"I know English so many, Mrs. Abbott": Reciprocal Discoveries in a Linguistically Diverse Classroom

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Abbott and Grose draw on examples from Abbott's first-grade classroom to illustrate a classroom environment that supports second language learners while drawing on linguistic diversity to enrich the language learning of all students.

After we sang Happy Birthday to Andreas, Jeannette suggested we sing it in Chinese! Ming and Yen helped her lead the class. Mrs. Lopez had just come in to pick up her daughter Maria, and she promptly taught us to sing "Cumpleanos Feliz" in Spanish. For four months, I had featured the linguistic diversity brought to our class by three ESL children, striving to turn that diversity into enrichment for us all. With the spontaneous enjoyment at Andreas' birthday party, I saw the effort was paying off.

From early in the school year, Suzette realized the primary challenge of her Inclusion first-grade class: how to integrate into her program three children who spoke little or no English. As a daycare and public school teacher in New York City for 20 years, Suzette had already enjoyed the richness of a multiethnic student body. And years ago, she said, "I was a new immigrant myself—when I arrived from South Africa, I was surprised at how foreign I felt, even though I spoke English. I have always tried as a teacher to draw into the class those children who are potentially 'outsiders,' to assure that they are not seen as less knowledgeable or capable because they are different or speak another language."

This time the challenge went further, beyond the three ESL learners, to encompass *all* the children. How could Suzette build on the opportunity of fortuitous language diversity to enrich the language experiences of the whole class?

The literature is full of evidence that a rich curriculum and a positive group environment support and enhance the learning of individuals, both first- and second-language learners (Altwerger & Ivener, 1994; Fox, 1980; Peregoy & Boyle, 1993). Further, as Lim and Watson (1993) write, "effective language learning, either native or second language, depends not on direct teaching of identified skills, but rather on a sound philosophy of learning and teaching, underlying a meaning-filled curriculum" (p. 393). Part of Suzette's philosophy, thus, included giving "children windows through which to see *many* worlds" (Kiefer & DeStefano, 1985, p. 171).

This is the story of Suzette's classroom. The elements described bring to life a theoretical basis for understanding how a rich language arts curriculum serves as fertile ground for the development of both first- and second-language learners as they are actively involved in constructing their deepening knowledge of English (Hudelson, 1994; Peregoy

& Boyle, 1993). It also highlights the unanticipated benefits for all learners that emerge from the reciprocal learning in the classroom (Edelsky, 1989; Kiefer & DeStefano, 1985; Moll & Greenberg, 1990). We illustrate the range of scaffolding techniques (the temporary instructional supports—personal, curricular, and social) that help emergent language learners move beyond what they could do on their own (Cazden, 1992; Boyle & Peregoy, 1990; Peregoy & Boyle, 1993), and we show the importance of teacher autonomy, which allows flexibility to respond to children's funds of knowledge (Moll, 1988; Moll & Greenberg, 1990).

SUZETTE'S STORY

I teach at a small public school in an urban community. The student body is predominantly White and middle class. It includes the children of academics and professionals associated with the many colleges and universities in the area. We also have a number of families recently arrived from China, Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean.

When school started, my first grade, one of two in the building, had fifteen children, four of them new to the school. Among the newcomers was Maria, dark bangs framing animated, brown eyes, who came from Venezuela during the summer. Then in early October, two new children appeared: Yen, quiet and serious, two years in America but speaking Mandarin Chinese at home, and Ming, slight in build, mischievous in his smile, who had just arrived from China. Yen could speak some English; Ming and Maria spoke no English at all.

Resources and Routines

Getting started, I knew I was not alone; I could muster the resources at hand—if I could figure out how to use them. First, naturally, there were the parents and caregivers of the children. I was also fortunate to be in touch with a volunteer literacy support program directed by a friend and former colleague. When Claudia heard of my Chinese students, she introduced me to a new volunteer, Mrs. Lu, born in China, educated at Wellesley, now aged 80 and interested in doing something new and worthwhile. As soon as this sprightly little woman came into my classroom, in blue jeans and cropped white hair, she plopped down on a tiny chair to engage Ming and Yen—but she quickly became a point of interest to the whole class.

