

1-1-2008

The [de] construction of institutional representation of student achievement : an ethnographic case study of an ELL student's academic growth.

Pierre W. Orelus
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1

Recommended Citation

Orelus, Pierre W., "The [de] construction of institutional representation of student achievement : an ethnographic case study of an ELL student's academic growth." (2008). *Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014*. 5833.

https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1/5833

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.

★ UMass/AMHERST ★



312066 0336 7553 1



University of
Massachusetts
Amherst

L I B R A R Y

•

11 10

This is an authorized facsimile, made from the microfilm master copy of the original dissertation or master thesis published by UMI.

The bibliographic information for this thesis is contained in UMI's Dissertation Abstracts database, the only central source for accessing almost every doctoral dissertation accepted in North America since 1861.

UMI[®] Dissertation
Services

From: ProQuest
COMPANY

300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-1346 USA

800.521.0600 734.761 4700
web www.il.proquest.com

THE [DE] CONSTRUCTION OF INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF AN ELL
STUDENT'S ACADEMIC GROWTH

A Dissertation Presented

by

PIERRE W. ORELUS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 2008

School of Education

UMI Number: 3336996

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3336996
Copyright 2009 by ProQuest LLC
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

© Copyright by Pierre W. Orelus 2008

All Rights Reserved

THE [DE] CONSTRUCTION OF INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF AN ELL
STUDENT'S ACADEMIC GROWTH

A Dissertation Presented

by

PIERRE W. ORELUS

Approved as to style and content by:

Jerri Willett, Chair

Laura Valdiviezo, Member

Donna LeCourt, Member

Christine B. McCormick, Dean
School of Education

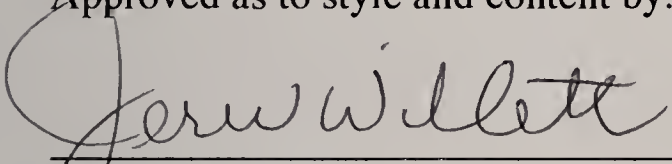
THE [DE] CONSTRUCTION OF INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF AN ELL
STUDENT'S ACADEMIC GROWTH.

A Dissertation Presented

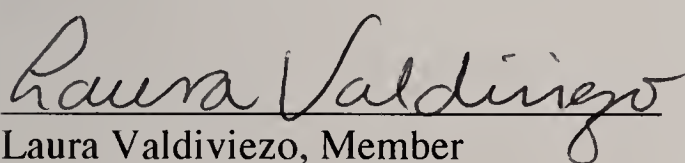
by

PIERRE W. ORELUS


Approved as to style and content by:




Jerri Willett, Chair



Laura Valdiviezo, Member



Donna LeCourt, Member



Christine B. McCormick, Dean
School of Education

DEDICATION

To Pablo, Ms. Rosa, Ms. Mirlanda and their English language learner (ELL) students.
They all in their unique way inspired me to continue exploring issues concerning ELL
immigrant students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I feel indebted to many people for the materialization of this dissertation.

First, I want to sincerely thank my advisor, Dr. Jerri Willett, for supporting me with my doctoral work over the last five years. This dissertation would not have been made possible without her strong support. I also want to thank her for inspiring and challenging me to think deeper and become a better analyst.

Second, I am grateful to Drs. LeCourt and Valdiviezo for strongly supporting me with this dissertation. Third, I want to express my gratitude to Drs. Gebhard, Paugh, Nieto, Lam, and Austin for their support. Fourth, I wish to thank Drs. Withorn, Macedo, and Leistyna who, among others, inspired and encouraged me to go beyond my bachelor's and master's degree. Fifth, I owe a great deal of gratitude to my wife, Romina Pacheco, for being so supportive throughout the last five years I was in the doctoral program.

Sixth, I want to thank my parents, especially my "illiterate" father who always trusted that I would do well in school and be successful in life. I miss you dad! Seventh, I also want to thank my older brother and sisters who sacrificed their education so that I could get one. They all directly and indirectly contributed to my academic growth. Eighth, I want to thank teachers such as Ms. Rosa, Ms. Mirlanda and Mr. Carmo for opening their classrooms to me and enabling me to get to know Pablo, the focal student in this study.

I am grateful to Pablo and his mother for sharing their stories with me. Without their stories and collaboration, this study would not have been a reality. In addition, I am grateful to Linda Guthrie for helping me not to get lost through the process of gathering

and submitting required paperwork to fulfill the school requirements for this doctoral degree. Thanks Linda, you're the best! Finally, I wish to sincerely thank my classmates and friends Margaret, Andrew, Andres, Jane, and Milton for being supportive and helping me to overcome some obstacles over the last five years.

