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The Acquisition of Black Language by Spanish-Speaking Preschoolers: A Community-Based Sociolinguistic Approach to Language Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this case series was to demonstrate a community-based sociolinguistic approach to language sample analysis (LSA) for the evaluation of Spanish–English bilingual preschoolers acquiring Black language (BL). As part of a comprehensive bilingual speech-language evaluation, we examined sociolinguistic variables in the context of the children's English language samples. Specific emphasis is placed on sociolinguistic information to account for all language(s) and dialect(s) in each child's environment, BL feature patterns, and appropriate scoring procedures for characterizing language use.
Method: This case series includes four monolingual English-speaking and four bilingual Spanish-English–speaking 4-year-olds in a linguistically diverse preschool program. Play samples were collected from each child and coded for morphosyntactic features across three categories: BL, Spanish-Influenced English, and shared. Measures derived from the language samples include percent grammatical utterances, mean length of utterance in words, and number of different words. The children's language is characterized within a community-based sociolinguistic approach that combines three culturally responsive methods for assessment found in the speech-language pathology literature in addition to a novel sociolinguistic questionnaire.
Results: We explain how conducting LSA using a community-based sociolinguistic approach yields diagnostically relevant information that is pertinent to conducting a comprehensive and accurate evaluation of preschoolers in linguistically diverse settings without the use of standardized assessments.
Conclusion: A community-based sociolinguistic approach to LSA is a useful procedure for mitigating misdiagnosis in preschoolers reared in linguistically diverse environments.

Speech-language pathology literature centers a dialect of English that often goes unnamed due to its social currency as the "standard" and is thus presumed to be universal. As a result, dialects such as Black language (BL) are underrepresented in the literature. Furthermore, research in bilingualism largely excludes minoritized dialects from discussions about language acquisition. The purpose of this article was to demonstrate a new community-based sociolinguistic approach to assessment that is adaptable and responsive to multiple languages and dialects in a community. The approach is community based in that it consults community informants (i.e., teachers, caregivers) to characterize the language environment and to set expectations for appropriate language use. The approach is sociolinguistic in that it integrates sociocultural information into a language assessment protocol to guide clinical expertise (e.g., scoring, interpretation). More specifically, this article demonstrates the potential of this assessment approach with Spanish-English–speaking

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preschoolers acquiring BL. Following Baker-Bell (2020), this article refers to the presumed standard as *White Mainstream English (WME)* to highlight that "linguistic hierarchies and racial hierarchies are interconnected" (p. 2). Likewise, this article uses the term *Black language* to highlight the continuity between African languages and BL spoken throughout the African diaspora as opposed to its connection to standardized varieties (Baker-Bell, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Misdiagnosis of speech and language disorders due to systemic racism in Black children (e.g., Campbell et al., 1997; Rodekohr & Haynes, 2001) and Latinx children (e.g., Kraemer & Fabiano-Smith, 2017; Peña et al., 1992) is well documented in the literature. The approach presented in this article aims to accurately describe the language of Spanish-speaking preschoolers who are acquiring BL. Normalizing linguistic diversity requires that linguistically minoritized students are no longer compared to homogenized standards in the development, administration, scoring, and interpretation of assessment protocols. In the current approach, every named language and dialect in a child's environment comprise the communal standard, and the perceived boundaries between languages and dialects in speech-language production are posited as sites of the generative creativity inherent in human communication.

Here, we take a critical race approach (Privette, 2021), which rejects standardization in favor of assessment practices that center and value multiple ways of knowing and being. Through an intersectional lens that challenges the converging hierarchies of race, language, and dis/ability, we emphasize a community-focused approach aimed at describing multilingual children's language in a way that informs the diagnostic process rather than attempting to construct a category of disorder. Race, language, and dis/ability are co-constructed such that individuals who fall outside of white, monolingual, neurotypical ideals are pathologized regardless of their actual functioning (Erevelles, 2015). Furthermore, the parameters around these constructs vary across localities. Patterns of diagnosis (i.e., overdiagnosis and underdiagnosis) vary according to local characteristics, including student demographics, staff demographics, and school resources (Elder et al., 2021; Fish, 2019; Shifrer & Fish, 2020). These patterns contribute to a growing body of literature that suggests that dis/ability is defined according to local ideals about acceptable modes of learning and communication. Access to the curriculum, therefore, depends not only on an individual's ability but also on the accessibility of the environment. The assessment approach presented here proceeds from the stance that diagnostic decision making is a collaborative process among clinicians, parents, and teachers. While traditional approaches incorporate input from all parties, this input is often positioned as secondary or tertiary to clinical expertise (Khamis-Dakwar & Randazzo, 2021). In this case series, parents and teachers are centered as experts on their children and students' needs regarding access and communication. Centering the most marginalized linguistic communities in the development of new assessment practices will benefit individuals from all language backgrounds (Privette, 2021).

Spanish and BL in Contact

BL is a widely spoken, socially prominent dialect that is a common target for minoritized individuals learning English (Adger et al., 2007; Goldstein, 1987; Ibrahim, 2003). Various interlocutors and each individual's relationship (e.g., level of affinity) with those interlocutors influence a speaker's acquisition of a particular dialect. For children, the acquisition of a minoritized dialect is generally the result of peer-to-peer relationships (Berthele, 2002; Carter, 2013; Goldstein, 1987; Rojas et al., 2016). While siblings have been found to be a significant peer relationship in dialect acquisition (Berthele, 2002; Rojas et al., 2016; Stanford, 2008), this case series focuses on peer exposure in the classroom.

The acquisition of BL by Spanish-speaking adults and adolescents is well documented in sociolinguistics literature (e.g., Carter, 2013; Dunstan, 2010; Goldstein, 1987). To date, there is no research that explores the acquisition of BL by Spanish-speaking preschoolers in early development with known significant contact with monolingual BL speakers. One study describes the production of BL morphosyntactic features by young Spanish–English bilinguals on a standardized test. Gatlin-Nash et al. (2021) performed a secondary analysis of the morphosyntactic features produced by 81 Spanish–English bilingual children ages 4;0–7;1 (years;months) in Philadelphia. This subset of children, who were included in the original norming sample of the Bilingual English–Spanish Assessment, were presumed to have significant contact with BL due to the demographics of the city. However, no measure of BL contact was used, and the Spanish dialect of the children was not reported. Their study revealed that all of the BL features in their analysis were produced by at least one child in the sample. Furthermore, they found no statistical difference between high and low language groups in their use of three nonobligatory forms of BL: past tense, possessive, and plural. This finding suggests that, despite quantitative differences between children with and without diagnosed language impairment on some features, standardized measures do not provide the qualitative information needed to characterize the morphosyntactic abilities of bilingual speakers

of BL, a population that has been largely excluded from assessment research. This article describes the use of BL by Spanish-speaking Latinx preschoolers and includes BL as a target for accurately assessing their language ability through language sample analysis (LSA).

LSA in Linguistically Minoritized Communities

Research across populations has demonstrated that LSA is the best method for composing a comprehensive linguistic profile of a child's expressive language skills (Gutiérrez-Clellen et al., 2000; Heilmann et al., 2020; Stockman, 1996). LSA allows the clinician to observe a child's strengths and weaknesses across language domains in a naturalistic context. Thus, it is the most functional, ecologically valid form of language evaluation (Heilmann et al., 2020). Furthermore, the measures that are derived from LSA can be used to track growth and the generalization of treatment targets (Heilmann et al., 2020; Horton-Ikard, 2010).

