identification number that included information about the date, language context, focal student(s), and transcriber. A general review of the data suggested a considerable amount of redundant information. Therefore, a subset of data was selected for in-depth analyses that

included two transcripts (and related data sources) in each language for each four week time period of the study (six periods total) for each participant (for a total of 24 transcripts and related data sources per participant). An effort was made to select transcripts/data sources that depicted each stage of the writing process for each participant in order to make the subsets of data comparable across participants. Further effort was made to select transcripts/data sources in which children continued working on the same story from the 'preparation' through the 'publication' stage, though this was not always possible.

### **Data analysis**

Initial analyses occurred throughout the data collection period during bi-weekly research meetings including researchers, classroom teachers, and the school's biliteracy specialist. All selected data sources were initially coded and analyzed with attention to stage of the writing process, behaviors/strategies observed, language of interaction/text, aspects of form and mechanics, and meaning. Initial coding was based on the First Steps Writing Developmental Continuum (Raison and Rivalland, 1994), a widely used writing instruction and assessment tool that had been adopted by the teachers in this school system to document children's writing development.<sup>1</sup> Emerging patterns in the data provided direction for further data gathering and analyses. A bilingual writing profile, grounded in the work of Bear and Barone (1998), Clay (2001), Morris (1993), and Sulzby (1985), was created for each child. These profiles were compiled by teasing out from field notes, transcripts, interviews, and written artefacts any evidence of a child's cross-linguistic and language-specific writing processes, behaviors, and development. The profiles, as well as all field notes, were shared with the teachers for accuracy. As recursive patterns and themes were identified in the data, I checked with research team members to test the tentative trends that were emerging during bi-weekly research meetings throughout the duration of the study. The teachers often contributed supporting information and student work outside of the WWs that helped to refine our collective understanding of the bilingual writing development of individual children and each group of children. This reflective and reflexive process offered a sense of other interpretations and added multiple perspectives to my conclusions.

Triangulation of data from the multiple data sources provided a comprehensive view of emergent bilingual writing behaviors, verified themes and patterns, and cross-validated the regularities in the data. Within and cross-case analyses (Merriam, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994) were conducted in order to reveal patterns of bilingual writing process and

development unique to Spanish-dominant and English-dominant students, as well as patterns of processes and development exhibited by both groups.

## Findings

This section describes general findings representing patterns across all cases. In order to maintain consistency with children's instructional/language placements (based on language dominance), L1 refers to a student's dominant language, while L2 refers to the non-dominant language.

### Strategic codeswitching

Developing bilingual writers drew from both languages in the process of creating L1 and L2 texts. These young writers engaged in hybrid language and literacy practices that encompassed their knowledge of Spanish and English, their prior knowledge and experiences, their formal and informal ways of communicating and meaning making, and their developing bilingual and bicultural identities (Manyak, 2000; Moll and Dworin, 1996; Pérez, 2004). With some exceptions (e.g. vocabulary that is related to American popular culture, proper names of places, restaurants, cartoon characters, theme parks, etc., that have no equivalent in Spanish), the texts developing bilingual children created were generally monolingual. When lexical codeswitches appeared in children's writing, they were generally from Spanish (base language) to English. Table 2 shows examples of an English-dominant child's (Jose) written codeswitches and/or use of loan words in his Spanish texts. Table 3 gives examples of Katherine's (Spanish-dominant) written codeswitches.