Finally, there were the children themselves. I decided to address the challenge of the three second-language learners directly with the whole class. Just because these children spoke little or no English, I said, did not mean that they did not know anything. I asked the class to help Yen, Ming, and Maria learn the routines, just as they would help any of their classmates.

From the start, I sought to establish a relationship with the parents of my three second-language learners (Cummins, 1994), to show them my interest in their children's special qualities, to allay their concerns, and to gather information. I found that telephone calls or face-to-face encounters, before or after school, were more useful than sending notes home. Fortunately for me, all the parents spoke some English. In addition, Mrs. Lu was effective in helping me communicate with Ming and Yen and their parents. In my initial contacts, I sought feedback about how their children were talking about their school experiences. Ming's parents related that he liked "English school" because he could play. During this talk, I also learned that Ming was attending Chinese school where he was learning to read and write in Chinese, a useful bit of information for the future. Maria's mother, Mrs. Lopez, arranged her work schedule to spend time each week in the class, helping her daughter but also making books and materials for all of us.

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Language arts in my classroom are integrated throughout the day and across the curriculum to give children experience with a variety of reading and writing activities in various pleasurable and comfortable ways. In the first weeks of school, I felt it important to establish the class routines. Knowing that there is a plan for the day and assuming responsibility for different jobs in the room helps all children build independence; it also supports the idea of a community that works together. These established routines and procedures serve as particularly valuable scaffolds for second-language learners who are struggling to make sense of their new environment and language (Peregoy & Boyle, 1993; Sutton, 1989).

We begin with a morning meeting to lay out the day's plan and engage in interactive chart reading and various opportunities for children to share ideas and personal information. A written schedule shows the times each day for focused reading and writing activities, in large and small groups and independently. An important activity is reading the illustrated job chart which directs individual children's responsibilities. Mrs. Lu translated the words so that Ming and Yen could understand how they could participate alongside their classmates in this fundamental aspect of the community.

Fortunately, within the broad mandates of our district frameworks, I had the autonomy to develop my own curriculum, an essential component for making reciprocal learning work. Thus I could seize targets of learning opportunity, to build upon each child's knowledge and abilities. I sought ways to include and highlight the languages of the three ESL children. One morning, I invited Maria and her mother to

teach all the class to count in Spanish. As they began, another child, Estella, whose father is Puerto Rican, I learned, joined in. We made a class chart with the English and the Spanish words, and from then on we often counted in Spanish as part of our math time. A few days later, Yen's mother came in to help him and Ming teach the children the numbers in Chinese. Jeannette, whose mother is Chinese American, was so intrigued with the Chinese numerals that she copied them all from the chart into her own writing folder.

Other children asked if their parents or relatives could visit too, and one thing led to another over coming weeks as children shared stories about hearing different languages in their extended families and contributed more samples to our growing collection of multilingual charts. Andreas often had a hard time settling into school, but his first moment of pride and success came as he, his mother, and little brother stood in front of the whole class and counted in Greek. Following another counting lesson, inspired by Liza whose mother is Korean, an interesting discussion developed as the children studied and compared the Chinese and Korean number words written on two charts hanging next to each other. Some children commented on the intricacy of the individual Korean characters, wondering if it was more difficult to learn than Chinese.

In those early weeks, I relied on Mrs. Lu and Mrs. Lopez to translate during meetings and to make sure the children understood the schedule and special activities. Mrs. Lu also wrote the Chinese words alongside the English and Spanish words for the months of the year. Then we added the days of the week in Spanish and Chinese to the English word cards in our class pocket chart, making the daily calendar activity more accessible to everyone. Ming, Yen, and Maria could remind us how to read the Chinese or Spanish, and the rest of the class felt proud at reading another language besides English. Many times in those early weeks, I noticed Maria copying English words from around the room, or Ming referring to the daily schedule. Other children liked to copy the Chinese or Spanish or Haitian Creole number words as well.

Risks and Rewards: A Rich Language Arts Curriculum

Routines established, we set about creating a supportive classroom environment in which all the children, those who knew English and those who did not, would feel comfortable taking risks and working together to build their language and literacy proficiency. Reading aloud to the class was central to my language arts program. The children looked forward to this time each day when they could stretch out on the rug or curl up against the cushions, and enter the world of literature. I combed libraries and discount book sales for a variety of literature that would entrance the children while reflecting and extending their diverse experiences and linguistic knowledge (Natarella, 1980; Nurss & Hough, 1992).

