Narrative Skills of Colombian Adolescents in an Elite Bilingual School

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1. Introduction

1.1. Bilingual education in Colombia

Colombia is a 98% Spanish-speaking country. Actual bilingual settings are limited to very small indigenous and Caribbean communities in different areas of the country. Nevertheless, the acquisition of a second language, especially English, is very desirable as an educational outcome in Colombia, as it is all over the world today. In our increasingly globalized world, bilingualism broadens students' access to advanced education, scientific information, and professional opportunities. Thus, there are social and political pressures in Colombia for wide access to early English semi-immersion, as the presumed best way to achieve bilingualism.

Up to now, early bilingual education has been an urban, middle-class, private school phenomenon. The first schools offering bilingual education in Colombia were international in philosophy, curriculum, and administration. They were originally established to provide education to the children of foreigners (Germans, French, Americans, Swiss, etc.) working in the country. Eventually they had to admit Colombians and include instruction in Spanish along with the original instruction in the foreign language. The Colombian student population gradually grew, as the schools acquired fame among middle-class families for providing an international education and, most of all, native-like skills in a foreign language.

Many Colombian private schools have been created following or slightly modifying the pedagogical model these first international schools established, to provide bilingual education mostly in English. The result is that most Colombian bilingual schools today offer early Spanish/English medium education, with a 50%/50% time of instruction in each language. In this kind of bilingual model, students use English from kindergarten on (from 4 or 5 years of age), mostly for academic purposes in the areas of science, mathematics, and language arts and mainly within the environment of the school. On the other hand, they use Spanish for language arts, social studies, religion and the arts. Extra-curricular activities may be conducted in any of the two languages according to the availability of English-speaking teachers. Language arts are always offered in both languages to ensure bilingual literacy instruction and ample opportunities for contact with the literature in each language. In Colombian bilingual schools, literacy instruction is first provided in Spanish and only extended to English in or after the first grade.

In this kind of program, children get to speak English apparently fluently and perform a variety of academic tasks in English. For this reason, parental demand for bilingual education is constantly increasing in Colombia, at the youngest possible age. At present, the model is widely admired. Furthermore, awareness of the practical advantages of mastering a second language is generalized, and it has been a serious interest of policy makers in the last two governments to find ways to open access to early bilingual education through public schools.

In the midst of this generalized interest in and admiration for early semi-immersion bilingual education in Colombia, there is no awareness at all of any possible problems related to it. Parents seem mostly uncritical of the way schools are offering early bilingual education at present, and policy makers are seriously looking at the model when thinking about how to get more Colombians to learn English at an academic and professional level. Thus the idea is that the second language should be introduced as early as possible and that teaching of different academic subjects has to be conducted in it.

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1.2. The need to explore bilingual acquisition in Colombia

The actual consequences of early semi-immersion education in a monolingual environment such as Colombia have not been explored in depth. Systematic research is necessary to inform public opinion and political decisions related to such a model for bilingual education. Before expanding access to English medium education in this sociolinguistic context, research is needed to inform the design of programs that will ensure the best educational outcomes.

In Colombia, the only data available about the success of bilingual programs are anecdotal. They come from the experience of bilingual educators and students. My own experience as academic coordinator, administrator of development seminars, and teacher of Spanish and ESL in a private, bilingual school in Colombia has allowed me to observe, unsystematically but extensively, through my own and through others' eyes, the academic and linguistic development of Spanish-speaking students being partially schooled in English. I have noticed three problems that I have had the opportunity to discuss formally and informally with administrators and teachers in different bilingual schools.

First, although admission to these schools is limited by tests that eliminate many candidates on the basis of low skill assessments in their first language, drop-out rates among those accepted are high. Probably, one important factor influencing this negative outcome is lack of proper support for the second language outside school. In a monolingual environment like Colombia children have very limited opportunities for informal contact with English speakers. In addition, their parents are often unable to support their learning process in English, as they often lack skills in this language. Children abandon bilingual schools in failure, often diagnosed with some kind of language impairment.

Second, high school students from bilingual schools seem to have limited ability in Spanish, compared to those from Spanish monolingual schools. Evidence for this comes from Spanish teachers and administrators in bilingual schools who observe the performance of their bilingual students and compare it to that of monolingual students during inter-school events. More evidence is provided by some bilingual students themselves, who describe feeling limited in their Spanish expression, compared to students in monolingual schools. Nevertheless, nothing is actually known about how the acquisition of the first language may be affected by early semi-immersion in English.

Finally, limitations of bilingual students in their development of English are often confirmed by English-speaking teachers and administrators in bilingual schools. They observe that the time necessary for native-like second-language development is never completely available in this type of semi-immersion program, while it is especially necessary in the absence of support for the English language outside school. Nevertheless, the second language proficiency of the students in these programs has never been assessed.

The present study constitutes a contribution to the development of the systematic research and analysis necessary to find ways to produce the best possible Spanish and English outcomes in the socioliguistic context of a monolingual country like Colombia. This work also describes specific outcomes of the acquisition of bilingualism and the acquisition of native Spanish and English skills in adolescence, an age which has been excluded from most studies on language development. I also hope that better understanding of the special case of bilingual acquisition in Colombia may offer a valuable comparison with other situations in which second language development relates to school performance, thus helping to expand the still limited knowledge about school-supported acquisition of bilingualism.

2. The study

2.1 Research questions

Sophisticated development of linguistic skills is a fundamental educational goal for school-age children. In a monolingual context like Colombia, complex development of the first language, Spanish, should be easily achieved through enriching and demanding linguistic environments in schools, supported by the use of the language in the society at large. It is reasonable to hypothesize that early and intensive introduction of a second language for complex academic uses may limit the very high quality of proficiency possible for children in their first language.

In turn, the use of English in semi-immersion bilingual programs in this kind of monolingual environment is limited to the classroom, without much support for it outside school. For this reason, the students receiving this kind of bilingual education may not be developing their skills in the second language to the high levels expected from the early exposure and academic use. If this is so, the time spent at school using English at the expense of Spanish may be less justified, and other ways should be explored to achieve high levels of second language proficiency without unnecessary trade-offs affecting the development of the first language.

I explored these hypotheses in the present study by analyzing bilingual oral proficiency in the two languages, as reflected in fictional, picture-book narratives. I looked for answers to the following research questions:

2.1.1 Do Colombian Spanish-English bilinguals narrate orally differently in each language than Colombian and American monolinguals?

2.1.2 How can oral narrative proficiency in Spanish and English be characterized in bilingual Colombian adolescents?

In order to provide a framework for the comparisons implied in these basic research questions, I also explored the skills of the monolingual adolescents, by answering the following question:

2.1.3 Do Colombian Spanish monolinguals narrate differently than American English monolinguals?

2.2 Research design

2.2.1 Subjects

A sample of 54 adolescents was used. Eighteen 15-year-old boys and girls in a private, co-educational, Colombian bilingual school, eighteen 15-year-old boys and girls in a Colombian monolingual private school, and eighteen 15-year-old high school boys and girls from the Boston area, all volunteers, produced stories for the study.