In contrast, the writing processes of these developing writers were

**Table 2** Examples of lexical codeswitches in Jose's (English-dominant student) Spanish writing

<i>Jose's original written codeswitch and/or loan word</i>	<i>Standard English orthography</i>
Disney on ice	Disney on Ice
snow cone	snow cone
Jimeny cricket	Jiminy Cricket
Buaty and the Beast	Beauty and the Beast
Mickey Mouse	Mickey Mouse
ronald Duck	Donald Duck
toy Story	Toy Story

**Table 3** Examples of lexical codeswitches in Katherine's (Spanish-dominant student) Spanish writing

<i>Katherine's original written codeswitch and/or loan word</i>	<i>Standard English orthography</i>
Disney world	Disney World
Qucau	cookout
bresap	dress-up
Storatlara	Stuart Little

bilingual to different degrees. Spanish-dominant and English-dominant children exhibited different patterns in their oral use of strategic codeswitching, depending on several different factors. Spanish-dominant children used English and Spanish in the process of creating Spanish texts; some also used both languages in the process of creating English texts.

English-dominant children, however, were observed to codeswitch between their two languages only while creating Spanish texts. For example, the most obvious aspect of Jeremy's writing behavior in the Spanish WW context was the bilingual nature of the process he employed to produce a Spanish text. At the time of the study, Jeremy was an English-dominant student with emerging Spanish skills. When Jeremy wrote in the Spanish WW, he used English in all stages of the writing process (i.e. planning, drafting, revising, and editing) and engaged his more proficient bilingual peers in English conversations related to his writing. For example, Jeremy participated (with codeswitching) in group brainstorming activities to elicit ideas and information before writing, shared ideas for writing with peers or teacher switching codes, and talked with others switching codes to plan and revise own writing. Jeremy always rehearsed his L2 stories in English (L1) and wrote his story ideas on a graphic organizer in English (L1). When it came time to produce the Spanish text, Jeremy almost always relied on translation help from more proficient bilingual peers and/or teachers:

Jeremy: (to Barbara) I don't know what the title was . . . 'cause I don't know how to say 'it'. How do you say 'it' in Spanish?

Jeremy: (rereading his story plan) Fleet Center in Boston . . .

Jeremy: Barbara, Barbara!

Barbara: What?

Jeremy: How do you say, 'It was in the Fleet Center in Boston'?

(Jeremy, 17 March, Spanish WW)

Children's ability and facility to codeswitch was contingent upon several factors, including the relative strength of L1 and L2 (i.e. language dominance), their bilingual development, the linguistic context, and the corresponding language proficiencies of their interlocutor(s).

### **Positive literacy application**

Developing bilingual writers appropriately applied skills learned/used in one language to the other language. Most processes/skills exhibited by each of these developing bilingual writers were applied cross-linguistically. Two types of processes/skills were observed within this phenomenon, each exhibiting slightly different transfer patterns. First, emergent processes/skills were defined as those that are developmental and temporary. These included, but were not limited to, using upper and lower-case letters indiscriminately, adding a period at the end of each line, spacing by syllables vs words, etc. The expected transfer pattern for these literacy processes was complex, since these behaviors were temporary scaffolds that either were discarded or eventually developed into parallel mature literacy processes/skills. For Spanish-dominant and English-dominant students, emergent literacy processes and skills first appeared in the L1, then in both L1 and L2, then in L2 and then in neither language. Second, mature literacy processes and skills were defined as those that once learned or acquired are maintained. For Spanish-dominant and English-dominant children, the transfer pattern exhibited was from L1 to L2. In both cases, transfer was contingent upon a developing bilingual's relative strength in L1 and L2 literacy, that is, her or his biliterate development.

Brian, a Spanish-dominant student, pointed to words while reading his own writing and over-generalized punctuation conventions while creating Spanish texts throughout the first two months of the study. When he began to create English texts in the spring, he applied these emergent writing behaviors in that context as well. As his L1 literacy skills developed, these literacy scaffolds were no longer necessary and he began to use periods appropriately in his Spanish writing, although he continued to include periods at the end of each line in his English texts. Toward the end of the study, Brian regularly used periods appropriately in both contexts as his literacy skills in each language developed and he no longer relied on these scaffolds to create text.