LSA is traditionally used to supplement standardized assessments. However, for linguistically minoritized communities, LSA has been used as a primary diagnostic tool with calls for it to replace standardized measures in these communities (Stockman, 1996; Vaughn-Cooke, 1986).

LSA also provides an opportunity to capture children's translanguaging practices. Translanguaging refers to how multilinguals produce features from across their full linguistic repertoires in an integrated fashion in ways that are not confined by the boundaries of named languages (García & Li, 2014). From a translanguaging perspective, features that do not fit neatly into a language or dialect category are not only normalized but expected. Furthermore, a translanguaging perspective views variability in the implementation of features as an aspect of social awareness regarding the participants of a communicative event. Some features of minoritized dialects—specifically unmarked forms[1]—have been associated with language disorder in BL speakers because they are indicators of language impairment in WME-speaking children. For example, Oetting et al. (2019) developed a strategic scoring protocol as an intermediary between unmodified scoring (counting all minoritized forms as errors) and modified scoring (counting all minoritized forms as correct). Strategic scoring counts some minoritized forms as correct and others—primarily unmarked forms—as errors based on previous research comparing children with and without diagnosed language impairment.

[1]Some morphological features are not obligatory in Black language (BL). While the meaning (e.g., possession) may not be overtly marked in morphology, the meaning is marked in other ways (e.g., semantically, syntactically, pragmatically).

Acknowledging this research base, this case series positions unmarked forms as an essential part of the linguistic repertoire of BL-speaking children in addition to the marked forms that are unique to BL and those that pass as WME (Green, 2010; Newkirk-Turner & Green, 2021). From an epistemological perspective, counting any minoritized form as an error further pathologizes valid forms of languaging that are accepted across their respective communities. From a methodological perspective, a strategic scoring protocol was developed using tasks that are controlled to elicit specific forms in specific contexts (e.g., sentence recall; Oetting et al., 2019). A later study found that strategic scoring was more accurate when scoring structured probes rather than for LSA, particularly in the absence of dialect-specific cut scores (Oetting et al., 2021). The current approach is developed for use with language samples, an elicitation strategy that does not guarantee the production of specific forms or linguistic contexts. Furthermore, the calculation of cut scores is not feasible, nor desirable, within the proposed approach as the emphasis is on local varieties of the languages in contact.

A substantial body of research demonstrates the validity of global language measures derived from language samples for children who speak BL (Craig & Washington, 1995; Horton-Ikard & Weismer, 2005; Jackson & Roberts, 2001; Stockman et al., 2016) as well as for bilingual children (Bedore et al., 2010; Uccelli & Páez, 2007). These measures include percent grammatical utterances (PGUs), mean length of utterance in words (MLUw), and number of different words (NDW). PGU is calculated by dividing the number of complete, grammatical utterances by the number of total complete utterances and multiplying by 100. MLUw is calculated at the level of the C-unit and is more culturally responsive than MLUm because it does not depend on a child's production of morphemes that are nonobligatory in many minoritized dialects. NDW is calculated for the language sample as a whole. All three measures were calculated from the language samples of the participants in this case series and discussed within a qualitative analysis of each child's morphosyntactic productions.

Both monolingual BL-speaking children and Spanish–English bilingual children are traditionally compared to the standardized dialect in each of their languages. For English specifically, WME is assumed to be the target for individuals acquiring English as an additional language. Despite cursory recognition that bilinguals may speak a minoritized dialect of English (e.g., BL, Chicano English), the emphasis remains on WME as the expected standard, particularly in school settings where WME is posited as the singular language of success (Bedore et al., 2012; Gutiérrez-Clellen et al., 2000). While these studies reveal important information regarding the diagnostic utility of various measures derived from language samples (Bedore

et al., 2010; Gutiérrez-Clellen et al., 2008; Potapova et al., 2018; Uccelli & Páez, 2007), not accounting for dialect limits the diagnostic accuracy of these measures and renders them ungeneralizable across linguistic communities (Horton-Ikard & Weismer, 2005).

The Need for Localized Criteria

When using global language measures, it is important to consider who is included in the comparison population when determining a child's relative language ability (Gutiérrez-Clellen & Simon-Cereijido, 2007; Horton-Ikard, 2010; Peña et al., 2018). Evidence shows that "the interpretation of normal or disordered performance will need to consider the child's performance in relationship to the child's own linguistic community" (Horton-Ikard, 2010, p. 20). Furthermore, Stockman (1996) asserts that criterion-referenced measures alone will not improve clinicians' diagnostic decision making. Rather, speech-language pathologists (SLPs) need greater metalinguistic knowledge, cultural awareness, and an approach to language that is both investigative and ethnographic (Stockman, 1996). While previous nonstandardized approaches emphasize multiple informants over criterion references, they do not directly address the influence of multiple dialects on a child's linguistic system. This case series incorporated sociolinguistic information gathered from caregivers and teachers to index the influence of BL on Spanish-Influenced English (SpIE). It also investigated the relation between that ethnographic information and direct measures of language ability to understand local norms. This perspective on local norms does not emphasize the development of numerical criteria; rather, it emphasizes contextualizing numerical scores within the qualitative data gathered from parents, teachers, and classroom observations.

Development of a Sociolinguistic Approach to Assessment

The purpose of this case series was to demonstrate how a community-based sociolinguistic approach to assessment clearly accounts for all of the dialects in a child's environment. Here, we examined two dialects of English and observed how they interacted. For the purposes of this case series, we limited our analysis to interactions between dialects of English. While the Spanish of the bilingual children was considered as a part of their comprehensive evaluation, the discussion of the Spanish skills of the bilingual children is beyond the scope of this paper. This case series focuses on the interaction of English dialects rather than the interaction between Spanish and English. The interaction between Spanish and WME is well documented in the literature (Bedore et al., 2012; Gutiérrez-Clellen et al., 2008); however, the interaction between minoritized dialects of English is not (Gatlin-Nash et al., 2021). The approach that follows depends on the community for determining expectations for language use and participation in the environment. It combines three different methods for assessing linguistically minoritized children found in the SLP literature in addition to a novel component derived from sociolinguistic research (Dunstan, 2010).

First, the current approach starts with converging concern as a framework for assessment (Castilla-Earls et al., 2020; Ebert, 2017). Specifically, parent report—via a child development history form and ethnographic interview—is considered fundamental to the assessment process because it provides an ecologically valid way of collecting background information on pediatric patients across cultural backgrounds (Westby, 1990). Parent report has also been found to correlate with both formal and informal direct measures of language ability (Castilla-Earls et al., 2020) across languages (Ebert, 2017) for Spanish–English bilingual children. Thus, parents are a reliable source for information regarding a child's language use and language context.