The Colombian schools serve a middle-class population. This SES level is characterized in Colombia by university-educated parents, often at masters level or beyond, especially among fathers. Many parents, especially fathers, hold managerial professional positions. Most mothers also work. The participant schools were chosen on the basis of descriptive information provided by school administrators about the population they serve. The 36 Colombian adolescents were chosen from volunteers who filled out a screening questionnaire; criteria for selection included their not having changed schools since kindergarten and not having special access to English outside school. The 18 American students were also chosen from volunteers who filled out a questionnaire on parental occupations and educational levels. Although many aspects of their schooling and life circumstances differ, students in both countries were from socio-economic strata that could be characterized as ‘middle class’ in their respective contexts.

I chose 15-year-olds as subjects for the present study for several reasons. First, they are supposed to have practically completed their native language acquisition (Crowhurst, 1979; Applebee, 1978; Scott, 1988). In addition, the bilinguals have experienced 10 years of bilingual academic semi-immersion, so they may be expected to have acquired similar skills in their first and second languages.

Furthermore, it was my special interest to assess language proficiency during adolescence, since it provides much needed information about complex language development. As indicated in the theoretical section above, traditionally, the process of language acquisition has been considered practically complete by ages 10 or 11. Developmental studies beyond the age of 9 for English speakers and 11 for Spanish speakers are scarce.

2.2.2 Data

I used the wordless picture-book Frog, Where Are You, by Mercer Mayer (1969) to elicit oral narratives in Spanish and English. I told the adolescents to look through the book carefully first and then tell me the story it depicts. I allowed them to continue looking at the book while narrating, but I stayed at a distance so it was clear that I was not able to see the pictures. Each bilingual subject

produced two stories, one in each language. All the bilingual speakers chose Spanish to tell the story first and performed the task in English after a lapse of at least 60 minutes.

I considered the bilingual subjects' first choice of their primary language a guarantee of best performance. It is my belief that the use of the primary language first probably increased confidence in performance in the second language and set a cognitive and linguistic standard that was then aimed at in the second language, ensuring the use of each language to the best possible level. In turn, the natural challenge implicit in the use of the second language eliminated the danger of the second task being a mere translation of the first. A total of 72 stories were collected for the study, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample of stories

MONOLINGUAL STORIES	BILINGUAL STORIES
Stories from Spanish-monolingual adolescents (18)	**Spanish stories from bilingual adolescents (18)**
Stories from English-monolingual adolescents (18)	**English stories from bilingual adolescents (18)**

There are several reasons why I chose wordless picture-book narration to assess proficiency. First, narration has been identified as a discourse type children produce from age 2 (McCabe & Peterson, 1991). Its characteristics and path of development have been extensively analyzed in research on children's language (e.g., Botvin & Sutton-Smith, 1977; Hicks, 1991; Peterson & McCabe, 1983; 1991; Preece, 1986), showing that children refine and diversify their narrative skills greatly through the school years.

Second, narration draws on some of the most sophisticated language skills in a person's repertoire: The use of an array of temporal, spatial, and logical relationships; the use of complex linguistic elements to refer to objects, characters and situations already mentioned or new in the story; and the use of varied linguistic mechanisms revealing the narrator's personal point of view (Labov, 1972; Karmiloff-Smith, 1980; Hickman, 1990; Bamberg & Damrad-Frye, 1991; Berman & Slobin, 1994). Narrative discourse also lends itself well to the study of the ways in which subjects use the formal linguistic devices in their repertoire to serve specific functions in communication (e.g., Berman, 1993; Hickman, 1990, 1991; Karmiloff-Smith, 1981).

Because of these high demands on verbal proficiency, oral narration has been extensively used in studies of narrative development across ages, up to and including adulthood (Bamberg & Damrad-Frye, 1991; Bocaz, 1992, 1993; Slobin & Bocaz, 1988), and is increasingly being used to assess bilingual competence (e.g. Gutiérrez-Clellen & Hofstetter, 1994). In addition, the fact that narrative discourse can take the form of monologues with recognizable unity and structure (Labov, 1972; Peterson & McCabe, 1991) makes it appropriate material for different kinds of linguistic analyses (e.g., Hickman, 1980, 1991; Karmiloff-Smith, 1980; Shapiro & Hudson, 1991).

Story book narration is especially appropriate for the assessment of language skills acquired through academic work, the type of skill most likely to have been acquired in academic bilingual semi-immersion. In general, research has demonstrated the usefulness of narrative tasks in providing evidence for the use of language without the social support of conversation, which is the type of language most relevant to academic skills (McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Miranda., Camp, Hemphill & Wolf, 1992). And specifically because of its literary nature, story book narration demands control of the written language register (Miranda et al., 1992), more related to academic work than the oral register.

Finally, wordless picture-book narration standardizes input to the narrators, providing a kind of stimulus likely to minimize effects of culture and allowing for reliable comparisons of language use across subjects and languages. In fact, this particular book, Frog, Where Are You?, has been used in

research on narrative development in different languages, including Spanish (Bamberg, 1987; Berman & Slobin, 1994).

2.2.3 Transcription and coding

The stories were transcribed in their entirety and coded. They were divided into clauses, as defined by Berman and Slobin (1994: 660): a single verbal element and its corresponding unified predicate.

The coding system I devised for the present study has a functional orientation, i.e., it gives precedence to meaning over grammar. Grammatical form is considered important only as it serves to express different meanings (Berman, 1993; Berman & Slobin, 1994; Widdowson, 1978). Thus, the following narrative aspects of the oral stories produced by the subjects were examined:

2.2.3.1 Length of the stories is measured in number of clauses.

2.2.3.2 Events making up the plot of the stories refer to the number of occurrences depicted in the picture book and reported in the oral story produced.

2.2.3.3 Orientation counts clauses, parts of clauses or individual words describing setting (place and time) and introducing and describing characters and the circumstances of their actions.

2.2.3.4 Evaluation quantifies clauses, parts of clauses, and words that express the point of view of the narrator. It includes judgments, emotional descriptions, personal interpretations and opinions referring to characters, places or situations, references to the mental states of characters, 'readings' of their thoughts and intentions and individual stylistic ways of presenting information with the purpose of creating an effect.

2.2.3.5 Cohesion measures linguistic devices used to give unity to the story. Following the different aspects listed by Halliday & Hasan (1976) as cohesive devices, I included in this variable a count of all kinds of textual devices used to refer to characters, things, places and times in the stories. I also included apparent changes in word or clause order made not to give emphasis to a specific piece of information (evaluation) but to give continuity to the narration by going from old to new information.