An example of parallel emergent and mature literacy processes/skills exhibited by an English-dominant student, Barbara, involved her developing knowledge of print conventions. Before Barbara had command of the basic rules of punctuation, she was observed to overuse linking words such as 'and'/'y' to join simple sentences (i.e. an emergent process/skill). As her

knowledge of print conventions and punctuation rules developed, Barbara began to punctuate simple sentences more effectively and consistently while experimenting with various linking words to connect her ideas (i.e. a mature process/skill). The following examples highlight Barbara's use of this strategy in her English writing (linking words underlined for emphasis; student spelling unchanged).

Example of an emergent literacy process/skill: 'Joins simple sentences (often overusing the same connectors)' – English-dominant student:

And then when I went to my babys cousin house we went to my house and we Playd a lot of things and we had a lot of fun!

(Barbara, 13 March, English WW)

Example of a mature literacy process/skill: 'Uses a variety of linking words' – English-dominant student:

First we went wherewe had to go with the car. Then we got in one airplane and when we got out we went to a nther places. Then we went in a car and we got there. The next day we woke up and we teke a bothe. I put on my Budinsut and we went to the Bech. And when we came back we said good night. The next day we went to the pull and they thru fish in the pull. And When we wake up it was time too go home. it was rilliey cool and fun! When we went to the Beck.

(Barbara, 16 May, English WW)

## Interliteracy

In addition, developing bilingual writers applied language -specific elements of literacy of one language to the other. Interliteracy is defined here as the written language parallel to a developing bilingual's oral inter-language (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1992). That is, interliteracy is the literacy in development of bilinguals and may include the application of rules of one written language when writing the other. This phenomenon of developing bilingual writing has two components: (1) the temporary application of linguistic elements of literacy (including syntax, phonology, and semantics) of one language to the other, and (2) the application of print conventions (including graphophonemic relationships, orthography, and print conventions) of one language to the other. The following three examples represent the first component of interliteracy: the temporary application of syntax, phonology, and/or semantics of one language to the other (the applications, or instances of transfer, are underlined for emphasis in each example).

Steven's (English-dominant student) application of English sentence

structure (syntax) to Spanish (English word order for possessive applied to Spanish):

[Steven had written 'casa' (house) on a 'Future Story Ideas' sheet]

Teacher: ¡Que bueno! Estan guardando ideas. ¿Y ese cuento de que va ser?  
(Translation: How wonderful! You're saving your story ideas. And what will that story be about?)

Steven: De cuando yo fui pa(ra) la casa de . . . de mi. . . mi prima  
(Translation: It's about when I went to the house . . . my cousin's house)

Teacher: ¿Y solo la palabra 'casa' te ayuda recordarte de tu idea para un cuento?  
(Translation: And only the word 'house' helps you remember your story idea?)

Steven: (rereading:) casa  
[Steven inserts word 'prima' (cousin) before word 'casa']

Steven: (rereading:) prima casa

(Steven, 29 February, Spanish WW)

Lucy's (Spanish-dominant student) literal translation of Spanish phrase to English writing:

Lucy: (rereading what she'd just written) Twenty one from February I went to sleep over . . .

(Lucy, 28 February, English WW)

The next four examples represent the second component of interliteracy: the application of sound-symbol correspondence, spelling patterns, and/or print conventions of one language to the other.

Brian's (Spanish-dominant student) application of Spanish sound-symbol relationship to English spelling

Brian: (rereading:) jugamos . . .

Brian: (encoding:) un . . . jue-go . . . que . . .

Brian: (rereading:) un juego que

Brian: (encoding:) se . . . lla-ma . . .

Brian: (took out spelling sheet to get attempt of 'Secret Agent'; writes 'Secret allet')

(Brian, 25 April, Spanish WW)

**Table 4 Jennifer's (Spanish-dominant student) application of Spanish sentence structure to English**

<i>Jennifer's original sentence</i>	<i>Standard English orthography</i>	<i>Standard English version</i>
We whata to the housu of my ands.	We went to the house of my aunt's.	We went to my aunt's house.
We salovoraete the bordae of my mom.	We celebrated the birthday of my mom.	We celebrated my mom's birthday.
Thae gefe porasans to the baeby off my ans.	They gave presents to the baby of my aunt's.	They gave my aunt's baby presents.