Second, a patterns-based approach (Green, 2010; Johnson & Koonce, 2018; Newkirk-Turner & Green, 2021) was used to not only identify the morphosyntactic features of the child's dialect(s) but also determine how those features varied within the child's system. In other words, a patterns-based approach tracks how both marked morphemes and their unmarked corollaries for a particular morphosyntactic feature appear throughout a child's language sample. Thus, if a child produced unmarked forms of BL (e.g., "We in the back room"), their language sample was analyzed for corresponding overtly marked forms of the same feature (e.g., "We're almost done"). This method tracks how a particular form is produced across a child's linguistic system rather than considering each instance (or noninstance) of a feature in isolation. Third, global language measures (Bedore et al., 2010; Horton-Ikard & Weismer, 2005) were derived from the language samples. MLUw, NDW, and PGU have been found to be reliable measures of language ability for both bilingual (Bedore et al., 2010) and monolingual (Horton-Ikard & Weismer, 2005) speakers of minoritized dialects. Finally, a sociolinguistic questionnaire (Dunstan, 2010; Quesada Pacheco, 2014) was completed by the bilingual families in this case series (described below) to determine which language(s) and dialect(s) the child was exposed to.

Separately, the elements above are well established in the literature. Each component plays a unique role in assessing a child's language ability, yet they have not been integrated through a sociolinguistic lens in previous research to compose the most accurate picture possible of a child's language use. Here, we argue that these elements are combined on the basis that linguistic data can

only be interpreted responsibly alongside qualitative sociolinguistic data. Here, data from the four elements above are considered in an integrated fashion using a case series design to describe the English language use of the participants.

Method

This research protocol was approved by the institutional review board at The University of Arizona. Parental consent was obtained for each participant prior to their participation in the research.

Setting

This research was conducted with a preschool program in the U.S. South that was designed to serve Black and Latinx families in a low-income neighborhood in equal proportions. The demographics of the neighborhood elementary school comprise 47.8% Black and 43.3% Hispanic/Latinx students (Durham Public Schools, 2019). The program operated on a half-day schedule. All participants in the case series attended the morning class 4 days per week. There were three classroom teachers—three monolingual BL-speaking teachers and one Spanish–BL bilingual teacher. In addition, the program director—a monolingual BL-speaking teacher—spent a significant amount of time in the classroom. The program director and two of the monolingual teachers spoke WME as well; however, they spoke BL in most of their interactions with the children. The bilingual teacher used Spanish often with the bilingual children and led whole-class activities bilingually. This was a language-affirming classroom, meaning that both BL and Spanish were used by the teachers and children without repercussions, including in instruction. The program was also intentional about its support of maintaining the Spanish of the bilingual children. They often sent home Spanish language resources, including children's books, for the bilingual families.

Participants

The present case series includes eight children: four monolingual BL-speaking children (4;0–4;10; $\bar{x}$ = 4;4) and four Spanish–English bilingual children (4;1–4;11; $\bar{x}$ = 4;6). The specificity of the target language profile (i.e., BL + Spanish) resulted in a small sample size. Fourteen children ages 4;0–4;11 were recruited for this case series. Because the present case series focuses on linguistic variation in English, three children were excluded because they did not speak English. Two children were excluded because they had incomplete data sets. One monolingual participant was not Black and did not speak BL. In this case series, the children are referred to by their pseudonyms. Parents completed a child development history form with the first author, a speaker of BL and a bilingual Spanish-English–speaking SLP, to rule out relevant medical history that may impact speech-language development. Parent and teacher interviews were also conducted to rule out cognitive impairment.

Qualitative Analyses

Parent Interviews

Each caregiver completed a child developmental history form (see Supplemental Materials S2 and S3). All caregivers were interviewed orally using the questions on the form. The first author asked follow-up questions to the responses provided to elicit further description. Parents rated their child's language proficiency using a scale of 0 (*does not speak the language*) to 4 (*speaks the language perfectly*; Peña et al., 2002, 2003). The bilingual parents rated each of their child's languages separately. One of the monolingual parents was not available for interviewing during the data collection period. Therefore, information was gathered from a friend of the parent who worked in the classroom. In addition to the ratings, parents described their child's daily routine in terms of who is present and which language(s) was used and heard by the child for each activity. Parents also described any strengths and concerns they had about their child's speech and language.

Sociolinguistic Questionnaire

The caregivers of the bilingual children completed a sociolinguistic questionnaire, developed by the first author, a member of the Black community who speaks both BL and Spanish. The questionnaire included a series of yes/no questions adapted from Dunstan (2010; see Supplemental Materials S4 for the full questionnaire). The questions elicit information regarding their child's and their own contact with Black BL speakers. Each question is weighted according to each factor's relative influence on dialect acquisition. Language contact is quantified by totaling the point value of each question with a "yes" answer to yield a contact score ranging from 0 to 12. A score of 0–4 indicates low contact, 5–8 indicates casual contact, and 9–12 indicates high contact. A contact score above 4 suggests that the child has notable exposure to BL and therefore may be acquiring BL (Dunstan, 2010). Caregivers also circled their region of heritage on a map that was color coded according to the major regional Spanish dialects of North, Central, and South America (Quesada Pacheco, 2014). Caregivers were not asked about their immigration status or how many generations their family has in the United States.

Teacher Interviews

The teachers were interviewed by the first author to gain ethnographic information regarding the children's language, communication, and peer networks. All teachers who worked in the classroom for the full school year were Black. The bilingual teacher during the first semester was Latina and used Spanish and English with the children during free time and instruction. All teachers spoke BL. They were consulted throughout the research on creating the optimal environment for eliciting each child's speech and language samples.

Classroom Observation

At the request of the program director, the first author volunteered in the classroom before starting data collection so that the children could become familiar with her. She monitored play stations during morning free play and led story time on several occasions. Each child who participated was later observed during instruction and group play to gain additional information regarding the child's language and social communication skills.

Quantitative Analyses

Child Data

Speech samples. Speech and language samples were recorded using a Zoom H4n Handy Recorder with an integrated condenser microphone (24-bit sound card; ZOOM, 2019). All children completed the Assessment of English Phonology (Barlow, 2003), a single-word picture-naming task that gives the child multiple opportunities to produce each phoneme across word positions. The bilingual children also completed the Assessment of Spanish Phonology (Barlow, 2003). Every child in this case series demonstrated that they have fully developed phonetic inventories with no parent, teacher, or clinician concerns regarding their speech sound ability. Although the focus of this case series was on morphosyntax, speech sound inventories were reported to provide depth of linguistic information for each child.

Language samples. Each child participated in a 20-min play sample facilitated in English by the first author and recorded using the Zoom H4n Handy Recorder. The bilingual children produced a second language sample facilitated in Spanish for the purpose of comprehensive language evaluation; however, only the English samples are discussed here in the present analysis in order to highlight the variability present within the English language production of monolingual and bilingual speakers of BL. Sociolinguistic research indicates that children speak the dialect of the group with which they affiliate most strongly (i.e., affiliation group; Berthele, 2002). Most often, children's affiliation group is their peers, even when peer dialect differs from that of their parents (Berthele, 2002; Rojas et al., 2016; Stanford, 2008). For the bilingual children in this case series, their primary English exposure was at school. Therefore, the goal for elicitation was to record each child at play with a peer in the classroom to sample the kind of language that the monolinguals produced as direct input to their bilingual peers and that the bilinguals produced at play in a similar context. The clinician was a participant in all play samples, facilitating language use by responding to children's comments, answering questions, modeling new vocabulary, and asking open-ended questions.