2.2.3.6 Interclausal Connection measures the use of different ways to connect whole clauses and general and specific terms within a clause. Two general types of connections were coded and counted: relations of clause subordination through relativization or use of WH words as subordinating conjunctions in 'that' complement clauses and logical relations.

2.2.3.7 Time Representation counts correct uses of different verbal *tenses* (e.g., past, present, present and past perfect, future) and lexical or verbal markers of *aspect* indicating beginning, duration, continuation or end of action in the stories.

In addition to the 7 variables indicating oral proficiency, two aspects indicating lack of proficiency were coded in the present work:

2.2.3.8 Formal Errors identify improper or non-canonical lexical, morphological and syntactical uses of Spanish or English, as identified by native speakers in relation to adult criteria of correctness.

2.2.3.9 Reference Errors count frequencies of absent referents to characters, things, places and times in the stories, as markers of lack of cohesion.

In the coding system, each of these general variables or indicators of proficiency includes a series of subcodes identifying specific linguistic devices used to express them. For the analysis, I added the frequencies of the specific devices for each variable in each story in order to come up with the total frequency for each indicator of proficiency.

2.2.4 Reliability of the coding system

I assessed reliability of the coding system with a second coder, using 6 randomly-selected Spanish stories, 3 from the monolinguals and 3 from the bilinguals, and 3 randomly-selected English stories produced by the bilingual adolescents (20% of the Colombian data). We used Cohen's kappa (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986) to estimate the corrected-for-chance agreement between raters and obtained values of 72% for narrative devices, 83% for division into clauses and inter-clausal connection, and 96% for tense and aspect. I subsequently refined the coding system based on analysis of Spanish stories I carried out for my Qualifying Paper (Ordóñez, 1999).

In order to establish external validity for the variables chosen to measure Spanish and English oral proficiency, two native speakers of Spanish and two native speakers of English, experienced in narrative analysis for research on language development, assessed holistically the 72 stories produced by monolingual and bilingual adolescents. The raters individually sorted the stories into four levels of proficiency and assigned them scores from 1 to 4. Divergent ratings between each pair of experts were mathematically averaged, finally producing seven possible levels of proficiency among the different groups of stories.

2.2.5 Data analysis

I moved gradually from the comparison of the descriptive statistics for each group of narratives into One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine significant average differences between groups of stories. Then I performed Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to characterize basic differences in detail.

For PCA, I used the nine basic variables as a set of indicators making up the construct of *oral narrative proficiency*, and I performed the analysis separately for each group of stories. Since PCA reveals patterns of correlations among a set of variables and assigns each a specific weight in the formation of composites measuring a construct, it revealed different composites of the variables, measuring proficiency differently in each group of narratives. PCA also assigned proficiency scores for each story in each composite. I used the differing composites to describe differing dimensions of proficiency across stories and, accordingly, to describe the oral narrative proficiency of each group of adolescents in each language.

I conducted the statistical analyses on the total frequencies of the 9 general proficiency indicators in the coding system: clauses (length), events, orientation, evaluation, cohesion, interclausal connection, time representation, formal errors and reference errors. Since the frequencies of errors are actually measures of lack of proficiency, the scores for these indicators were reversed, so a high number in the scale indicated fewer errors and higher proficiency.

3. What we know about adolescent narrative proficiency

A characterization of the language proficiency of adolescents, especially that to be expected from the production of narrative discourse, can only be deduced from studies of narrative development in young children. A few researchers have included adult samples in their developmental analysis and have, thus, identified possible linguistic changes in adolescence and ways in which adults' narrative skills look different from those of young adolescents (Bamberg and Damrad-Frye, 1991; Bocaz, 1992, 1993; Slobin & Bocaz, 1988). Nevertheless, detailed studies beyond the age of 9 for English native speakers and beyond the age of 11 for speakers of Spanish as a first language are scarce.

The basic analysis of narration as discourse comes from research on the development of linguistic skills in English. Labov and Waletzky (1967; Labov, 1972), and later Peterson and McCabe (1983), analyzed the component functional elements of a narrative into two basic ones: *referential* , those elements that relate events to the listener and orient him/her as to who and what was involved in those events and when and where they occurred; and *evaluative* elements, those that demonstrate the specific perspective the narrator takes on the events. Referential elements provide the basic organizational structure of the narrative, in the form of different types of appendages introducing and ending the stories, complicating action and resolution (composed of the basic sequence of events that makes up the story), and orientation to characters, place and time. Studies of the ways in which young narrators produce their stories support a developmental sequence that moves from a focus on the detail of events towards increasing story organization (Botvin & Sutton-Smith, 1977; Karmiloff-Smith, 1979, 1981, 1984; Reilly, 1992).

Another recognized feature of narrative discourse production which marks its developmental progression is cohesion, the way in which explicit linguistic elements link the different clauses in a narrative to make it a whole (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Peterson & McCabe, 1991). Research shows that appropriate use of cohesive devices such as intratextual anaphoric pronominal reference, as opposed to the deictic use of pronouns in a story, is a relatively late development (Hickmann, 1980; Karmiloff-Smith, 1980). Also late-emerging are other important cohesive devices such as logical

connectives (e.g., connectors of sequence and causal and adversative relations like ‘then’, ‘because’, ‘but’, etc.) to join narrative elements appropriately in semantic terms and to pragmatically mark the structure of the narrative (Peterson and McCabe, 1991).

Specific types of narrative elements seem to especially contribute to the increase in story complexity that comes with greater maturity. Labov (1972) found that evaluative comments are expressed in more complex syntactic forms than are narrative events. While narrative events are expressed in simple three-element narrative clauses (adverbial, noun phrase, and verb phrase), departures from this basic narrative syntax have marked evaluative force, carried in particular by syntactic elements like questions, negatives, intensifiers, modals, comparatives, superlatives, appositives, and embedded attributes. Peterson and McCabe (1983) and Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) have added other evaluative devices to the list, such as references to internal states and emotions and reported character speech. Bamberg and Damrad-Frye found that adults use considerably more evaluative devices than 5 and 9-year-olds and that they use more reference to frames of mind. They also confirmed that the variety of types of evaluation increases with age.

Gutiérrez-Clellen and Hofstetter (1994) studied syntactical complexity in the Spanish oral narratives of Puerto Rican and Mexican-American children from 5 to 9 years of age. Significant developmental differences were revealed across ages in number of words per T Unit (a main clause with all its subordinate clauses and modifiers), index of subordination (average number of clauses in a T unit), and average frequency of relative clauses and prepositional phrases. Developmental changes were also observed in the children’s ability to use complex syntax to achieve coherence in their narratives. For example, proficiency in the use of relative clauses to clarify referents and in the use of adverbial clauses to recapitulate background information increased.