**Table 5 Jennifer's (Spanish-dominant student) application of Spanish sound-symbol relationships, phonology to English spelling**

<i>Jennifer's invented spellings in English (based on L1 sound-symbol relationships and phonology)</i>	<i>Standard English orthography</i>
Frayday	Friday
lucac	look at
gat autu	got out
clous	clothes
mines	minutes
si	see
go	go
pori	party
tu	too
liro	little

Steven's (English-dominant student) application of English spelling convention to Spanish writing (orthographic rule – silent 'e'):

(Steven is in the process of drafting a story. He is not sure how to spell 'fuimos' [we went]; he takes out a spelling sheet to attempt the word.)

Steven: (encoding on spelling sheet) Fui . . . mos

(Steven wrote 'fuimos', then added 'e' at end of word; word now spelled 'fuimose')

Steven: (rereading:) ¡Fuimos!

(Steven, 29 February, Spanish WW)

The final example represents a combination of the two components of interliteracy (i.e. application of print conventions and syntax of one language to the other).

Barbara's (English-dominant student) application of English print convention (capitalizing the first person singular, 'I') to its Spanish equivalent, and the application of English sentence structure to Spanish (possessive word order and 's' possessive marker):

'Cuando Yo durmi ande LiLianas casa.'  
(Translation: 'When I slept at Liliana's house')

(Barbara, 17 March, Spanish WW)

The two components of interliteracy appeared to have somewhat different patterns of transfer. The application of language-specific elements of literacy first occurred in L1-only, then occurred temporarily in both L1 and L2, and then in L1-only for both Spanish- and English-dominant students. In contrast, the application of print conventions appears to have a dual pattern of transfer for Spanish-dominant students: children used their literacy skills in a bidirectional way (Manyak, 2000; Moll and Dworin, 1996; Pérez, 2004; Verhoeven, 1994). Initially, these students applied language-specific print conventions in L1, then in both L1 and L2, and then in L1-only. In addition, some Spanish-dominant students applied language-specific print conventions in English-only, then temporarily in both English and Spanish, and then in English-only. The latter transfer pattern was also the expected one for English-dominant students. Interliteracy was contingent upon both bilingual and biliterate development.

## Discussion

The main research question of the study called for an examination of the writing development of English-dominant and Spanish-dominant students in a TWBE program that employs a process writing approach. The study investigated (1) the trends and patterns of bilingual writing processes and skills, (2) the nature of the transfer of writing skills and processes from one language to the other, and (3) how emergent bilingual writers utilized their two languages as resources in the writing and learning process. Although theories of second language and literacy acquisition imply the existence of cross-linguistic aspects of language and literacy, they do not provide specific information about what these aspects may be. Cummins' (1981a,b, 1991) interdependence hypothesis and the notion of a common underlying proficiency suggest that literacy related aspects of bilinguals' proficiency are

transferable, or interdependent, across languages. Subsequent studies establish a connection between L1 and L2 literacy, but they neither identify which skills transfer and which do not, nor do they specify how the process of transfer actually occurs. The findings from the present study begin to fill some of these gaps in our current understanding of cross-linguistic literacy transfer: in the process of creating texts, developing bilingual writers (1) use their full linguistic repertoire when creating texts; (2) apply developmentally appropriate processes/skills cross-linguistically as they create text; and (3) may temporarily apply linguistic elements and writing conventions of one language to the other. Taken together, these findings suggest a working model of bilingual writing development.

### **A model of emergent bilingual writing development**

Several documented features of children's bilingual writing processes led to the development of a preliminary model of emergent bilingual writing development for Spanish-dominant and English-dominant students. In this section, I present a brief description of the model and summarize the findings that undergird its development.