COVID-19 accommodations. Ideally, all children would have been recorded at play with a peer. However, this research was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Three of the children were recorded with a peer in the classroom before data collection resumed with safety protocols in place. The remaining children were recorded at play with the clinician alone or with the clinician and a parent. The toys provided to the children recorded outside of the classroom were similar to those available to them in the classroom (blocks, toy cars, and a doctor set) in order to provide consistency in play context across participants.

Transcription. The English language samples were transcribed orthographically into C-units (Miller et al., 2019) by both authors and coded for morphosyntactic features of SpIE and BL as well as for errors (see Supplemental Materials S1–S3 for codebooks of the morphosyntactic features coded in each dialect across samples).

Reliability of transcription. Basic transcription and coding conventions followed those applied in Heilmann et al. (2008) using the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT; Miller & Iglesias, 2008). Reliability analyses were performed on 100% of the samples. Language samples were segmented into C-units and coded for grammatical and ungrammatical utterances as well as for morphosyntactic features of BL. Point-by-point inter- and intrarater reliability, also referred to as percent agreement, was calculated for each transcript (Kovacs & Hill, 2015) at the utterance level. In addition, morphological features of BL were analyzed due to its status as our measure of interest. The first author transcribed all language samples, and the second author served as the second rater. Intrarater reliability was calculated by the first author, who transcribed the samples and then reviewed transcriptions at least 1 week later. To complete interrater reliability, the second rater listened to the original recording while reading the transcribed sample. The number of utterances that included at least one transcription disagreement was tallied for each sample as well as number of disagreements on the transcription of BL morphosyntactic features. This value served as the

calculation numerator. The total number of utterances in each sample served as the calculation denominator for utterance-level reliability, and the total number of BL features produced in the sample served as the denominator for the BL transcription reliability. The resulting percent agreement for each transcript was then derived by dividing the numerator by the denominator, multiplying by 100 (percent disagreement), then subtracting from 100 to yield percent agreement. Intrarater reliability reached 92% for utterances and 96% for features of BL. Interrater reliability reached 96% for transcription of utterances and 99% for features of BL. There was a very low level of disagreement between and within transcription raters, consistent with previous work examining language sample transcription and reliability (e.g., Heilmann et al., 2008; Rice et al., 2010).

LSA. Each language sample was coded for features of BL. The English language samples of the bilingual children were also coded for features of SpIE and for features that are shared between BL and SpIE (see Supplemental Material S1). This procedure was used to confirm that the bilingual children were acquiring BL as indicated by their use of features that are specific to BL. The BL features produced by the monolingual children served as an indicator of which BL features were produced in the classroom and thus expected in their bilingual peers acquiring BL. In this manner, the monolingual children are not used as a criterion reference for the bilingual children. Rather, the monolingual children's language provided insight into what BL-specific features were appropriate for their bilingual peers acquiring BL in this community. Because the bilingual children speak Spanish and because SpIE is also present in their environment, their BL feature patterns were not expected to match that of their monolingual peers. Their language, then, represents a unique dialect that can only be understood within their specific context. The combination of dialects in their repertoire constitutes a unique dialect of English.

NDW, MLUw, and PGU were calculated to index each child's overall language ability (Bedore et al., 2010; Horton-Ikard & Weismer, 2005; Restrepo et al., 2010). SALT (Miller & Iglesias, 2008) was used to calculate NDW and MLUw. PGU was calculated by hand by dividing the number of correct utterances by the total number of complete utterances. Incomplete utterances and utterances containing unintelligible segments were excluded from this calculation. Utterances containing morphosyntactic features of each child's dialect(s), including marked and unmarked forms, were counted as correct. Utterances containing morphosyntactic patterns that were not consistent with any of the child's languages or dialects were counted as errors (e.g., "I gon green" is not consistent with BL or SpIE and is therefore counted as an error utterance).

Case Series Organization

The monolingual children's language is discussed as a group to characterize the BL features that are used in this school setting. Their global measures are discussed within a qualitative analysis of their morphosyntactic productions to demonstrate the variability of BL feature use across language abilities. Then, the bilingual children are discussed individually by order of age, referred to by their pseudonym. Their dialect use is summarized, and their language measures are discussed in terms of converging concern. For each child, qualitative and quantitative information regarding their language use and language skills are discussed in five areas. (a) The *developmental history* summarizes the child's overall development and family environment in addition to the caregiver's rating of the child's communication and speech sound ability in English. (b) The *sociolinguistic information* characterizes the child's communication partners, language use across English and Spanish, and the child's contact with BL. (c) *Clinical observations* record the child's overall communication ability in group and one-on-one settings. (d) The *morphosyntactic analysis* identifies the types and tokens of features across dialects. (e) The *diagnostic information* details the characteristics of the child's language that are considered in the diagnostic process.

Results

Monolingual BL Use

Morphosyntactic Analysis

As a group, the monolingual children produced 14 types of morphosyntactic features that are characteristic of BL (see Table 1). The types and tokens of BL features produced by each child were not associated with their language ability (see Table 2).

All children produced unmarked features optionally. In other words, they all produced unmarked forms in addition to overtly marked forms that are unique to BL and overtly marked forms that pass as WME. The excerpt in Figure 1 is exemplary of the optionality characteristic of BL that includes the same sentence repeated with both marked and unmarked forms.

This patterns-based approach to LSA (Green, 2010; Newkirk-Turner & Green, 2021) demonstrates that the variability in the production of optionally marked forms contributes to a child's syntactic complexity. In other

Table 1. BL features from the monolingual participants' language samples.

Morphosyntactic feature of BL	Example	# of monolingual children who produced the feature	# of tokens across monolingual samples
Existential *it is*	"It's a lot of people here."	2	4
Unmarked possessive *–s*	"I'm goin' to my mama house."	2	2
Unmarked copula	"She in there."	3	14
Subject–verb agreement leveling	"She don't see me."	3	4
Future expressions *gon', Ima*	"I'm finna go." "I'm gon' be late." "Ima go."	3	14
Article leveling	"It's a airplane."	3	6
Unmarked participle *–ed*	"The cars are line up."	1	1
Reflexive pronoun variation	themself, theyself, ourself	1	1
Unmarked past tense*	"I cook dinner last night." (I cooked dinner last night.)	2	3
Unmarked third-person present tense *–s**	"She make cakes." (She makes cakes.)	3	9
Unmarked plural*	"She has two cat." (She has two cats.)	2	2
Past tense copula leveling *–was* for *were**	"They was reading a book." (They were reading a book.)	1	1
Multiple negation*	"I didn't have none." (I didn't have any.)	1	1
Unmarked auxiliary *do**	"What you do?" (What do you do?)	2	10

Note. Information from (Rickford & Rickford, 2000) Features with an asterisk (*) are also shared with SpIE (Bedore et al., 2012). BL = Black language; SpIE = Spanish-Influenced English.

words, the children with normalized language development[2] skills have large morphosyntactic repertoires that reflect the morphosyntactic nuance of BL as a whole.