The use of logical connections in narrative has been an important specific interest among researchers in native Spanish narrative skills. Ferrari (1991), for example, found that adversative uses of ‘pero’ (but) increase with age. Bocaz (1992), in turn, found a gradual increase in the use of causal relations to establish textual coherence. Bocaz (1993) also reported considerable development from age 5 in the use of logical connectors to mark the explanation of motivations, reasons, antecedents, causal consequences, and enabling conditions for the actions of characters.

Bocaz had also previously explored the evolution of the use of lexical markers of simultaneity and their syntactic and discursive functions in narratives (Bocaz, 1989). She found that from 3 years of age children use ‘cuando’ (when) and other expressive resources like ellipsis, lexical and syntactic parallelism and maintenance or change of verbal aspect to express juxtaposition of events. After 7 years of age there is systemic marking of syntactic subordination involving both sequence and simultaneity. The simultaneity markers used (‘mientras’ and ‘mientras tanto’ = while and meanwhile) allow progressively more complex syntactic packaging of events. From 11 years of age to adulthood there is considerable increase in the use and variety of textual markers of simultaneity (e.g., conjunctions and adverbs).

Only a small number of studies refer to comparisons between the narratives of English-speaking and Spanish speaking children and have produced data of interest to the present study. The most extensive is Sebastián and Slobin’s (1994), which centered on the expression of time across languages. Nevertheless, these researchers also covered the developmental use of different syntactic elements for the expression of different narrative functions in Spanish in more general terms.

Sebastián and Slobin analyzed the narrative productions of Chilean and Argentinean 5 and 9 year-olds and adults. They found that length consistently increases with age in Spanish stories. They also showed that there is increasingly more varied use with age of different means of implying paths of motion through descriptions of setting. This seems to be a necessary strategy in a verb-framed language like Spanish, where the core information about movement is contained in a small number of rather general verbs of motion. There are few and also rather general ‘satellite’ particles like prepositions to assist in the description of paths (Slobin, 1998; Talmy, 1985; 1991). This finding points towards greater motivation to elaborate on setting in Spanish than in English, resulting in a possible higher number of orientation devices in the stories produced by Spanish speakers.

According to Sebastián and Slobin, Spanish narratives share with English narratives increasing coherence and organization with age. This development is marked by several phenomena: First, abstracts are used more often as ways to introduce the stories. Second, coordination and sequential markers (e.g., *y* = and; *entonces* or *pues* = then) decrease in use while subordination markers (e.g., *que*

= which or that; *porque* = because) increase, as the segmentation of the narrative into episodes makes it unnecessary to link each event to the next. And finally, the connectors used between clauses indicate actual logical relations (e.g., cause/effect) between events.

The most detailed findings in Sebastián and Slobin's study refer to the expression of time. Under the premise that each particular language allows for rich grammatical elaboration of certain semantic domains, Sebastián and Slobin focused their study on the verb system in Spanish, which features a wider variety of tense/aspect distinctions than that of English (Slobin & Bocaz, 1988). Spanish, like English, distinguishes between simple present and perfect and progressive in the past, present and future. But it also makes a perfective/imperfective distinction in the past (corrió/corría = ran) and the past progressive (estaba/estuvo corriendo = was running) which cannot be expressed in English.

Sebastián and Slobin found that many of the tense/aspect combinations possible in Spanish have already appeared at 3 years of age, but that there were differences in the use of tense/aspect across ages in the functions these forms fulfill. For example, although present perfect and past perfect are sporadically used from 3 or 4 years of age, only from age 9 are contrasts from present or past to the respective perfect used to indicate distant actions with repercussions in the time of narration.

As to durativity and other meanings related to verbal aspect, Sebastián and Slobin found that they are expressed by a gradually wider variety of morphological and lexical means with age. In particular, these researchers used Talmy's (1985) aspectual distinctions to indicate that the use of semi-auxiliary verbs like inchoatives (indicating beginning of action: empezar...; ponerse a...; comenzar = begin to...), extensive (indicating extension of action: quedarse...; seguir... = continue to...), cumulative (llegar hasta/a... = approach completion), and completive (acabar...; dejar de... = finish) increases.

Other comparative studies are scarce. Research by Jiménez and McCabe (1996) and Rodino, Gimbert, Perez & McCabe (1991) comparing narratives from mainstream American children and those of Spanish-speaking children point to a possible Spanish narrative 'norm' different from an English norm. According to their research, Spanish narratives contain fewer action sequences, use more habitual action verbs, and foreground more orientation and evaluation than English narratives. Nevertheless, the many differences between the research conditions of these studies and those in the present study limit the applicability of these results. The narrators in Jiménez and McCabe's studies were Latino 7 year-olds from low-income immigrant families of different Latin American backgrounds in the United States. The children were described as Spanish or English-dominant, which indicates variable levels of bilingualism within the samples. Furthermore, the stories were free personal narratives, rather than narratives pre-structured by pictures.

More importantly, recent studies of narrative development in Spanish monolingual children (Shiro, 1998; Uccelli, 1997) provide counter evidence for the research findings defining these as the features of a Spanish narrative norm. Shiro found no significant differences in overall evaluative density between the personal stories told by Venezuelan lower and middle-class children from 6 to 11 years of age and those by comparable mainstream children in the US, contrary to what had been previously reported by Peterson and McCabe (1983).

Moreover, Shiro found differences between the stories produced by lower and middle class children in Venezuela and between their production of two different narrative genres: personal narratives and fictional movie retellings. Shiro concluded that Venezuelan narrations do not make up a homogeneous cultural unit. Even within this linguistic community, children used narrative skills differently when telling different kinds of stories. Also, children belonging to different socio-economic groups showed they were developing narrative skills differently. Middle class children, specifically, increased the amount of evaluation with age in fictional stories. Uccelli (1997), in turn, described idiosyncratic and quite complex evaluative uses of multiple temporal sequences of events in personal stories told by Peruvian children speaking Andean Spanish.

These combined findings seem to indicate that defining a Spanish 'norm' for oral narratives is probably impossible. Nevertheless, the small number of comparative studies makes it necessary to increase knowledge about the characteristics, differences and similarities of comparable narratives produced by comparative groups of narrators across Spanish and English. The present study does this, in addition to describing in detail the Spanish and English proficiency of bilingual adolescents, as a product of bilingual education in a monolingual environment.