Moon Rope (Ehlert & Prince, 1992), a beautifully illustrated Peruvian legend, is published in a bilingual format with Spanish and English texts side by side. I invited Mrs. Lopez to join me, asking her to read the Spanish text in turn, as I read the English. On another occasion, the two of us read alternate parts of Lynn Reiser's *Margaret and Margarita* (1993), about two girls speaking their own languages and finding a connecting point.

Some children became restless during the reading of the unfamiliar language parts. I initiated a discussion eliciting children's reactions. Maria expressed her delight at the chance to hear the familiar Spanish language. Estella beamed with pride and pleasure at her ability to understand both the Spanish and the English. Other children talked about the difficulty of paying attention, when it sounded so different. As the year progressed, we came back to this topic several times, as children thought more and more about what it was like not to understand what was being said, and what little devices or strategies would help.

Next, I found two books, *At the Beach* and *Snow,* by Huy Voun Lee (1994), in which a mother teaches her child to write in Chinese calligraphy. Ming and Yen read the Chinese characters to the class. Later, during independent reading time, I noticed two of the English speaking girls carefully copying Chinese characters from the two books. They asked Ming and Yen for help when they ran into difficulty.

Jeannette brought in *Jingwei Filling the Sea* by Feng Jiannan (1991), which had Chinese and English texts side by side. "You can read the English and Mrs. Lu can read the Chinese, just like Maria's mother and you did," she proposed. At the conclusion of that reading, the children commented on how different the Chinese language sounded from English, and I overheard some of them experimenting with the tones—a nice variation on the usual first-grade language play (Cazden, 1992).

In the late fall, one of the children asked me to read *My Father's Dragon* (Gannet, 1948). Conscious of the wide variation in linguistic sophistication in the class, I wondered how to make this engaging series of chapter books accessible to all. First, I gathered together all the animals and related objects I could find. We made the eighteen crocodiles with lollipops, for instance, from photocopies but with real lollipops taped to their tails. This use of artifacts and dramatization not only helped Yen, Ming, and Maria, it delighted all the children, as each reading was full of unexpected surprises. The children loved taking turns manipulating the characters as the stories unfolded. The experience was such a success that it led to a sustained interest in dragons that became central to our curriculum, culminating many months later in a grand celebration of the Chinese New Year.

Several times a week, I read poetry aloud, usually writing the poems on large charts, and encouraging the children to join in. Sometimes for the ESL children, I found it useful to ask their parents or Mrs. Lu to translate the poems I read in

class. Once they understood the gist, they could enjoy the other elements of rhyme, and rhythmic patterns and imagery.

Pursuing the dragon theme, I found Lillian Moore's poem, "Dragon Smoke" (Prelutsky, 1986), a lovely example of metaphor on the idea of seeing your breath in the cold winter air. The children joked about breathing "dragon smoke" and quite literally showed Ming and Maria what was meant in the poem. A few days later, as we walked outside, Ming pointed to the exhaust from the cars driving by and, with a twinkle in his eye, said "Dragon smoke!" and then blew his own. He had truly understood the figurative and literal language, and along with the others, could enjoy the fun of it.

Poetry also inspired other connections. One morning, Jeannette came in to school grinning broadly as she displayed a large gap in her upper gum. Tim, who often had trouble staying involved during shared reading, recalled two poems about teeth that we had read before. Someone pointed out that the title of one of the poems had the Spanish word for tooth written next to it. I then asked for the Chinese word. Yen and Ming each responded, but with different words. After we tried to say both, Makeda offered to find Mrs. Lu to ask her which word was correct. We now had the word for tooth in three languages: Chinese, English and Spanish, and we saw that there can be several words for the same meaning.

After finishing the books in the Dragons of Blueland series, we wrote and practiced reading a group message to send home asking for any dragon books, toys or pictures. This request led to the engagement of even more parents in the curriculum and opened new experiences and connections.

In February, Tim, a monolingual English-speaking child, brought in *Vejigante Masquerader* (Delacre, 1993), a bilingual story about a Puerto Rican boy who dresses up in a special mask and costume as part of the Fiesta during Carnival in Ponce. Estella was bobbing up and down with excitement. She said that she had a Vejigante mask at home, given to her by her father. When she brought in her mask, the children kept trying it on, and we made plans to make our own.