ABSTRACT

THE [DE] CONSTRUCTION OF INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF AN ELL STUDENT'S ACADEMIC GROWTH

SEPTEMBER 2008

PIERRE W. ORELUS, B.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Jerri Willett

Student academic growth is one of the most heated issues surfacing in the frequent debates revolving around school reforms, particularly since the enactment of the No Child Left Behind mandate. Often missing in such debates is a clear articulation of what available resources students have drawn on to grow academically. Informed by socio-cultural theoretical and systemic functional linguistic frameworks and drawing on data collected in a three-year ethnographic case study, this study explores what contributed to the academic growth of Pablo, a middle school English language learner, who was institutionally recognized as an “achiever.” Specifically, this study examines in what ways and to what extent school resources, such as teaching practices, enabled Pablo to grow academically. This study also explores how and to what degree outside resources, such as parental involvement and support from the community, led to his growth. In addition, this study examines to what degree Pablo’s level of motivation contributed to his growth in academic writing. To determine whether or not Pablo’s writing changed over time and whether Pablo made progress with his academic writing, I

performed a textual analysis of a selective set of essays Pablo wrote over the course of one academic year. Findings suggest that Pablo's institutional status as an achiever stems from his ability to find ways to produce essays that were institutionally valued, recognized, and defined as "good essays." Findings also suggest that while such a status helped Pablo maintain his institutional identity as a "good student," it may at the same time have slowed down his learning process, prevented the school personnel from exploiting his full potential as a student and, worse yet, led to the over-generalization of student achievement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
ABSTRACT.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xii
CHAPTER	
1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	1
Introduction.....	1
The Inspiration for My Research	1
My Experience as a Former ELL Student & ACCELA Project Assistant	1
Statement of the Problem and its Significance	4
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions.....	10
Significance of the Study	11
Limitations of the Study.....	12
Theoretical Framework.....	13
Chapter Summary	17
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	18
Introduction.....	18
Social Class and Teachers' Implementation of the School Curriculum	18
Home Literacy vs. School Literacy	22
The Flaw in the Deficit Theory.....	33
School-Family Partnership & Student Academic Growth.....	39
Chapter Summary	46
3. METHODOLOGY	48
Introduction.....	48
Data Method Collection: Collecting Ethnographic Data	48
First Year of Data Collection.....	49
Second Year of Data Collection	50
Third Year of Data Collection	51
Selection & Background of the Participants.....	53
Pierre.....	53
Pablo	54
Yolanda (A Pseudonym).....	58
Ms. Rosa (A Pseudonym)	59
Ms. Mirlanda (A Pseudonym).....	60

	Ms. Jessica (A Pseudonym)	61
	Mr. Carmo (A Pseudonym).....	61
	Ms. Jana (A Pseudonym)	62
	Data Organization	63
	Data Analysis Processes	63
	Ethnographic and SFL Analyses.....	64
	Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis.....	65
	First Stage of Data Analysis	66
	Second Stage of Data Analysis	67
	Third Stage of Data Analysis	69
	Validity and Reliability of Qualitative Research Analysis	70
	Trustworthiness/Credibility/Confirmability/Triangulation.....	70
	Chapter Summary	72
4.	CULTURAL, INSTITUTIONAL & SITUATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	73
	Setting the Tone	73
	Demographics of the City Where the Study Was Conducted.....	75
	Entering the Site.....	82
	Physical and Cultural Characteristics of the Site.....	84
	Characteristics of Students and the School Personnel	86
	The NCLB Legislation: A Brief Overview.....	89
	Ms. Rosa: Teaching in Time of Test-Driven Accountability	93
	Ms. Mirlanda's Classroom.....	103
	Chapter Summary	107
5.	INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSES	108
	The Growth of Pablo's Writing Skills Over Time-Introduction.....	108
	Transcript #1: Interview with Ms. Mirlanda (Theme: Teacher's Verbal Evaluation of Focal Student)	109
	Interpretation and Analysis of Interview	110
	Sample #1: Pablo's First Journal Entry	116
	Interpretation and Analysis of Pablo's Journal Entry	117
	Sample #2: Pablo's Journal Entry, Four Months Later.....	120
	Interpretation and Analysis of Pablo's Journal Entry #2	120
	Sample #3: Pablo's Writing, Nine Months Later.....	125
	Interpretation and Analysis of Pablo's Writing Sample #3	126
	Sample #4: Pablo's Essay, Thirteen Months from Sample #1.....	128
	Interpretation and Analysis of Pablo's Essay	129