Characterizing BL as a Target Language

Three of the monolingual children (Brittany, Courtney, and Robert) demonstrated normalized language development as indicated by parent input, teacher input, patterns-based complexity, and global language measures (see Table 2). The global language measures for each child corresponded with parent ratings and clinician concern such that children with lower global language measures had lower parent ratings and more clinical concerns. The gap between children with concerns and those without was most apparent for NDW and MLUw. Tasha's scores were markedly lower than those of her peers. She produced the lowest number of complete utterances and the fewest unique BL morphosyntactic features. Tasha produced three tokens of future expression ("Ima make another house."; "It's gon be big."). She produced three tokens of unmarked copula ("She full of water.") in addition to seven contracted marked tokens. Five of those contracted forms were "it's" (e.g., "It's not big.") with two repetitions of "What's this?" She produced no uncontracted copulas. Her language sample included a high number of repetition of utterances and direct imitations of her mother's utterances, who also participated in the play sample. On the other hand, Courtney also produced a relatively low number of types and tokens of BL and the highest number of complete utterances. However, unlike Tasha, Courtney had high language contact with WME through her mother, who was a speaker of both dialects. Despite her lower production of BL features, those features patterned differently from Tasha's. Courtney produced four tokens of unmarked copula, 32 tokens of contracted copula (including *it's*, *that's*, *there's*, *here's*, *we're*, *they're*), and eight uncontracted copulas. Additionally, she produced one token of unmarked third-person present singular ("There it go.") and five tokens of marked third-person present (e.g., "The heart changes color.").

Table 2. Language profiles of monolingual participants.

Variable	Brittany	Tasha	Courtney	Robert
Age (years; months)	4;0	4;3	4;8	4;10
Parent rating	—	2	4	3
BL types	12	2	5	8
BL tokens	25	6	9	30
Complete utterances	140	37	276	134
PGU	95.71	94.79	97.10	92.54
MLUw	3.80	2.54	5.22	4.19
NDW	192	87	398	217

Note. The parent rating scale ranged from 0 (*no proficiency/few words, no sentences*) to 4 (*native-like proficiency/few errors*). The monolingual participants' ratings ranged from 2 to 4. BL = Black language; PGU = percent grammatical utterance; MLUw = mean length of utterance in words; NDW = number of different words.

[2]Our theoretical approach recognizes language impairment as a subjective label rather than an objective diagnostic category. Thus, rather than discussing typical development, we describe children who develop as expected according to their community standards. Similarly, we frame children with low global language measures as having language-based access needs to emphasize how environments mediate effective communication rather than emphasizing intrinsic impairment.

Figure 1. Excerpt from Robert's language sample.

Clinician: You made a airplane too, Jerry?	
C: Where's yours?	
Robert: He going to get it {laughs}.	[covert auxiliary + present progressive]
C: He gon get it.	[covert auxiliary + future *gon*]
R: He's going to get it.	[overt auxiliary + present progressive]
C: Okay.	
R: He really going to get it.	[covert auxiliary + adverb + present progressive]

Brittany and Robert, who were identified as having normalized language development, had a similarly frequent production of BL feature types and tokens as well as similar total number of complete utterances and similar global language scores. The patterns-based approach revealed the variability that is allowed by the optionality of BL across their high percentage of grammatically correct utterances. For example, Brittany produced two tokens of unmarked past tense (e.g., "I kick over that.") and two tokens of marked past (e.g., "I tried it.") as well as one token of unmarked auxiliary ("You gon jump over it.") and five marked tokens (e.g., "It's getting louder."). She also produced seven tokens of unmarked copula (e.g., "This the back of the house."), 19 contracted tokens (including *it's*, *that's*, *what's*), and one uncontracted token ("This is the kitchen."). Similarly, Robert produced nine tokens of unmarked auxiliary, six tokens of contracted auxiliary (*he's*, *it's*, *they're*, *you're*), and five tokens of uncontracted auxiliary (e.g., "This is our home."). He produced one unmarked token of past tense ("I miss.") and five marked corollaries (e.g., "He crushed my airplane."). He also produced four tokens of unmarked third-person present (e.g., "The old man get the grass.") and two marked corollaries (e.g., "If everybody sees the bus, they gon go in it."). These results are consistent with previous research that suggests that syntactic diversity—including unmarked forms—should be included in language sample analyses as a contributor to syntactic complexity for BL-speaking children (Newkirk-Turner & Green, 2021). This variability is thus analyzed accordingly for the bilingual children.

Bilingual Group (Case Series)

All bilingual families in this case series were of Mexican origin with varying amounts of time in the United States. The parents varied in their English proficiency; however, all of them intentionally spoke primarily Spanish with their children at home and in the community. Therefore, each child's primary English exposure was at school, and the language of the school was BL, spoken by the teachers and all of the Black monolingual children in the class. While Spanish speech and language samples were included in the full evaluation, this article focuses on the English samples in order to highlight the interaction between multiple minoritized dialects of English.

Each child's English language sample was analyzed for features across three categories (see Supplemental Material S1): (a) SpIE features are forms that result from the interaction of Spanish and English regardless of the dialect of each language (Bedore et al., 2012), (b) BL features are those produced by the monolingual reference group, and (c) shared features are those that are characteristic of both SpIE and BL. Features from all of these dialect categories make up the English of the bilingual children and are thus singularly referred to as English. Shared features were treated as a separate category for two reasons. First, it is difficult—if not impossible—to determine which dialect motivates the use of shared features, which speaks to named languages and dialects as a matter of perception rather than linguistic fact (Rosa & Flores, 2017). The importance of shared features is that they count toward the linguistic repertoire of the speaker and not as deviant, regardless of how it is categorized or named. Second, keeping shared features separate allows for determining which dialect(s) is part of each child's repertoire. The production of BL features that are not shared with SpIE confirmed that BL was a target English for each of the bilingual children.

Each child's language sample was then analyzed for diagnostic information, that is, information that informs clinical judgment and should be considered alongside caregiver and teacher reports in addition to similar analyses of the child's other language (i.e., Spanish). The first level of analysis implements a patterns-based approach to interpreting a child's use of unmarked features in nonobligatory contexts across dialect categories (Green, 2010). The second level of analysis includes the global language measures that were derived from the language samples, counting all possible forms from each dialect category (i.e., SpIE, BL, and shared) as correct. The bilinguals' English global measures are discussed in terms of converging concern and are presented as

descriptive information that should be considered within the context of a comprehensive multilingual evaluation. Measures for all bilingual children are found in Table 3. Each child is discussed below.

Case Study 1: Jocelynn (4;1)

Developmental history. Jocelynn's mother is a native speaker of Spanish and English. The ethnographic interview was conducted in English. Jocelynn's mother reported that Jocelynn achieved her developmental milestones (i.e., sitting, standing, crawling, walking, dressing, and potty training) at the expected age. Jocelynn is reported to be in good health. She spoke her first words at 22 months. She has no family history of speech, language, or hearing problems. Jocelynn's mother reported that Jocelynn has difficulty with verb tenses in addition to beginning and ending sounds. Jocelynn was not receiving any allied health services at the time of data collection. Jocelynn is reported to have good proficiency in English (3). Her phonetic inventory included all English phonemes.

Sociolinguistic information. Jocelynn lives with her mother, father, and 9-month-old sister. Jocelynn's mother reported that both parents speak Spanish and English, with Spanish as the primary language at home. Jocelynn's mother has native proficiency in English. Upon meeting the clinician, Jocelynn's father reported speaking very little English. Jocelynn's primary English exposure is at school. She enrolled in the preschool program about 3 months before participating in this research. She has some English exposure in the community, including ballet class. Both of her parents have Black friends and neighbors. Jocelynn watches TV shows reflecting Black culture. These factors give Jocelynn a BL contact score of 8, indicating casual contact.