Talking about the mask, I started to say the word in my normal South African accent, but caught myself and changed my mouth into the American pronunciation. Sabrina, a child who rarely contributed to language arts discussions, looked up in fascination. "I know what you did. You started to say 'mah . . .', and then you changed and said 'mask'." Eric quickly explained, "She talks like that because she comes from South Africa." Sabrina had picked up the nuanced accents, and Eric could explain why. I wondered if this kind of metalinguistic thinking would have happened without our ongoing focus on the rich language differences in the classroom (Moll, 1988).

In my class, writing and reading go hand in hand, each helping to reinforce the other. Whenever possible, I enlisted Mrs. Lu and Mrs. Lopez in helping the three emergent English learners with their writing. I explained that there were many ways to write and spell, and all were acceptable. Maria initially wrote in Spanish, sometimes dictating first to her mother and then translating with help. Ming and Yen drew many pictures, and labeled them using both English and Chinese. Some children wrote stories based on published books, or on personal experiences. Tim, a most resistant writer, was inspired one day by Yen's presentation to each child of a folded paper boat. Clutching the creation, he recalled a trip he had taken to Venice with his parents, and he struggled to produce a series of picture stories about gondolas—a first for him and the start of a collection of boat stories in the class.

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Most children started using invented spelling and we had several class discussions, collecting suggestions for ways to figure out spelling. At first, Ming, Yen, and Maria hesitated to experiment in their writing. I realized that they were concentrating on gaining command of vocabulary to convey their ideas. It was premature for them to focus on the details of the sounds (Nurss & Hough, 1992). Instead, I helped them use picture dictionaries and other books, as well as the environmental print in the room. Our evergrowing Word Wall of common sight words was especially valued by the two boys, and at one point Ming actually added some Chinese translations. I was confident that as they wrote more and gained confidence in their English language, they would eventually experiment with spelling, too.

Ming was a child who immersed himself in what interested him—mice, whales, outer space. Sometime in late October, I noticed that he was drawing pictures of mice in his writing folder day after day. One day during Writing Share, he showed everyone his drawings. The children were fascinated both by the humorous way he drew the mice and his delight in sharing. For Show and Tell on another day, he produced a photograph of himself in his mother's laboratory, wearing a surgical gown. Here was an outside resource that I could not have forseen, for as he showed the photograph, he spoke one English word, "mice." Sure enough, there behind him were stacks of cages full of mice for the laboratory experiments.

For our next shared poem I chose one about mice and encouraged the class to write or draw a response to the last line, "I think mice are nice." The children studied Ming's stylized and whimsical mice, and learned from his technique as they made their own illustrations. He was now the expert! The children were so pleased by the results that two girls volunteered to arrange a display of the large poetry chart and all the children's writing and drawings to hang outside our room for all the school to see.

In preparation for a trip to the science museum to see a movie about whales, we poured over the pictures in whale books. Ming became fascinated and his enthusiasm was contagious; soon his classmates recognized him as the Killer Whale expert. Thereafter, anyone coming across a picture or book relating to whales rushed over to show it to Ming for his assessment.

After I read William Steig's (1971) *Amos and Boris* to the class, Ming sat with the book, studying the illustrations and diligently copying the opening sentences describing the little mouse who loves the ocean. He highlighted the word "ocean" on his paper, as he drew his beloved mouse. A few days later, he drew a picture of himself watching the mouse happily riding on the whale's back. All three of his characters had speech bubbles: the Ming and Amos characters announced, "I like whales," and the whale replied, "I like Ming." I was not surprised at his picture, but very impressed that he had incorporated the dialogue format which we had only recently introduced in class.

One day during Writing Share time, the usually taciturn Yen spoke up shyly, "I want to show you something." He produced his writing assignment from Chinese School, marked with a large grade A. As his classmates scrutinized the unfamiliar Chinese characters, Yen's confidence grew and he told everyone that he has to "write them pretty." To my astonishment, he further explained that when he sometimes forgets a line or mark, "the phonics help me to remember how to write the Chinese." Later Mrs. Lu explained to me that many Chinese schools now use an alphabetic phonetic approach to teach reading and writing (Ho & Bryant, 1997). Here was a whole new discovery for me to pursue!