The proposed model of bilingual writing development presents phenomena unique to bilingual writers (specifying particular types of processes/skills that are applied cross-linguistically), relates these to bilingualism and biliteracy, and proposes anticipated transfer patterns for Spanish-dominant and English-dominant developing bilingual writers (see Table 6). Each phenomenon is described briefly and is related to specific processes/skills that were documented for the participating developing bilingual writers.

**Strategic codeswitching during the writing process** All developing bilingual children codeswitched in the process of composing texts. These young writers drew on their dual language knowledge as they searched for ways to express themselves about things that mattered to them. Patterns of codeswitching were related to the classroom or language context, a child's language dominance, and the interlocutor's target language proficiency. Most Spanish-dominant children codeswitched in both L1 and L2 contexts, while one Spanish-dominant child codeswitched in the L1 context only. Homza (1995) and Pérez (2004) found related patterns of codeswitching for Spanish-dominant bilingual writers: regardless of the language of the text, the children's other language was typically involved in the writing process to some degree.

On the other hand, English-dominant children only codeswitched in the L2 context (with two exceptions, which are noted in the following

**Table 6 Proposed model of emergent bilingual writing development for Spanish-dominant and English-dominant students in a Two-Way Bilingual Education program**

<i>Phenomenon</i>	<i>Definition relative to this model</i>	<i>Contingent upon</i>	<i>Expectation for Spanish-dominant student in a partial immersion Two-Way program</i>	<i>Expectation for English-dominant student in a partial immersion Two-Way program</i>
I. Strategic Code-switching	Use of one language while engaged in the process of writing the other	Relative strength of L1 and L2 (language dominance); bilingual development; linguistic context; language L1 proficiencies of interlocutor	Use of L1 while composing in English and/or use of English while composing in	Use of English while composing in L2
A. Oral codeswitching	Oral use of one language while engaged in the process of writing the other	(same as above)	Use of oral L1 while composing in English and/or use of oral English while composing in L1	Use of oral English while composing in L2
B. Written (lexical) codeswitches	Written use of one language while engaged in the process of writing the other	(same as above)	Use of written English while composing in L1	Use of written English while composing in L2

*Continued*

<i>Phenomenon</i>	<i>Definition relative to this model</i>	<i>Contingent upon</i>	<i>Expectation for Spanish-dominant student in a partial immersion Two-Way program</i>	<i>Expectation for English-dominant student in a partial immersion Two-Way program</i>
II. Literacy Application	Developmentally appropriate application of cross-linguistic processes/skills	Relative strength in L1 and L2 literacy (biliterate development)	(see below)	(see below)
A. Application of cross-linguistic emergent literacy processes and skills	Developmental and temporary cross-linguistic processes/skills (these disappear and/or develop into developmentally mature literacy processes/skills)	(same as above and opportunity)	What initially occurs in L1-only, occurs next in both languages, then in English only, then in neither (or) What initially occurs in L1-only, occurs next in both languages, then in neither	What initially occurs in English-only, occurs next in both languages, then in L2-only, then in neither (or) What initially occurs in English-only, occurs next in both languages, then in neither
B. Application of cross-linguistic mature literacy processes and skills	Cross-linguistic processes, skills once learned/acquired are maintained (eventually in both languages)	(same as above and opportunity)	What initially occurs in L1-only then occurs in both languages	What initially occurs in English-only then occurs in both languages