Table 3. Language profiles of bilingual participants.

Variable	Jocelynn	Yasmin	Kelly	Adán
Age (years; months)	4;1	4;5	4;9	4;11
Parent rating–E	3	3	3	1
Parent rating–S	4	3	1	3
BL contact score	8	6	5	8
SpIE types	2	5	2	1
SpIE tokens	8	9	2	7
BL types	2	3	2	1
BL tokens	3	5	10	1
Shared types	3	4	4	2
Shared tokens	8	13	10	2
Complete utterances	87	156	69	24
PGU	64.37	94.87	72.46	66.67
MLUw	2.37	3.52	2.76	1.78
NDW	142	216	157	77

Note. The parent rating ranged from 0 (*no proficiency/few words, no sentences*) to 4 (*native-like proficiency/few errors*). The bilingual participants' ratings ranged from 1 to 4. E = English; S = Spanish; BL = Black language; SpIE = Spanish-Influenced English; PGU = percent grammatical utterance; MLUw = mean length of utterance in words; NDW = number of different words.

Clinical observations. During circle time, Jocelynn participated in teacher-led activities by responding to the bilingual teacher's prompts. Her responses were sometimes unrelated to the prompt, and she appeared to be unaware that her responses were off topic. She required multiple prompts to respond on topic. During play, Jocelynn initiated turn-taking activities. In response to prompts to recount personal narratives, she responded with one-word utterances and utterances that omitted function words. She did not produce new vocabulary modeled by the clinician during play.

Play sample setting. Jocelynn was recorded at play with the first author in the classroom after school. Toys included wooden blocks and toy cars.

Morphosyntactic analysis. Jocelynn's language sample included features of SpIE, BL, and shared features (see Table 3). Jocelynn produced only two types of BL features: future expression *gon* and unmarked auxiliary. Her use of future expression "gon" in contrast with her use of "gonna" indicates that this is a true instance of BL production. In addition to unmarked auxiliary, Jocelynn also produced unmarked third-person singular present *–s* and unmarked past tense, both shared features (see Table 4).

She produced two tokens of unmarked auxiliary (e.g., "He gonna drive.") and two tokens of the contracted form (e.g., "It's spinning."). Most nonobligatory contexts for third-person singular were unmarked (six of seven), with one instance of marking ("It goes round and round."). The one context for past tense was unmarked ("He turn."). Overall, Jocelynn produced more unmarked tokens than marked tokens. Both marked tokens of auxiliary were contracted. This pattern of features suggests a low level of morphosyntactic complexity. Given Jocelynn's full phonetic inventory and her performance during the speech sound portion of the evaluation, her morphological omissions seem to account for her mother's concern about Jocelynn's difficulty with "beginning and ending sounds."

Diagnostic information. Jocelynn consistently omitted function words (e.g., *I don't wanna *_ school*) and obligatory copula forms (e.g., *I *_ gon * green*) and made pronoun errors (e.g., *He gonna wash *he car*). Many of her complete, intelligible utterances were repetitions of learned phrases (e.g., *There you go*; *Look at it*). Corresponding with

Table 4. Jocelynn's marked and unmarked feature patterns.

Feature	Marked		Unmarked	Total tokens
	Uncontracted	Contracted		
Auxiliary	0	2	2	**4**
Third person –*s*	1	N/A	6	**7**
Past tense	0	N/A	1	**1**
Total	**1**	**2**	**9**	

Note. Some marked features, like auxiliary, have uncontracted (e.g., *do not*) and contracted (e.g., *don't*) forms. For other marked forms, like past tense, the uncontracted/contracted distinction does not apply. These instances are included in the "Marked" → "Uncontracted" column in this table. By definition, unmarked forms do not appear and, thus, do not have uncontracted or contracted forms. Boldface items indicate totals. N/A = not applicable.

her low syntactic complexity, Jocelynn's global language measures and total number of complete utterances (see Table 3) confirmed the clinician's concern about Jocelynn's overall language use and reflect Jocelynn's mother's concerns about her use of verbs. Jocelynn's omissions made the meaning of her utterances unclear, causing communication breakdowns. The effectiveness of her communication was below that of her peers. Jocelynn's English exposure had been consistent for 3 months at the time of observation. These observations must be considered with Jocelynn's communication abilities in Spanish.

Case Study 2: Yasmin (4;5)

Developmental history. Yasmin's mother is a native speaker of Spanish with high proficiency in English. When asked which language she preferred, she said that it did not matter. The ethnographic interview was conducted in English. Yasmin's mother reported that Yasmin met her developmental milestones early. There was no family history of speech, language, or hearing impairment. She spoke her first words at 8 months and began combining words at 2 years. She is reported to be in excellent health. Yasmin's 7-year-old brother has a history of recurring ear infections treated with tubes. Yasmin's mother reported that she has no concerns about Yasmin's language in either language. Furthermore, she reported that others often comment on Yasmin's advanced language skills. Yasmin was reported to have good proficiency in English (3). She produced all English phonemes.

Sociolinguistic information. Yasmin lives with her mother, father, three older brothers, and an uncle. Yasmin's mother reported being equally proficient in both languages. Yasmin's father speaks Spanish and some English. Yasmin's uncle moved to the United States shortly before data collection, and Yasmin often interprets for him and is able to relay messages in multiple ways to help him understand. Yasmin spends most of her day playing with her brother. While they are encouraged to speak Spanish, they often speak English with each other. During family time, everyone speaks Spanish. Yasmin had been attending the preschool program for about a year and a half at the time of data collection. Yasmin does not have any Black neighbors. She is friends with her Black peers at school, and she loves R&B music. Yasmin's primary known contact with BL is at school. Her other significant English input is from her siblings, whose dialect use is not known to the clinician. Yasmin's BL contact score was 6, indicating casual contact.

Clinical observations. During circle time at school, Yasmin participated in literacy activities by responding to questions correctly, labeling, and generating rhyming words. During play in both languages, she commented, asked questions, and incorporated new vocabulary modeled by adults. She initiated turn-taking activities and recounted personal narratives using appropriate tense markers.

Play sample setting. Yasmin was recorded at play with the first author in the classroom after school. Toys included items from a play doctor set.

Morphosyntactic analysis. Yasmin produced features of SpIE and BL, as well as shared features (see Table 3). While Yasmin produced more SpIE features than BL features, she produced more types of BL features (3) than her bilingual peers (subject–verb agreement leveling, unmarked copula, and existential *it is*; see Table 5).

She produced more marked tokens of copula (e.g., "These stickers are for me.") than unmarked tokens (e.g., "This for this?"; she produced this sentence with and without the copula). She produced 21 tokens of uncontracted copula and 17 tokens of contracted tokens of copula (e.g., "We're done with it."). In the shared features category, she produced unmarked past and unmarked plural. She produced one token of marked past tense ("You finished it?') and one token of unmarked past tense ("I take it off."). While she produced eight tokens of marked plural (e.g., "This has numbers."), she produced one unmarked token ("We have nose too!"). Overall, Yasmin produced more marked tokens than unmarked with contractible features varying relatively

Table 5. Yasmin's marked and unmarked feature patterns.