We studied Yen's writing sheet, noticing special accent marks, and discussed how these marks told Yen which way his voice should go. The children tried to follow, using their own voices. Seeing this homework sample, I suddenly understood how strange our writing process must have seemed, compared to his experience in Chinese School (Anderson & Gunderson, 1997). I was gaining insights at the same time as my children.

For Valentine's Day, the children had spent days planning a sale of art and baked goods. Maria noticed when she came in that day that the morning message had not yet been written. "I know what to write," she announced. With my help sounding out some words, and by looking around the room for others, she happily wrote on the chart: "Get ready for the Sale."

Risks and Rewards: The Social Environment

In the normal course of their interactions and play, the children were experimenting and making discoveries about language. As the second-language learners were taking risks and experimenting with English for the purpose of communication and social interaction, the other children were making discoveries about the nature of language, their own and others (Peregoy & Boyle, 1993).

Yen became entranced with the earth-moving machines, trucks and other vehicles in our gravel box which I had set up because of the children's interest in the road building going on outside the school. One day as he and several other children were playing, I overheard him asking, "What is 'worse'?" After a moment, I realized that Andreas had told Yen that he was "making it worse," an abstract concept, difficult for Yen to grasp. It also became clear that Andreas did not want Yen and the other children to play in the box. I stepped closer to hear what the problem was, and to see if the children could come up with a solution. They did: a bigger gravel box, so Yen and Andreas could work in parallel—a fine example of the children's problem solving, but also a social breakthrough for Yen.

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Maria's language development was very much involved with her social relationships. In September and October, I would see her by herself in the playground, watching the other girls. She stayed on the fringe of small groups, using her drawing skills to communicate, at one point writing a wordless book about the weather. Soon she found Estella, whose Puerto Rican heritage and fluent Spanish made her a special ally. They often wrote and did other projects together. Maria was a keen observer of the social patterns in the class, often getting ideas from other children, and mimicking English phrases which she heard; a favorite was "cool . . . it's cool." One morning in mid year, Mrs. Lopez reported Maria's comment that "there are so many troubles" in the class, referring to the ebb and flow of relationships among the girls. Her parents reassured Maria that it was nothing new; it was just that Maria now understood enough English to follow the squabbles. On another day, Maria and Estella were playing near three other girls. The three were commenting that Ming and Yen were "so lucky, because they can tell secrets," since they spoke Chinese together. At that point, Estella spoke up, pointing out that she and Maria could tell secrets too, in Spanish.

Large group meetings were particularly difficult times for Maria and Ming in the early part of the year. They would wriggle and fidget, and I could see their frustration as they tried to make sense of all the English language around them. Ming would often lie down and tune out. Sometimes he seemed exhausted (Freeman & Freeman, 1993). Yen took it upon himself to confide in Mrs. Lu his concern that Ming turned his head away in the big group activities. During one whole-group math class, Yen saw that Ming was not understanding

the task at hand. To the surprise of his classmates, he spoke up. "Let me explain to Ming," and proceeded to do so in Chinese. Without prompting, Yen had learned how he could help others, and set a fine example for the class (Forman & Cazden, 1994).

One day during Meeting Time, as we were looking at the ubiquitous dragon toys, it became clear that Ming had something to say about a particular little green winged dragon. He raised his hand and tried to speak, haltingly pronouncing the word "dragon," but trying to say something else as well. It happened to be a day when Mrs. Lu was there, sitting behind him. The children were used to hearing Ming and Yen speak together in Chinese. Now they heard Ming explaining his thoughts to Mrs Lu. From their facial expressions, and their quiet attentiveness, it was clear that they were very eager to hear what "secrets" Ming had to convey. Mrs. Lu duly reported Ming's observation about the similarity between one little dragon and another animal, a dinosaur. The other children accepted his point with interest, and many agreed with him. They realized for themselves that Ming's difficulty in expressing himself in English did not mean he did not have knowledge to share.

Not too long afterwards, Ming's confidence allowed him to risk taking the next step. In a math discussion about different coins, he started to say something while pushing his hand back and forth in front of him. Listening very carefully, I made out the words, "quarter, my mother." He was enacting placing quarters in the washing machine coin slot! Once the other children understood his idea, and his participation was validated, he sat back with a smile of satisfaction.