*Continued*

Table 6 Continued

Phenomenon	Definition relative to this model	Contingent upon	Expectation for Spanish-dominant student in a partial immersion Two-Way program	Expectation for English-dominant student in a partial immersion Two-Way program
III. Interliteracy	Temporary application of language-specific linguistic elements and writing conventions of one language to other language	Bilingual development and biliterate development (i.e. relative strength of L1/L2, and relative strength of L1/L2 literacy)	(see below)	(see below)
A. Application of language-specific linguistic elements of literacy of one language to the other	Temporary application of language-specific linguistic elements of writing (i.e. syntax, phonology, semantics) of one language to the other	Bilingual development (i.e. relative strength of L1 and L2)	What initially occurs in L1-only, occurs temporarily in both L1 and English, and then in L1-only	What initially occurs in English-only, occurs temporarily in both English and L2, and then in English-only
B. Application of language-specific writing conventions of one language to the other	Temporary application of language-specific writing conventions (i.e. graphophonemic relationships, orthography, print conventions) of one language to the other	Biliterate development (i.e. relative strength of L1 and L2 literacy)	What initially occurs in L1-only, occurs temporarily in both L1 and English, and then in L1-only and (possibly) what initially occurs in English-only, occurs temporarily in both L1 and English, and then in English-only	What initially occurs in English-only, occurs temporarily in both English and L2, and then in English-only

paragraph). Young bilingual writers used their L1 while writing in the L2 to monitor their writing and to ask questions during writing (Halsall, 1986; Hudelson, 1989). The least Spanish-proficient child rehearsed in L1 whether creating text in L1 or L2. Homza (1995) found a similar pattern in Spanish-dominant children of low English-proficiency: children prepared stories in the native language whether the target language of the text was L1 or L2. In contrast to patterns of oral language use around the creation of text, developing bilingual children understood text to be mostly monolingual. When lexical codeswitches did occur, they were highly consistent with classroom oral language patterns: students generally did not codeswitch to Spanish in English essays but did codeswitch to English in some of the Spanish essays (Howard and Christian, 1997).

Written codeswitches were usually related to American popular culture or proper names of places children had visited for which no equivalent term existed in Spanish (e.g. Pokémon, Disney World). Two interesting exceptions of written codeswitches in English texts involving English-dominant children exemplify another strategy used by these developing bilingual children. Both Barbara and Jeremy wrote stories about trips to Latin American countries that included lexical codeswitches related to their experiences in these countries. Barbara wrote about an uncle she visited in the Dominican Republic, 'tio Melvin' (Uncle Melvin), and food she ate on this trip, 'jamon' (ham). Jeremy visited Cuba during school vacation and painted a portrait of 'La Habana' (Havana) through his description of places he visited and people he met. Although both children knew the English equivalents of these terms, as documented in the corresponding WW transcripts, they purposely used their knowledge of one language to help them convey a message in the other. They chose particular words from the other language to connote their understanding of what they may consider to be unique cultural constructs (Pérez, 2004) and not because of linguistic shortcomings or gaps in their vocabulary.

While these examples are exceptions to the general trends exhibited by students in the English-context, they represent a type of strategic codeswitching that has been documented in young and older bilingual writers alike. Friedlander (1990: 112) found that writers who use the language related to the acquisition of the topic knowledge 'write better texts containing more content, and create more effective texts'. Perhaps Barbara and Jeremy's use of topic related vocabulary brought back vivid memories of their experiences, helping them remember more details to include in their stories. Or, maybe the codeswitches represent purposeful stylistic choices the children made while preparing and drafting their texts.

In these instances, bilingual children's lexical codeswitching appeared to be purposeful and used with awareness (Edelsky, 1986; Pérez, 2004).

One other type of lexical codeswitch occurred in Spanish texts only. Some children used Spanish hybrid terms stemming from English words (e.g. Katherine's use of 'qucao' [cookout] and Steven's use of 'deiqueal' [daycare]). Homza (1995) and Pérez (2004) also found that children frequently used loan words or invented English gerunds in their Spanish texts that were related to their experiences in English. Children's use of these types of words illustrate not only the influence of English on the Spanish lexicon, but, more important, that these children have learned common colloquialisms from their Dominican-American community. This suggests at least an early sociolinguistic competence (Reyes, 2001).