Feature	Marked		Unmarked	Total tokens
	Uncontracted	Contracted		
Copula	21	17	1	**39**
Past tense	1	N/A	1	**2**
Plural	8	N/A	1	**9**
Total	**30**	**17**	**3**	

Note. Some marked features, like auxiliary, have uncontracted (e.g., *do not*) and contracted (e.g., *don't*) forms. For other marked forms, like past tense, the uncontracted/contracted distinction does not apply. These instances are included in the "Marked" → "Uncontracted" column. By definition, unmarked forms do not appear and, thus, do not have uncontracted or contracted forms. Boldface items indicate totals. N/A = not applicable.

evenly between contracted and uncontracted forms. This feature pattern indicates a high level of syntactic complexity.

Diagnostic information. While Yasmin did make errors, they were not recurring (e.g., *One *teeth is gonna break for me*; *where did the top *went*; *where's my *nother one*). Yasmin's global language measures were high and consistent with parent and teacher reports (see Table 3). She also produced more total complete utterances than her bilingual peers. These scores also corresponded with the clinician's impressions of her overall language use. Yasmin communicated effectively with few grammatical errors and a large vocabulary. Her English language production reflected Spanish influence and must be evaluated in conjunction with her Spanish language skills.

Case Study 3: Kelly (4;9)

Developmental history. Kelly's mother is a monolingual Spanish speaker. The ethnographic interview was conducted in Spanish. Kelly's mother reported that Kelly reached her developmental milestones at an expected age and that there is no family history of speech, language, or hearing problems. She spoke her first words at 9 months and started combining words shortly thereafter. Kelly was not receiving any allied health services at the time of data collection. Because Kelly's mother does not speak English, Kelly's 15-year-old sister provided the English rating, indicating good proficiency (3). She produced all English phonemes.

Sociolinguistic information. Kelly lives with her mother, stepfather, 15-year-old sister, and 1-year-old brother. Kelly's parents speak only Spanish and her older sister speaks English and Spanish. Kelly spends most of her day with her sister, who speaks both languages with her. Kelly's mother reported that Kelly had recently begun speaking Spanish when the family traveled to Mexico for winter vacation. Kelly had been attending the preschool for about 4 months at the time of data collection. Kelly lives near Black families, has Black friends, and watches TV shows that reflect Black culture. These factors give Kelly a BL contact score of 5, indicating casual contact.

Clinical observations. Kelly was observed at home with her mother and younger brother. She used complete utterances to communicate with her sister. She produced pronoun errors, and she frequently mumbled, resulting in a high percentage of unintelligible utterances. She did not respond to prompts to recount personal narratives.

Play sample setting. Kelly was recorded at play with the first author in her home. Toys included a jumbo Lego set, a play doctor set, and a stuffed dog.

Morphosyntactic analysis. While Kelly produced the same number of types of SpIE and BL features, she produced more tokens of BL features (subject–verb agreement leveling and unmarked copula; see Table 3). She produced the highest number of types and tokens of shared features, including the unmarked forms of third-person singular and past tense (see Table 6). Given that Kelly had only recently begun producing Spanish, it is likely that the shared features are motivated by her exposure to BL.

She produced two tokens of unmarked copula ("The purple safe.") and 12 tokens of marked copula. Three of those tokens were uncontracted (e.g., "Blue is for cold."), and nine of those tokens were contracted (e.g., "You're all fine."). For third-person present, she produced one unmarked token ("Mia like to run.') and two marked tokens (e.g., "That works?"). She produced one marked token of past tense ("What happened?") and one unmarked token ("That move a little."). Overall, Kelly produced more marked forms than unmarked and more contracted forms than uncontracted.

Diagnostic information. While Kelly produced a notable level of syntactic diversity, between marked and unmarked forms, she also produced copula and third person forms that are not consistent with the local varieties of either dialect (e.g., "What Ø this?", "I Ø measuring him," "Them *fits me."). Kelly also produced

Table 6. Kelly's unmarked feature patterns.

Feature	Marked		Unmarked	Total tokens
	Uncontracted	Contracted		
Copula	3	9	2	**14**
Third person *–s*	2	N/A	1	**3**
Past tense	1	N/A	1	**2**
Total	**6**	**9**	**4**	

Note. Some marked features, like auxiliary, have uncontracted (e.g., *do not*) and contracted (e.g., *don't*) forms. For other marked forms, like past tense, the uncontracted/contracted distinction does not apply. These instances are included in the "Marked" → "Uncontracted" column. By definition, unmarked forms do not appear and, thus, do not have uncontracted or contracted forms. Boldface items indicate totals. N/A = not applicable.

errors of tense (e.g., *How do you *putting this on*), agreement (e.g., *It *don'ts move*), and number (e.g., *We're missing this *ones*). She also omitted function words (e.g., *I don't know *_ say*). Kelly's total complete utterances and global language scores were consistent with the clinician's overall impression of Kelly's language use. While Kelly's English use was effective (the meaning of her utterances was apparent), she produced grammatical errors that could not be explained by any of the languages in her environment. While she had not been producing Spanish for long, she had a history of receptive Spanish. Therefore, her language skills in English and Spanish should be considered in an integrated fashion.

Case Study 4: Adán (4;11)

Developmental history. Adán's mother has native proficiency in both English and Spanish. The ethnographic interview was conducted in English. Adán's mother reported that Adán reached his developmental milestones at an expected age. He was reported to be in good health. No family history of speech, language, or hearing problems was reported. Adán spoke his first word at about 18 months. His mother did not remember how old he was when he started combining words. Adán was not receiving any allied health services at the time of data collection. The first author referred him to occupational therapy (OT) for attention and sensory concerns observed over the course of the comprehensive speech-language evaluation. He received an OT evaluation and intervention was recommended. Adán's mother rated his English proficiency as low (1). He produced all English phonemes.

Sociolinguistic information. Adán lives with his father, mother, and 1-year-old sister. They speak only Spanish at home. Both parents speak English. Adán's mother was observed speaking BL to the classroom teachers. Adán had been attending the preschool for a year and a half at the time of data collection. Outside of school, Adán spent time with his family and watched TV. Adán and his parents have Black friends and neighbors, and Adán watches TV shows reflecting Black culture. Adán's BL contact score was 8, indicating casual contact.

Clinical observations. Adán often played by himself during free-play time in the classroom, and he did not verbally participate in circle time. He required multiple redirections to remain engaged. During play, he often responded nonverbally. His verbal participation increased with familiar interlocutors present.

Play sample setting. Adán was recorded at play with the first author in the classroom during free play. A teacher intermittently participated in the play interactions.

Morphosyntactic analysis. Adán produced few complete and intelligible utterances; thus, opportunities to demonstrate morphosyntactic features were limited (see Table 3). He produced more tokens of SpIE—all instances of translanguaging, which is reflective of his preference for Spanish. He produced one token each of two BL features, (unmarked auxiliary and existential *it is*; see Table 7).

He produced one token of unmarked auxiliary ("My car racing.") as well as one unmarked token each of two shared features: third-person singular ("My car ride.") and plural ("Now it's two tire."). He did not produce marked corollaries of any of the three features.