From halting single words like "mice," to overgeneralizations—"I love that book . . . I love that whale . . . I love poems," he began to formulate spontaneous sentences, and ask about words he did not understand. Following my reading of a story about a doctor giving a child a shot with a needle, Ming asked, "What's a needle?" Dora immediately responded, "It's when you get a shot. A shot with a needle, not shooting." As she spoke, she acted out receiving a shot with a needle. A chorus of children began explaining to Ming, and Yen added a further explanation in Chinese. Ming was able to ask for clarification and, at the same time, the other children recognized the potential semantic confusion that was posed.

A climactic moment came one day when I reentered the room; Ming looked up at me and asked in a matter-of-fact tone, "Where have you been?" After telling him, I commented on how much more he was speaking in class now. He beamed and replied, "I know English so many, Mrs. Abbott!" I could only smile back in full agreement.

Building on the Children's Experiences

In December, Yen went to China for a month. That gave us an excuse to study the globe—from Boston, Yen had traveled across the whole United States and the Pacific Ocean to China. Everyone was excited to receive a letter from Yen from China. The stamps were of special interest, but the important news was that he had lost a tooth, information that was quickly added to the classroom tooth chart. On his return, Yen and his parents showed photos and traced on the globe the places they had visited and the route of the airplane. This discussion helped Yen reenter the class, and all the children began to see themselves in relation to the greater world in a way that made sense to them.

Just before the December vacation, the two first grades planned a joint Peace Breakfast, inviting all the families to bring samples of their holiday foods to share with everyone. Using the children's dictated language, we typed a simple reminder which they could read themselves and which they illustrated individually, showing the foods reflecting their different celebrations. For the occasion, we learned "The Sharing Song" in English and "De Colores" in Spanish. The songs were written on large charts which the children illustrated to help them remember the words. We also practiced along with an audio tape to make sure we pronounced the Spanish correctly. Later Mrs. Lopez confided to me Maria's comment: "Mrs. Abbott is doing well with Spanish. But her accent—I need to work with her on her mouth." It must have been reassuring for her to see her teacher also struggling with another language.

In early January, at Estella's suggestion, we read *Three Kings' Day* (McConnie Zapater, 1992), in acknowledgement of her celebration of that holiday. The children in the book eat *arroz con leche* (sweet rice with milk) as part of their celebration. Estella told us how delicious this is, so I asked her family for the recipe (cooking was a regular part of our curriculum and we often cooked recipes inspired by stories we read together). Not only did Estella's family send in the recipe, but also all the ingredients! I wrote the recipe up on a big chart, with clear illustrations and few words so that all the children could read it as we cooked. As always, some children loved it, and others did not even want a taste—but everyone enjoyed the cooking.

In early February, our dragon theme reached fever pitch as we began to prepare for the Chinese New Year. I read aloud *Lion Dancer* (Waters & Slovenz-Low, 1990) about a Chinese American child who learns to dance as part of the dragon. Jeannette's mother brought in a videotape of street dances in Beijing and some audio tapes of Chinese songs. Mrs. Lu picked a short, simple song to write out on a big chart, with small copies for the children's poetry folders. She wrote the Chinese characters on the top line over a phonemic transcription in English to help with the pronunciation. The third line of print was an English translation of the text. As we looked at the song on the big chart, I used the phrase "Chinese characters"; this led to a wonderful discussion about "characters" in books we'd read and how Chinese writing is made up of "characters."

Under Mrs. Lu's instruction, we practiced singing, and Yen and Ming helped us as well. Now they were the ones who were more language proficient than the rest of the class! As we worked to learn the Chinese words, a discussion arose comparing the sounds with those of the Spanish song we had learned earlier. Many children concluded that Spanish was easier for them because it sounded more like English. This led to further comments about how hard it must have been for Ming and Yen to learn English. By the looks on their faces I could see that this experience of trying to learn another language, especially one that is very different from one's own, had given many of the children their first clues about the complexity of language.