4. Results

One important initial step in the analysis of the data in my study is to determine what they say, in general, about the narrative skills of 15-year-olds in relation to previous findings. We have a partial picture of what proficiency in the frog story task looks like from research by Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991), Sebastián and Slobin (1994) and Berman and Slobin (1994) with narratives from 9-year-olds and adults in English and Spanish. This research allowed me to establish what could be expected from the stories in both native languages in my sample. This was important to then compare my findngs from the bilingual stories

Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) use the frog story in analyzing the skills of 9-year-olds and adults in producing evaluative comments in native English. In turn, Sebastián and Slobin (1994) and Berman and Slobin (1994) discuss skills at the same ages in expressing time perspective, movement in space, and connections between ideas in frog stories produced in native English and Spanish. All these researchers also report mean lengths of the 9-year-olds' and adults' frog stories in clauses.

Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) show growth in English from age 9 to adulthood in the mean frequencies of four specific types of evaluative devices (frames of mind, hedges, characters' reported speech, negatives and causes), from 7.92 to 33.67 per story[1]. According to these researchers, adults mostly produce significantly more references to frames of mind and hedges expressing non-commitment to the truth value of ideas (e.g., looks like, kind of, probably). Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) report an average length of 46.08 clauses in the stories produced by 9-year-olds. Then they show this average length growing into 79.25 clauses in adult English stories.

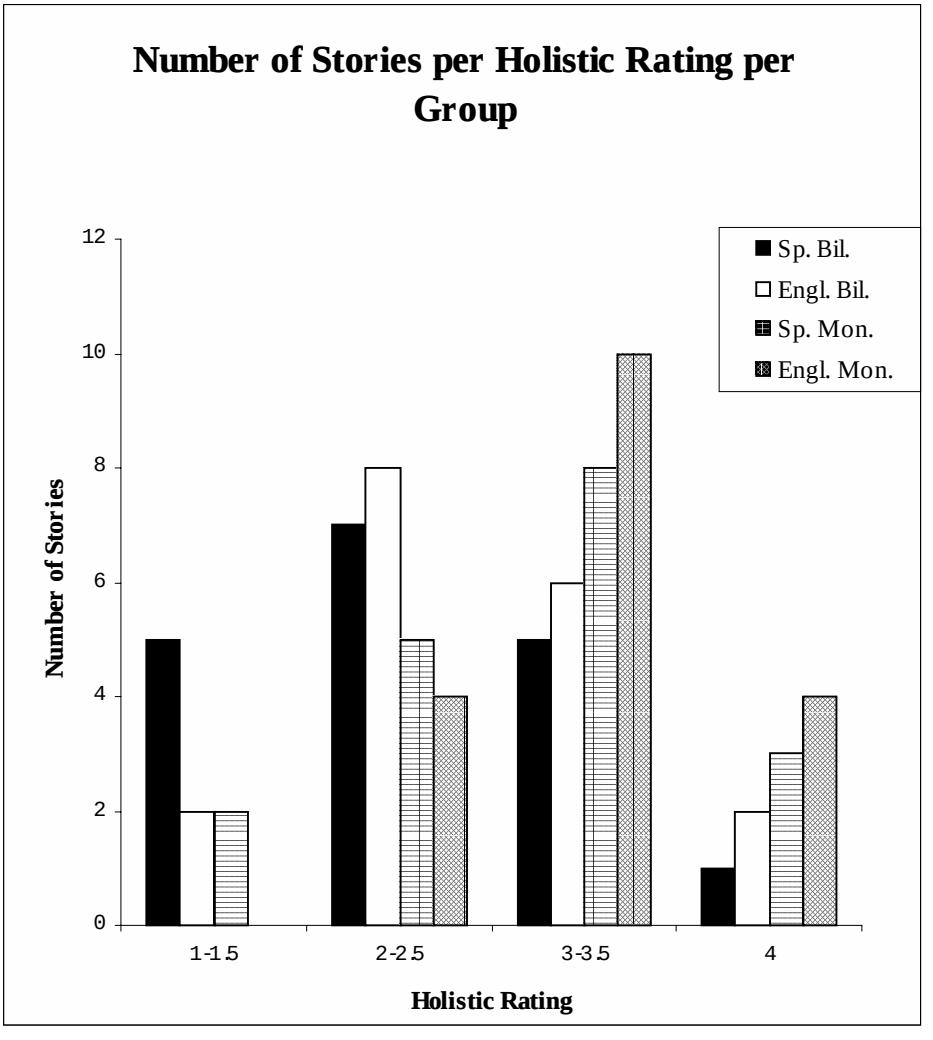
In turn, based on their own frog story research and on research by Sebastián and Slobin (1994), Berman and Slobin (1994) produced descriptions of the skills of proficient narrators in English and Spanish which show that good frog stories in both languages share some characteristics in varying degrees. Proficient story-tellers, for example, use a specific anchor tense and introduce multiple variations in time from the anchor tense by indicating anteriority, durativity and simultaneity in different ways. Furthermore, proficient frog stories in both languages contain ideas richly connected in temporal, causal and concessive relations and in relations of subordination, allowing the packaging of events in blocks rather than the narration of sequences of individual events. Berman and Slobin (1994) report an average length of 45.0 clauses in the English stories and 50.8 in the Spanish stories of 9-year-olds. They show these lengths growing into 75.3 clauses in adult English stories and 91.3 in adult Spanish stories.

Two of the characteristics of proficient frog story telling discussed by Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) and Berman and Slobin (1994) were used as rating criteria by the expert judges who assessed the stories produced by the 15-year-olds in this study: the amount of information from the pictures included in the stories (related to degree of event elaboration and, thus, to length) and the amount of evaluation. In addition, the raters also assessed the organization of the stories and their coherence. For organization they looked for clear introduction, conflict and resolution or for episodes; for coherence they evaluated the relative ease with which it was possible to follow a narrative path and to understand who the agents of the different actions were.

The results of these ratings give an initial idea of a very wide range of skills around these criteria represented in my sample of frog stories (See Figure 1). Expert raters individually grouped the stories produced by 15-year-olds in four scoring groups, which ended up being seven levels after different ratings for the same story were averaged. Most of the stories (73%) received scores between 2 and 3.5, a range that includes at least four levels of narrative proficiency. Ten out of the 72 stories (14%) were rated with the maximum score of 4 and nine with 1 or 1.5 (13%).

[1] I have calculated mean frequencies of the four evaluative types from the total frequencies per type reported by Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991).

Figure 1: Holistic evaluation of stories by expert raters



Of these totals per rating, the two groups of monolingual stories contained more stories rated 3 and higher than stories rated 2.5 and lower. The English monolingual stories received ratings only equal to or above 2 and had the highest number of highly rated stories (14). In turn, each group of bilingual stories contained more stories rated 2.5 and lower than stories rated highly. The Spanish bilingual stories had the most low-rated ones (12) and the fewest 4's (1).

Specific sources of this wide variability may be identified in the variables discussed by Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) and Sebastián and Slobin (1994), since these variables roughly or completely correspond to some of the ones I analyze in the present study. As these researchers did, I divided the stories into clauses to determine their length. I also included all four evaluation types studied by Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) in my count of evaluative devices. Furthermore I quantified appropriate changes in tense and aspect from the anchor tense of the stories. And finally, I analyzed frequencies of temporal, causal and other logical connections. Descriptive statistics of these variables for the four groups of stories in my sample are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for some variables in monolingual and bilingual Spanish and English stories (n=18 in each group).