**Positive literacy application** Bilingual children in the present study developed spontaneous biliteracy: the acquisition of literacy in Spanish and English without formal instruction in both languages (Reyes, 2001). Like the children in Homza's (1995) study, these Spanish-dominant and English-dominant children had been receiving literacy instruction only in their dominant language prior to this study. However, when the children began writing in both languages, they employed the majority of their writing related behaviors and skills cross-linguistically and bi-directionally. They were developing two written language systems by applying what they knew about writing in one language to the other language. They applied specific hypotheses, more general strategies, and abstract knowledge about language and literacy to both languages (Edelsky, 1989; Manyak, 2000; Moll and Dworin, 1996; Pérez, 2004; Verhoeven, 1994).

The current findings suggest that developing bilingual children's cross-linguistic strategies and behaviors involve emergent literacy processes/skills related to encoding, spelling, monitoring, punctuation, capitalization, editing, and revising. These temporary behaviors have been documented in earlier studies of young monolingual writers. For example, the language of these young bilingual writers during the act of composing, like that of their monolingual counterparts, was characterized by procedural statements and rereading for sense making (Childers, 1981; Clay, 1977; Graves, 1983b; Sipe, 1998). In the current study, both Spanish-dominant and English-dominant developing bilingual writers applied these monitoring strategies cross-linguistically in the process of creating both L1 and L2 texts. Edelsky (1989: 87) also documented these types of temporary literacy scaffolds, which provided young Spanish-dominant writers, in a transitional bilingual education program, opportunities to construct, revise, and abandon 'hypotheses'.

Children in the current study based much of their encoding on sound-symbol relations and many of their early, unconventional writing segments on the syllable. Other researchers (Clay, 1975; Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1982; Pérez, 1994) also found the syllable to be an important unit in young children's acquisition of written language.

Data from these participants indicated that emergent literacy processes either disappear or develop into parallel mature literacy processes. Similarly, Sipe (1998) found that monolingual children internalized outward expressions of cognitive processes during writing as they learned to control the processes of encoding. Once they internalized verbalization and metacognition, children began to focus more on the meaning of the text they were creating. The developing bilingual children in this study verbalized less toward the end of first grade as they gained control of emergent literacy processes, such as encoding, in the L1. As indicated in the proposed model of bilingual writing development, young bilingual writers first learn to control these processes in L1 while still outwardly expressing cognitive processes in L2. Eventually, these early writing processes are mastered in L2 as the child further develops that language and learns the appropriate phonetic system and language-specific conventions of print.

It should be noted that the application, or transfer, process of emergent and mature literacy skills is not fixed and may depend on a bilingual's general language proficiency and literacy development. For example, not all emergent processes/skills that have been developed in the L1 will necessarily transfer to the L2 if the child learns the parallel mature literacy process/skill first. In this case, the mature process is learned in the L1 and then transferred to the L2, bypassing the transfer process for the parallel emergent literacy skill. This transfer pattern is consistent with Cummins' (1981a) Common Underlying Proficiency model.

Some mature literacy processes/skills were observed in the L2-context only for some children, seemingly contradicting the proposed direction of transfer as explained by the model of bilingual writing development. However, particular behaviors documented in one language context represent only those processes/skills that were observed within the parameters of the study; absence of the behaviors does not necessarily mean that the child had not developed the particular behavior/skill in the other language. Rather, limitations related to data collection or analyses may have prevented the observation of the particular behavior/skill in the L1 context. The assumption is that if a child exhibits a behavior/skill in one language, she or he has access to this behavior/skill in the other language (Cummins, 1981a,b, 1991).

Developing bilingual writers demonstrated an understanding of such

literate practices as abstract knowledge of the sound and structure of language and vocabulary in two languages. Although an examination of this type of knowledge is beyond the scope of the current work, it is important to note that metalinguistic awareness (i.e. the general ability to manipulate language as a formal system) is characteristic of young developing bilinguals (August and Hakuta, 1997; Hoffman, 1993; Lyon, 1996; Reyes, 2001; Romaine, 1995).