As the New Year approached, our preparations became more concentrated. Jeannette's mother came in twice to teach us the simple street dance. The other first grade made a large dragon of papier-mache to hold over their bodies during the parade. We arranged with all the other grade-level teachers to let us parade through their classrooms on the Festival Day. As we continued reading our book about Ernie Wan's celebration of Chinese New Year, we discussed costumes and colors, and all the preparations that had special meaning: for instance, that red signifies good fortune.

On the long-awaited day, the children came to school dressed in red, as requested in the note we'd sent home. All the families were invited. The other first grade assembled under their elegant dragon, and led the parade. We followed close behind, waving our fans and scarves, dancing in and out of the classes, down the stairs, through the kindergartens, and to the cafeteria.

After catching our breath, we sang "Xiao Hu Die" (Little Butterfly) to the wonder of the assembled company. Then we dined on dumplings and oranges, traditional New Year's food donated by a parent, and Mrs. Lu shared her memories of New Years in China seventy years ago.

The diverse contributions of the second-language learners had become the property of us all. As all the children gathered themselves together, and opened their New Year's envelopes, (a traditional feature contributed by a parent) they beamed and chatted all at the same time, tired, proud, and happy.

DISCUSSION

Teachers are pushed and pulled in all directions, urged to try one approach here, another technique there. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the current debate about teaching English as a second language or, more generally, the challenges faced by the teachers in a classroom with diverse language learners (Nieto, 1996; Hudelson, 1990, 1994). Good teaching emerges from the teachers' solid convictions, identification of a goal, and adherence to that goal through the flow of classroom life.

Believing that language learning "is an active, constructive holistic process, [that is] inherently social in nature" (Strickland & Strickland, 1997, p. 203), Suzette's goal was creation of a classroom environment that would nurture the integration of first- and second-language learners for the reciprocal and profound benefit of both groups (Hudelson, 1990; Nurss & Hough, 1992). In her regular visits to the classroom as supervisor of literacy volunteers, Claudia brought a fresh perspective that helped them both reflect on all that was really going on in that lively setting.

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The developing linguistic facility of the three second-language learners over the year was obvious, from Ming's risk taking in uttering the single word "mice," to, just three months later, his casual enquiry, "Where have you been?" (Urzua, 1980). Equally apparent, though not as expected, were the spontaneous initiatives of the other first-graders that demonstrated growing awareness of their own language and, at the same time, their interest and confidence in exploring the other languages around them. Sabrina, an English monolingual speaker, found nothing strange about choosing to take home *Margaret and Margarita,* fully confident of her ability to read both the Spanish and English texts.

Suzette's class worked as a case study of the benefits of reciprocity in multilingual elementary education. Far from distracting from the teaching of monolingual learners, the presence of the ESL children in a curriculum and environment that acknowledged and engaged their contributions, enhanced the learning for all. The "emphasis on substance and content facilitated the frequent occurrence of . . . metalinguistic and metacognitive events: the conscious examination of other's and one's own use of language and thinking" (Moll, 1988). The children's ability to talk about the elements of language grew; they became aware of the role of sounds, visual characteristics, intonation, and semantic flexibility. They learned to explain words like "worse" and "shot" in context (Cazden, 1992).

At another level, the children came to understand more deeply the purpose of language, both oral and written, and the way people across cultures use language to organize information, communicate meaning, make sense of the world. As he tried to understand his new land, Yen was alert to comparisons and differences. By spring, as he became more comfortable in English in a classroom that encouraged examination and celebration of diversity, he could comment

on the different physical features of Chinese and American people (Nieto, 1996). Ming, forever quantifying objects, proudly announced his love of Chinese history because it is "10,000 years old."

Creation of such an environment in which all children—second-language learners and primary English speakers—are challenged and encouraged to work together for reciprocal benefit, depends on three broad circumstances:

1. The teacher's belief, demonstrated in matters large and small, that all children have funds of knowledge to share (Moll & Greenberg, 1990), are capable of communicating their information and can be understood, by one means or another, whatever their spoken language (Nieto, 1996; Urzua, 1989);
2. The deployment of multiple forms of language and literacy scaffolding that encourage risk taking and that support experimentation, discovery, and communication (Boyle & Peregoy, 1990; Hudelson, 1990; Peregoy & Boyle, 1993);
3. An educational philosophy across the whole school that supports teacher autonomy in making curricular and pedagogical choices in response to the dynamic personality of the class (Moll, 1988).