VARIABLE	TYPE OF STORY	RANGE	MEAN	STD. DEV.
	Bil. Spanish	**19 - 64 (45)**	**40.50**	**13.86**
	Mon. Spanish	31 - 97 (66)	53.67	16.55
CLAUSES	**Bil. English**	**21 - 67 (46)**	**37.83**	**14.12**
	Mon. English	30 - 94 (64)	50.00	16.11
	Bil. Spanish	**23 - 105 (82)**	**44.83**	**20.19**
	Mon. Spanish	20 - 131 (111)	67.39	31.87
EVALUATION	**Bil. English**	**18 - 105 (87)**	**36.50**	**20.27**
	Mon. English	16 - 105 (89)	46.11	21.02
	Bil. Spanish	**3 - 31 (28)**	**14.11**	**7.72**
	Mon. Spanish	8 - 42 (34)	21.33	10.76
TIME	**Bil. English**	**1 - 23 (22)**	**10.06**	**6.01**
	Mon. English	2 - 24 (22)	12.00	6.83
	Bil. Spanish	**12 - 39 (27)**	**21.22**	**8.31**
	Mon. Spanish	13 - 60 (47)	28.00	13.04
CONNECTIONS	**Bil. English**	**8 - 34 (26)**	**19.56**	**7.71**
	Mon. English	7 - 40 (33)	16.61	8.76

The table shows that, roughly, the four variables previously analyzed by Bamberg and Damrad-Frye (1991) and Sebastián and Slobin (1994) are also key dimensions of variability among the stories produced by 15-year-olds. These variables display wide ranges of values and high standard deviations in all monolingual and bilingual versions. This is especially true of the evaluation variable.

My monolingual English narrators produced stories that were closer in length to those of the 9-year-old English narrators in other frog story research than to adult narrators' frog stories (an average length of 50 clauses for my participants, compared to 45 / 46 clauses for 9-year-olds and 75 / 79 clauses for adults reported in previous research). Similarly, my monolingual Spanish narrators produced stories that averaged 53.7 clauses, closer in length to Spanish-speaking 9-year-olds' (50.8 clauses reported by Berman and Slobin) than to adults' (91 clauses reported by the same researchers). Fifteen-year-olds appear, on length alone, to be only part of the way along in the transition from child to adult narrative productions.

On the other hand, the mean frequency of evaluation devices per story used in English by the 15-year-olds (46.11) is much nearer the reported adult mean frequency (33.67) than the 9-year-old mean frequency (7.92). Of course the frequencies in my data include more coded evaluative devices that those in Bamberg and Damrad-Frye's data. But their four types of evaluation devices are a big fraction of mine. My data, then, seem to confirm very important development in adolescence in the frequency of use of evaluative devices in frog story narrative. This is quite significant, as the expression of evaluation also marks the use of complex syntactic forms (Labov, 1972).

Among the four groups of stories, the ones that contain the highest means and the widest variability in all four variables are monolingual Spanish narratives. Monolingual English stories follow in length and evaluation, while bilingual Spanish stories follow in time changes and frequency of connections between ideas. For the most part, bilingual stories display lower means in these variables than their monolingual counterparts.

I made more precise comparisons among the stories in the four groups using PCA. The resulting variable composites allowed me to define a sort of profile describing a differing dimension of proficiency for each group of stories, and so the oral narrative proficiency of each group of adolescents in each language. The comparison of the profiles can be seen in Table 3.

The comparison between monolingual stories in Spanish and English, whose profiles occupy the central columns in the table, shows a definite difference in narrative style. The Colombian monolingual adolescents told stories characterized by richness in logical connections between ideas, frequet changes in tense from the anchor, and abundant evaluative language. The American monolinguals told narratives characterized by their use of cohesive devices, rich orientation, and lots of events.

In turn, the column on the extreme right presents a profile of the bilingual frog stories in English which appears quite similar to the profile of the American monolingual stories. This looks right. But the profile of the bilingual stories in Spanish, in the left column, also resembles the American monolingual profile, which is surprising. It would have been expected to find similarities between the Spanish monolingual and bilingual profiles.

Table 3: Profiles, according to Principal Components Analysis - PCA

Bilingual Stories in Spanish	Monolingual Stories in Spanish	Monolingual Stories in English	Bilingual Stories in English
	LOGICAL CONNECTIONS		
COHESIVE DEVICES		**COHESIVE DEVICES**	**COHESIVE DEVICES**
(events)	**TIME**		
ORIENTATION		**ORIENTATION**	**ORIENTATION**
	EVALUATION		
		(events)	(events)

ANOVA confirmed these results. When comparing average frequencies of all variables in the two groups of monolingual stories, it indicated that the ones which mark the statistically significant differences between them are the same variables distinguishing the profiles. As can be seen in Table 4, the monolingual narratives in Spanish contain higher frequencies of evaluative language, tense changes and logical connections between ideas.

Table 4: Comparison between monolingual stories in Spanish and English, according to ANOVA (n=18 in each group)

	Monolingual Stories	Mean	ANOVA F (3,68)	p
EVALUATION	Sp.	67.39	**5.48**	**< .01**
	Engl.	46.11		
TIME	Sp.	21.33	**6.76**	**< .001**
	Engl.	12.00		
CONNECTIONS	Sp.	28	**4.47**	**< .01**
	Engl.	16.61		

In general, both the PCA profiles and the ANOVA analysis show American adolescents who prefer to tell a very concise type of story, centered in events and scene description. On the other hand, they show Colombian adolescents telling stories full of details about what characters think and feel and why they do it, and rich in explanations of what happens and temporal relations between ideas.

As to the stories told in Spanish by my bilingual subjects, which had shown more similar to the American stories than to the monolingual Colombian ones, the previous results are also confirmed by ANOVA (See Table 5). When comparing their frequencies of all variables with those of the Spanish monolingual stories, they appear poorer in the variables that characterize the Spanish story in the PCA profiles. This means they have significantly less evaluative language, logical connections and tense changes. The bilingual Spanish stories were also significantly shorter in number of clauses.