**Interliteracy** In the current study, young bilingual writers applied several language-specific linguistic elements of literacy and/or print conventions to the other language in the process of developing two written language systems. L1 and/or L2 writing samples of some Spanish-dominant and English-dominant children showed characteristics of transitional writing (Routman, 1994): while much of the writing was standard, there were numerous instances of inventive spelling and inconsistent use of punctuation as these young writers were still in the process of developing each language and dual language literacy skills. Like the children in Reyes' (2001) study, invented spelling in L2 sometimes relied on L1 phonology (i.e. children wrote words as they pronounced them based on the sound-symbol correspondence that is related to their L1). Some Spanish-dominant children also applied L2-specific sound-symbol correspondence to L1 text.

Current findings suggest that the phenomenon of interliteracy, or the application of language-specific elements of literacy from one language to the other, is contingent upon a student's bilingual and biliterate development and is parallel to their oral interlanguage. Interliteracy thus represents growth of biliteracy and not a backward developmental progression. When children apply language-specific elements from one language to the other, they are exhibiting general literacy knowledge although they may not yet know particular elements or conventions of one of their languages. This application may result in inaccurate language, but the process is consistent with normal bilingual/biliterate development. As the children's languages develop and literacy in those languages advances, they move beyond the stage of interliteracy and toward standard productions in each language.

It should be noted that not all language-specific print conventions were applied across languages. Two, in particular, seemed to be off limits to interliteracy. For example, children applied accents only to Spanish text and apostrophes only to English texts. The language-specific nature of these conventions was clear to the children from the beginning of the study. This awareness may have been due to specific instruction, the prevalence of available print resources, or a combination of both.

## Implications for future research

The research reported here was based on documentation of children's bilingual writing processes over the course of six months. The length of time was adequate for effectively describing the children's writing processes within and across languages, and for identifying similarities and differences across the two language groups and among children within a group. However, it was not possible to discuss changes that occurred over time, except in the most tentative way. Longer term research using case study and ethnographic techniques is necessary in order to describe and explain more fully the writing processes of young children writing in two languages, similar to research that has been conducted with native English-speaking children (e.g. Calkins, 1983; Graves, 1983a). These investigations would benefit from an added component of home and community literacy forms and practices that students are exposed to outside school.

It would be very useful if such research followed children from their initial school-related exposure to writing in both L1 and L2 in order to describe changes over time. Although this study documented developing bilingual children's initial formal exposure to writing in the L2, the children had been writing in L1 for quite some time. A comparison of the writing processes of developing bilingual students from majority- and minority-language backgrounds who are exposed to authentic writing opportunities in both L1 and L2 simultaneously merits investigation (perhaps in a 50/50 TWBE program). In this way it would be possible to further investigate the proposed model of bilingual writing development and add to the sparse literature on developing bilingual children's writing processes in native and non-native languages that is representative of the growing bilingual population in the USA.

Lastly, the multiple case study design is an inherent strength as well as a limitation of the current investigation. Because of the low number of participants, there is no expectation that we will be able to generalize the findings of this study to all developing bilingual writers of comparable ages. But, we can particularize the findings by comparing them with what is happening in other classroom contexts where children are developing biliteracy and bilingualism (Clarke, 1995). In this way, the case study can provide rich insights about a specific situation and add nuance and subtlety to the perspective of theory. Thus, we may use the experiences of Lucy, Brian, Katherine, Jennifer, Jeremy, Steven, Jose, and Barbara as a starting point for discussion of how to benefit most fully and effectively from knowledge about the individual and collective writing processes of young, developing bilinguals.

**Note**

1. For a detailed description of the First Steps WDC and a listing of the individual indicators, see Raison and Rivalland (1994).

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