Interviews With Pablo and his Mother	131
Transcript #2: Interview with Pablo’s Mother (Theme: Mother’s Assessment of Pablo).....	132
Interpretation and Analysis of Interview	133
Transcript #3: Interview with Focal Student, Pablo (Theme: Pablo’s Reflection on His Learning Process)	138
Interpretation and Analysis of Interview	140
Chapter Summary	143
6. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS	144
Introduction.....	144
Summation	144
Findings Related to Pablo’s Early Apprenticeship in Academic Literacy and Ms. Mirlanda’s Teaching Practices.....	146
Findings Related to Pablo’s Investment in his Studies and His Mother’s Educational Background.....	149
Implications for Practice and Further Research.....	150
Conclusion	158
 APPENDICES	
A. PARENTS/GUARDIANS CONSENT FORM	160
B. INTERVIEW WITH PABLO’S MOTHER	162
C. INTERVIEW WITH PABLO.....	169
D. STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE	172
E. TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE.....	173
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 174

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Graphic Summary of Data Collection	52
2. Demographics of the City & the State	76
3. Educator-Data: 2005-2006.....	76
4. Enrollment 2005-2006	77
5. Enrollment 2006-2007	77
6. Educator-Data: 2006-2007.....	78
7. Additional Teacher Information about School	78
8. Summary of Types of Crime Occurred in the City.....	81
9. Graphic Display of the School Test Results-MCAS Tests of Spring 2005 (Percent of Students at Each Performance Level).....	91
10. Graphic Display of the School Test Results-MCAS Tests of Spring 2006 (Percent of Students at Each Performance Level).....	92
11. Graphic Display of the School Test Results-MCAS tests of Spring 2007 (Percent of Students at Each Performance Level).....	93
12. Clausal Analysis of Pablo's Text.....	117
13. Clausal Analysis of Pablo's Text.....	120
14. Clausal Analysis of Pablo's Text.....	125
15. Clausal Analysis of Pablo's Text.....	129

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter delineates the background of the study. I begin this chapter by explaining what leads me to conduct this research: what inspires and motivates my involvement in conducting this ethnographic case study. I go on to state and analyze the issue that I aim to address in this study and the research questions that guide it. Furthermore, after talking about the importance of the issues that this study addresses, I point out its limits. I end the chapter by discussing the theoretical perspectives informing this study, and the reasons for my drawing on these perspectives to frame this study.

The Inspiration for My Research

This study emerges out of my experience both as a former English language learner (ELL) and as a Project Assistant working with in-service and pre-service urban teachers in western Massachusetts through ACCELA (Access through Critical Content and English Language Acquisition). ACCELA is a federally funded grant through which the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts established a partnership with Springfield, Holyoke, and Amherst public schools. Through this partnership, the University of Massachusetts provides professional and academic assistance to ELL teachers and supports ELL students' school experiences and academic development.

My Experience as a Former ELL Student & ACCELA Project Assistant

Like many ELL students, I did not speak English prior to moving to the United States. Having faced the challenges of learning a new language while also receiving my general education, I wanted to explore the linguistic and cultural struggles and academic

achievement of second language learners, especially those learning English. The research for and development of this dissertation addresses the struggles and concerns of ELL students similar to mine; for this reason, I feel particularly invested in this research and bring much passion and energy to the study.

As an ACCELA Project Assistant working with in-service and pre-service teachers and English language learners in the urban schools of western Massachusetts, I have had a unique opportunity to pursue my research goal of conducting a study that (1) explores the linguistic, cultural and academic struggles of English language learners, and (2) examines the role that students' social class, teachers and parents plays in the academic achievement of ELL students.

Through ACCELA, urban elementary and middle school teachers in Springfield and Holyoke, Massachusetts, enroll in an inquiry-based master's program during which they acquire theoretical and applied knowledge in L1 and L2 literacy and in multicultural education. In addition, they receive professional development preparing them for the special challenges of teaching ELL students (ACCELA, 2005). Completion of the Master's degree entails conducting a research project. As a Project Assistant through ACCELA, I help these Master's students critically examine their research and meet the technical challenges of their inquiry-based Master's projects. In addition to helping the teachers with their researches, ACCELA enabled me to conduct my own research.