Diagnostic information. Adán produced a low number of complete utterances. He produced pronoun errors (e.g., **Tu es pequeño and yours muy grande*) and omitted verbs (e.g., *I flying*) and function words (e.g., *This is *_ rocket*). He also produced cross-linguistic patterns[3] that are not expected with Spanish–English interaction, specifically related to tense and agreement (e.g., *Let's *tiene un race*; *No *están ready this*). Adán's global language scores were consistent with parent and teacher concerns and the

[3]While translanguaging is expected and encouraged in a language-affirming environment, patterns that contain elements of both Spanish and English but do not follow the grammatical rules of either language were considered cause for concern.

Table 7. Adán's marked and unmarked feature patterns.

Feature	Marked		Unmarked	Total tokens
	Uncontracted	Contracted		
Auxiliary	0	0	1	**1**
Third person *-s*	0	N/A	1	**1**
Plural	0	N/A	1	**1**
Total	**0**	**0**	**3**	

Note. Some marked features, like auxiliary, have uncontracted (e.g., *do not*) and contracted (e.g., *don't*) forms. For other marked forms, like past tense, the uncontracted/contracted distinction does not apply. These instances are included in the "Marked" → "Uncontracted" column. By definition, unmarked forms do not appear and, thus, do not have uncontracted or contracted forms. Boldface items indicate totals. N/A = not applicable.

clinician's impressions of Adán's overall language use. He did not consistently respond to the clinician's prompts, and his verbal responses were mostly incomplete utterances. Adán's English language use reflected a preference for Spanish. Thus, his English scores alone do not provide a sufficient summary of his overall communication skills.

Discussion

This case series demonstrates the potential utility of a community-based sociolinguistic approach to the analysis of English as a primary language assessment method for children in linguistically diverse communities (i.e., communities were multiple languages and dialects are spoken). The approach demonstrated in this case series generates important and relevant information for diagnostic decision making in the absence of standardized assessments. While the product of standardized assessments emphasizes numbers (e.g., percentages, standard scores) in relation to a large set of normative data that washes out the variability allowed in natural language, the approach implemented in this case series emphasizes the variability of natural language as demonstrations of a child's linguistic dexterity. The sociolinguistic aspect of this approach contextualizes commonly used global language measures (i.e., PGU, MLUw, and NDW) within the child's specific linguistic community. Sociolinguistic information gained from collaboration with caregivers and teachers allows the clinician to make more accurate judgments regarding grammaticality. The community-based aspect of the approach sets appropriate standards for interpreting global language measures to describe verbal language ability. Together, these two aspects make the approach adaptable to any child in any context, regardless of their linguistic background.

While unmarked forms have traditionally been considered cause for concern and thus considered errors in some scoring procedures (e.g., Oetting et al., 2019), the children in this case series produce them as part of a large repertoire of the possible forms available to them in their linguistic environment (i.e., SpIE and BL). The patterns-based aspect of the approach used in this case series situates unmarked forms within the child's larger linguistic repertoire and does not view them as separate from their marked corollaries. Furthermore, unlike standardized assessments, overtly marked stigmatized features (e.g., multiple negation) *count toward* the child's morphosyntactic repertoire rather than ignoring them. The minoritized dialects that comprise a linguistic community are rich sources of input that diversify speakers' morphosyntactic repertoire. Using a patterns-based approach reveals that unmarked forms contribute to the syntactic complexity of monolingual and bilingual speakers of BL.

Children with normalized language development produced a wide range of unmarked forms and their marked corollaries. As in previous research (e.g., Oetting et al., 2019), the children in this case series whose caregiver and teacher reports indicated concerns produced fewer marked unbound morphemes. Many of their marked forms were contracted and produced as learned phrases they hear often in their environment. Because these patterns of production are contextualized within both the child's whole linguistic system and the community's standards for effective communication, the current approach mitigates misdiagnosis by bypassing the raciolinguistic ideologies infused in standardized assessments. This approach does not rely on idealized versions of named languages and dialects that pathologize the linguistic practices of marginalized speakers within those varieties or those whose language practices are rooted in more than one of those varieties.

Implementation of this approach requires a shift in epistemological perspective. A raciolinguistic framework (Flores & Rosa, 2015) allows us to turn our attention from language practices of racially minoritized children as a "difference" to be managed to the clinical practices

that perceive these differences as deficits. Racially minoritized communities have been historically excluded from the research process and ignored as experts of their own linguistic practices. Their "home" languages are valued only as stepping stones to ill-defined notions of "academic" language (García & Solorza, 2020). In contrast to this tradition, a community-based sociolinguistic approach centers the wisdom of these very communities as the authority on their own competence. Furthermore, each community's language practices are valued in their own right—apart from a predetermined standard. Students' linguistic skills according to community-defined standards are then situated within classroom expectations in order to determine who has language-based access needs that can be addressed through speech-language services. Through this process, community language practices must be sustained as an integral part of identity formation and solidarity in a stance against discrimination and for equity and justice more broadly.

Limitations

This case series examines a small sample of monolingual and bilingual children, and only results from English samples are reported here, although Spanish samples were included in the broader diagnostic process. More language samples from bilingual Spanish-BL–speaking children with strong language skills across both languages are needed to confirm the patterns found here. Additionally, this case series excluded children with cognitive disabilities. Because the proposed approach centers community language practices rather than medically prescribed diagnoses, children with cognitive disabilities are an important part of reframing what counts as effective communication.

While the language contact measure provides insight into a child's level of exposure to BL, it is not a validated measure. Furthermore, all the bilingual children in this case series had casual contact with BL (i.e., contact scores between 5 and 8). Results may differ for bilingual children with other degrees of BL contact, particularly those with low contact. Data from a wider range of contact scores are needed to further assess the utility of the language contact score.

The elicitation method changed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Not all participants completed their play sample with a peer, and not all play samples took place at the school. Children who were recorded after school closures had also spent weeks with virtual interaction only rather than in person with their peers and teachers. All of these factors may impact the type of language and the quantity of features the children produced. The participants also varied in the number of utterances produced in their sample, which may limit the utility of within-group comparisons. A larger sample size across elicitation methods may reveal differences in how features of the various dialects in a child's repertoire manifest across settings and elicitation methods. Different elicitation methods may also allow for more opportunities for a particular feature to be produced (e.g., past tense vs. present tense). Additional sociolinguistic information (e.g., language input from siblings) was not considered in the current case series.

Future Directions

While the language samples in this case series provide evidence that features from multiple dialects appear in the language production of bilingual children, more research is needed to gain insight into the unique features that may arise as a result of the bidirectional interaction between Mexican Spanish and BL. It is possible that this interaction yields morphosyntactic patterns that do not appear in either language alone or in monolingual speakers of SpIE and BL.

This case series focused on the English input of bilingual children's monolingual peers. Future studies should investigate the effect of Spanish dialect as well as the influence of siblings. The bilingual children in this case series spent a lot of time with their siblings, and previous research suggests that siblings can be a more influential source of input than peers when a child affiliates more with family than peers (Berthele, 2002; Stanford, 2008). The sociolinguistic questionnaire may be modified to include questions regarding the dialect use and peer affiliations of siblings. Children also have other peers in the community (e.g., extended family, church members) that influence their dialect acquisition. Direct measures of caregiver language and dialect use may also be explored.

Data Availability Statement

The data analyzed for the current research are included in this article. Detailed data sets generated during this current research are available on reasonable request.

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