Table 5: Comparison between monolingual and bilingual stories in Spanish, according to ANOVA (n=18 in each group)

	Stories in Spanish	Mean	ANOVA F (3,68)	p
LENGTH (# of clauses)	Mon.	**53.67**	4.43	**<.01**
	Bil.	**40.50**		
EVALUATION	Mon.	**67.39**	5.48	**< .01**
	Bil.	**44.83**		
TIME	Mon.	**21.33**	6.76	**< .001**
	Bil.	**14.11**		
CONNECTIONS	Mono.	**28.00**	4.47	**< .01**
	Bil.	**21.22**		

And even though the stories told in English by the bilingual adolescents looked similar to the English monolingual stories in the profiles, ANOVA showed a different picture. The bilingual narratives were significantly shorter and had lower average numbers of events and orientation pieces, which were two of the variables that characterized the English monolingual stories according to the PCA profiles. This can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6: Comparison between monolingual and bilingual stories in English, according to ANOVA (n=18 in each group)

	Stories In English	Mean	ANOVA F (3,68)	p
LENGTH (# de clauses)	Mon.	**50.00**	4.43	**<.01**
	Bil.	**37.83**		
ORIENTATION	Mon.	**38.61**	4.30	**< .01**
	Bil.	**29.33**		
EVENTS	Mon.	**29.50**	4.45	**< .01**
	Bil.	**19.50**		
FORMAL ERRORS	Mon.	**3.67**	9.90	**< .001**
	Bil.	**15.11**		

Finally, Table 7 shows the only difference I found between the bilingual Spanish and English stories: According to ANOVA analysis, my bilingual subjects produced significantly more formal errors in their stories in English. Both types of stories by the bilinguals were, then, very similar and, as indicated above, more similar to the monolingual English stories than to the monolingual Spanish ones.

Table 7: Comparison between bilingual stories in Spanish and English, according to ANOVA (n=18 in each group)

	Type of story	Mean	ANOVA F (3,68)	p
FORMAL ERRORS	Bil. in Spanish	**5.72**	9.90	**< .001**
	Bil. in English	**15.11**		

5. Discussion

5.1. Monolingual stories

Although monolingual stories were not the main object of my research, there are some interesting findings related to them. First of all it is necessary to point out that, above all possible differences in the stories attributable to cultural or linguistic reasons, the manifestation of proficiency in all frog stories, in Spanish or English, is high frequencies of the narrative variables analyzed here. Nevertheless, monolingual Spanish and English stories appeared qualitatively different, on average. Spanish monolingual stories showed richer use of evaluation than English monolingual stories. They also displayed substantially higher average numbers of interclausal connections and verbal tense and

aspect markers than monolingual English stories. These, in turn, showed higher average frequencies of events, orientation and cohesion devices.

Both linguistic reasons and reasons of cultural preference may be behind these differences. First, these results seem to partially support findings by Jiménez and McCabe (1996) and Rodino et.al. (1991) comparing narratives from mainstream American children and Spanish-speaking children, that suggest the existence of a Spanish narrative 'norm' different from that of American narratives. These researchers found that Spanish narratives contained fewer action sequences (events), used more habitual action verbs (a type of aspect marker included in my time variable), and foregrounded more orientation and evaluation than English narratives.

The Spanish monolingual stories in the present study conform to the proposed Spanish norm in their significantly higher average amount of evaluation, in comparison to the monolingual English stories. However, my analysis suggests that the previously proposed Spanish 'norm' may miss the mark in only considering habitual actions as characteristic of Spanish narratives. The adolescents in my study obviously showed control over a more elaborate tense/aspect system. In this respect, then, my analysis expands the possible comparative model between Spanish and English narratives, suggesting that Spanish narrative may contain a richer representation of time through more changes in verbal tense and verbal and lexical aspect. In addition and because my Spanish monolingual stories also show richer logical connections, time representation is even more enriched in them with connections of sequence and simultaneity. This last characteristic of the Spanish monolingual stories in my sample, their richer connection of ideas, is another addition to the presumed model of Spanish narration, in comparison to an English one.

5.2. Monolingual and bilingual Spanish stories

Spanish bilingual stories proved significantly poorer than Spanish monolingual stories precisely on the variables that distinguish the latter from English monolingual stories: evaluation, time representation and connection of ideas. Bilingual Spanish stories were also significantly shorter. These findings constitute evidence that the oral proficiency in Spanish of bilingual adolescents who have acquired English through academic bilingual semi-immersion in the Colombian Spanish monolingual environment is different from the oral proficiency of Colombian monolingual adolescents, as it is manifested in picture-book narration. This difference may be interpreted as evidence that the Spanish oral narrative proficiency of the bilingual adolescents is underdeveloped, when compared with that of monolingual adolescents.

First, it is a fact that, in the circumstances of a narrative task that standardized the input to the narrators through pictures, the bilinguals produced stories in which they omitted events that were visually available as parts of the story plot. Furthermore, in producing stories that are more similar to the English than to the Spanish ones, bilingual narrators failed to produce tense and aspect variations especially possible in the Spanish language due to a verbal system which is naturally richer than that of English. They also produced sentences that less frequently exploited subordination, a feature that Spanish allows more widely than English.

The bilinguals also expressed considerably less of the evaluation that makes clauses especially informative and syntactically complex (Labov, 1972), and fewer logical connections between ideas. Both evaluation and interclausal connection indicate high cognitive activity while narrating, as narrators read characters' minds, explain their actions with reasons, causes and purposes, relate events in sequence and simultaneity relations, add similar ideas in chains and distinguish adversative ideas, etc. As the Spanish narrative model is -- or should be -- widely available to bilinguals in the monolingual environment in which their bilingual education takes place, we may actually be looking here at limitations in their Spanish stories which are probably linguistic in nature. Linguistic limitation may have prevented the bilinguals from demonstrating the whole range of cognitive abilities they may be able to display when telling a linguistically complex story.

5.3. Monolingual and bilingual English stories

English bilingual stories also proved similar to English monolingual stories in the profile of their narrative features. According to PCA, bilingual narrators also focus on a straightforward, oriented and

cohesive report of events in their English stories. Nevertheless, we cannot actually say that bilingual English stories are similar to monolingual English stories, because the frequencies of the features that best characterize the latter, clauses, events and orientation, are significantly lower in bilingual English stories. This is a first indication of limitations of the bilinguals in their skills in the second language.

Poor control over the verb system in English was revealed in the lower numbers of both tense and aspect changes, despite the fact that the narrators' native Spanish favors this feature in stories. Also, a considerable number of morphological, syntactical and lexical inaccuracies were evident in the largest number of formal errors in the bilingual English stories, among all the groups of narratives. Once again, a profile of narrative features similar to that of monolingual English stories appears associated with underdeveloped language skills in bilingual adolescents: It reveals that bilinguals are unable to produce stories with similar levels of complexity in their two languages.

Contrary to what many parents and educators in private bilingual schools in Colombia seem to expect, as indicated by the growing demand of places in bilingual schools and the constant opening of early bilingual programs in old and new private institutions, the oral proficiency in English attained in such schools is far from excellent. After 10 years of academic bilingual semi-immersion in the Colombian Spanish monolingual environment, the oral English proficiency of the bilingual adolescents appears still quite limited when compared with that of monolingual American adolescents.