Scaffolding in Suzette's class took many forms, from direct translation provided by parents, volunteers, and other classmates, to the establishment of set routines, to the use of pictures and multilingual print on the wall, to the dramatization of whole texts to make them vivid and memorable (Boyle & Peregoy, 1990; Peregoy & Boyle, 1993; Sutton, 1989). Important, too, was the way in which children sought out and found their own resources, turning to each other or asking others for clarification (Chomsky, 1980; Forman & Cazden, 1994).

Ming's successful struggle to convey his understanding of the use of quarters marked a big step toward community participation. It was Suzette's scaffolding, her close attention, her belief that she could understand, and her restatement for the class of Ming's message, that propelled him forward into other attempts at communication in English (Hudelson, 1990; Urzua, 1980).

At the same time, her modeling of careful listening, patient attending and clarifying comments was noticed and unconsciously appreciated by many others in the class. The shared experiences, discussions, and investigations encouraged all the children to explore differences, draw comparisons and appreciate the variety and richness of their world. In a climate of mutual support and respect, they took steps toward understanding diversity and developing empathy (Nieto, 1996).

Routine displays of environmental print in several languages and sharing of bilingual texts were further forms of scaffolding. They served the vital purpose of validating the first languages of the ESL children, providing them with a place to show their own expertise and broadening the linguistic awareness of the whole class (Ernst & Richard, 1994/1995; Freeman & Freeman, 1993).

From parent participation came a more subtle process: their sharing of their family language and culture emphasized for the children (their own included) the positive view of "knowing" something, rather than the negative point of "not knowing" English (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Invitations to share language and culture conferred "official" status upon them (Nieto, 1996; Quintero & Huerta-Macias, 1990). For some of the children, this paralleled their own emerging feelings of having something positive to contribute, not just of being deficient in something that everyone else seemed to know. Maria thus expressed confidence that she could play the teacher role in helping Suzette improve her Spanish pronunciation.

Teachers have long known that parental participation is a key factor in children's success in school. Too often, though, parents feel uncomfortable or unwelcome in a vibrant classroom society; work or family commitments, or different cultural understandings about school and learning may also deter direct participation in school activities (Nieto, 1996).

Suzette's success in this endeavor came from her ability to show flexibility and creativity to accommodate potentially interested and interesting relatives, or other representatives of the community, finding materials and activities appropriate for different families (Mrs. Lu was a special resource, of course, but hardly unique). Bilingual shared reading was a natural way to engage parents who might have felt uncomfortable otherwise: the spontaneous dragon curriculum opened other avenues; cooking and arts projects, preparations for the various celebrations, and simple requests for information or artifacts that reflected home cultures offered other ways for parents to participate. These opportunities strengthened the home-school connection, and gave parents a closer view and better understanding of classroom life (Anderson & Gunderson, 1997; Quintero & Huerta-Macias, 1990).

Recognizing that "writing, speaking, listening and reading all nourish one another" (Rigg & Allen, 1989, p. xiii), Suzette provided opportunities for children to engage individually and together in a wide variety of meaningful activities, providing the "warm bath of language" (Rigg & Allen, 1989, p. xii) for the new English learners and allowing all children to construct their own understandings of how oral and written language works.

For this, teacher autonomy is the key. Ever mindful of the district-mandated curriculum frameworks, Suzette still was free to make choices that responded to who her students were, as individuals and as a group, choices that allowed them to "act as thinkers . . . not as passive givers and receivers of prepackaged curriculum" (Moll, 1988, p. 468). By following up on the children's interests and taking advantage of their experience outside the classroom, she helped

the class make connections that enhanced their global awareness in ways that were appropriate to their developmental stages.

Late into the spring, the number charts and birthday songs labeled by the children were displayed outside the classroom, attracting interest from students of all ages, as well as their parents. By all measures, the total of this first grade's language experience amounted to far more than the sum of its parts. ●

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CORRECTION

In the article entitled "They Left Their Genderprints: The Voice of Girls in Text," the community of Harborview was incorrectly reported to have been situated in Edmonton. We apologize for the error. Edmonton is, in fact, the city where the author of the article, Heather Blair, currently lives. The location of her research is not being reported in an effort to protect the anonymity of the participants.—The Editors