5.4. Bilingual Spanish and English stories

Finally, bilingual Spanish and English stories showed more similarities than differences. The only aspect in which bilingual English stories were significantly poorer than bilingual Spanish stories was the number of formal errors. Bilinguals seem to attempt to produce in their second language stories which are very similar to the ones they produce in their native Spanish. Despite this attempt, bilingual narrators seem to find themselves limited by their lower command of the vocabulary and grammar of the second language, English.

The oral skills of bilinguals both in Spanish and English thus appear fairly underdeveloped within this narrative task. The impact of the monolingual Spanish environment in which these adolescents' bilingual schooling experience is embedded appears stronger than may have been predicted in a situation of educational semi-immersion in a second language. The lack of social support for the second language outside school, probably including the impossibility of parents to support learning of and in a second language at home, may be an important disadvantage for the majority of these adolescents. But at the same time the semi-immersion environment in English at school seems to have had too strong an impact on these bilinguals' native Spanish. They are unable to express in their native language the linguistic and cognitive richness characteristic of Spanish narration in their second language.

5.5. Implications for language acquisition, education and research

The results of the analyses I conducted in the present study have interesting implications, both for bilingual acquisition in the additive context studied here and for the general process of first language acquisition. In the first place, it is reasonable to consider the possibility that the type of bilingual acquisition that the bilingual participants have gone through has left them, at this point in the process of their language development, still limited in their first language and in the second one. This may be interpreted as evidence for a possibly undesirable effect of the kind of bilingual education offered to these students in the monolingual sociolinguistic circumstances in question. The time spent in second language development at the expense of time that could have been used in highly sophisticated first language development may, after consideration of these findings, not seem justifiable.

The findings in the present study also point to educational challenges related to the type of instruction necessary to achieve the goals of bilingual acquisition in a monolingual environment. Different bilingual programs or, at least, special instructional interventions within traditional bilingual programs are clearly needed. The acquisition of bilingualism is undoubtedly a desirable educational outcome in any type of sociolinguistic context, but how to make it happen efficiently in practice and what 'efficiently' means may vary according to different conditions. In the monolingual context studied here, where high proficiency levels are possible and desirable in the first language as a main

component of bilingual acquisition, the age of introduction of the second language and the level and kind of support for its full development deserve special attention.

The similarity between Spanish and English skills in the bilinguals even after 10 years of second language practice in the highly demanding academic environment clearly supports the idea of transfer as a basic process in the acquisition of a second language, even in conditions of acquisition at ages 4 or 5. Transfer was also observed in the use of some more typically Spanish forms in the bilinguals' English narratives, but it seems stronger from English to Spanish, which is surprising. This indicates the importance of designing very strong instruction in the native language as a necessary basis for the acquisition of high levels of second language proficiency. It also suggests that the proficiency standards demanded of bilingual students in the second language should be carefully defined, so as to avoid the confusion created by the general idea that children in bilingual schools are acquiring native skills in two.

All the previous reasons may also be combined to suggest the appropriateness of introducing English at an age later than 5, when development in Spanish is more advanced. This type of program modification demands overcoming the commonly held belief that efficient acquisition of a second language needs to take place as early in life as possible, an idea not well supported by research (Marinova-Todd, Marshall & Snow, 2000). According to research showing the efficiency of adolescents as language learners, late primary school or the middle school years may be good times to try for the massive introduction of the second language. This also makes it necessary to design high quality English instruction that would stimulate transfer from Spanish and help youngsters develop skills in the second language comparable to those in the first in a shorter time.

At the very least, the present findings provide empirical bases for instructional interventions aimed at supplementing areas of weakness in the development of Spanish in the type of bilingual program these adolescents have followed. For example, it may prove effective to intensify Spanish instruction in the expression of time and time relations and in the production of different types of extended discourse. The amount of reading required in Spanish should probably increase. Reading of fiction should be especially emphasized, since academic expository text does not provide rich input for features like tense, aspect and evaluation. And bilingual instruction should definitely dedicate more attention to specific contrasts in the use of specific formal features of Spanish and English for different discourse functions.

This last point raises interesting questions about the ideal training that teachers in this kind of program should have. The strengthening of specific instructional areas in the native language and the stimulation of transfer from Spanish to English in areas in which it is actually possible and positive probably requires bilingual teachers who themselves possess very strong skills in both languages. This should occur in addition to the knowledge they need in their specific academic field and in the handling of children's learning.

Finally, research must continue. It is necessary to continue exploring the best conditions for bilingual acquisition in monolingual environments. The present study is limited in several ways which, in turn, limit the applications that can be made of the findings. First, I only analyzed oral narrative proficiency of the bilingual adolescents. It is necessary to study other aspects of the language skills of the bilinguals in question. Very different evidence may result from assessing the reading and writing skills bilingual adolescents display and from exploring relationships between what they can do orally and what they can do in writing and reading. The student's control of other types of discourse associated with the academic environment, such as expository talk, may also prove quite interesting.

Secondly, I only analyzed one specific manifestation of narrative proficiency: the guided narration of a picture-book story. The use of other narrative tasks and other ways to assess proficiency is important. Results from more freely produced discourse, for example, may produce evidence to compare to the results of my study. One important result to find more evidence for is the similarity between bilingual Spanish and English skills. The participants in my study chose to tell the frog story in Spanish first, and so their English narratives may have been influenced by this first experience in the native language. The assessment of a possible order effect in my findings may begin with the analysis of frog stories told first in English.

Thirdly, I analyzed the language of bilingual subjects from only one bilingual school in Colombia. In these conditions, it is impossible to guarantee, for instance, that the participants have not been exposed to especially poor instruction in one or both of their languages. It would, then, be important to

include students from other schools in future research, in order to improve the possibility of generalizing results and making instructional decisions based on them. The inclusion of subjects from international schools, where the development of Spanish probably takes a more secondary role in relation to the acquisition of the second language, is also quite important.

Finally, the statistical analysis presented in this paper has been based on general frequencies of elements in the coding system. It has rendered an equally general picture of differential proficiency in the oral narrative proficiency in Spanish and English of monolingual and bilingual adolescents. The picture is accurate, since only meaningful, functionally appropriate units were coded, which ensures that the coding captures the complexity of the data. But more specific analysis is necessary of the ways in which specific formal features are used, especially by proficient bilingual Spanish/English and native monolingual Spanish adolescents, in fulfilling specific discourse functions.

All this will contribute, in addition, to fill the gap created by the paucity of research on language acquisition by Spanish monolinguals and by bilinguals who acquire their languages at school within monolingual sociolinguistic contexts. There is also a need to combine qualitative and quantitative language analyses of larger groups of subjects in the process of finding evidence to describe the language acquisition of these speakers.

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