The combination of working closely with in-service and pre-service teachers and observing students' growth over time gives me a deep understanding of the context of this study. Specifically, my position as a project assistant allowed me to take field notes and videotape classroom interactions between these teachers and their students. In this

way, Pablo, the focal student in this study, came to my attention. One early video captured the classroom interaction between Pablo and Ms. Rosa. Pablo, who was not yet able to speak English, was timidly interacting in Spanish with Ms. Rosa and a few of his peers. Two years later, this video helped me to trace the academic struggle of Pablo, eventually considered by the institution as an achiever. When it was time to analyze data for this study I already had an extensive record of Pablo's learning across a four-year period to draw on.

During the first three months of collecting data for this study, I juggled my roles as a Project Assistant and a researcher. At certain times I felt the primacy of the researcher role, i.e., in taking field notes, interacting with the focal student, and interviewing Ms. Rosa to get more insights about Pablo's academic growth. Likewise, there were times I dedicated mostly to answering questions that Ms. Rosa had about her own research project. This hybrid position made me a more engaged and active participant-observer in the study. Indeed, my research questions emerged from these rich experiences. For this study, I initially observed two focal students: a Puerto Rican girl, Maria (a pseudonym), and Pablo, a Dominican student. I witnessed Pablo's slow but steady academic development from the time when he first joined Ms. Rosa's class, in Fall 2005, until Fall 2008. As I wanted to document an ELL student's academic growth over a relatively long time period, I became particularly interested in Pablo, who, over the course of three years, achieved significant gains in his English language skills. The relationships I established with Pablo's teachers, and subsequently with his single mother, enabled me to explore to what degree Pablo's teachers and his family contributed to his academic growth.

Statement of the Problem and its Significance

Student academic growth is one of our most pressing educational issues, and as such often comes to the fore of debates revolving around school reforms. Parents, educators, and policy makers alike express great concern about student academic growth. When debate shifts towards the academic gap between students, it often focuses on the gap between monolingual Caucasian, African-American, Latino/a, and Asian students. This race and class-based comparison occurs despite the increasingly change in the student demographic involving increasing numbers of ELL students in the U.S. school system. However, under the No Child Left Behind mandate, English language learners' academic growth has moved to the forefront of school reform debates. This is due partly to the elimination of many bilingual programs in states such as California and Massachusetts. In consequence, monolingual urban teachers have found themselves teaching ELL students for whose needs they are unprepared.

As a result of this decrease of primary and secondary bilingual programs, the U.S. school system is experiencing a shortage of certified ESL teachers and teachers professionally trained to work with ELL students. A survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (2000) reveals that only 20% of teachers felt that they were prepared to teach students with limited English proficiency. A report by the same center indicates that only 2.5% of teachers who work with ELL students have a degree in ESL or bilingual education, while only 30% of all those teaching ELL students have participated in professional development addressing ELL needs. In consequence, monolingual teachers are increasingly required to teach linguistically and culturally diverse students without adequate support and proper training. One of the tremendous

challenges these teachers face is that ELL students often bring to school resources differing from those valued in traditional U.S. classrooms. These resources are often unappreciated and go unrecognized by school personnel. Worse yet, sometimes the students themselves do not know if their resources carry any value.

Nonetheless, the linguistic and cultural mismatch faced by ELL students in the U.S. school system does not necessarily constitute a dead end to their academic growth. These differences can certainly impact their learning, especially when teachers perceive their diverse linguistic and cultural resources as problems rather than resources they can build on to effectively teach students. Schleppegrell (2004) argues that, “schooling is primarily a linguistic process, and language serves as an often unconscious means of evaluating and differentiating students.” Schleppegrell’s argument helps explain why, “In U.S. classrooms, linguistic diversity has commonly been viewed as a temporary, if troublesome, barrier to learning. After students learn English, the thinking goes, learning can then proceed unhampered” (Nieto, 2005, p. 211).

Policy makers too often fail to appreciate the scope and complexity of these challenges to ELL students. For example, besides having to cope with the difficult transition to life in the United States, ELL students enter a school system whose structure often differs from that of schools they attended in their native lands (Nieto, 2004). This transition is much more challenging for ELL students from poor economic and social class backgrounds. These students tend to live in poverty and therefore attend schools in marginalized neighborhoods with insufficient resources; this was the case with the middle school Pablo attended.

Moreover, many ELL students enter the U.S. school system without the educational background that teachers expect. When class and social background resulted in inferior or non-existent education, a great number of these students did not develop academic language and literacy skills in their first language that could be transferred to content-area studies in English. Indeed, many ELL students are illiterate prior to starting school in the U.S. For this category of students, exponentially more time and effort is required to help them develop the language and literacy skills needed to grow academically. Even those with some English experience face challenges. Many ELL students have achieved some level of oral fluency in the English language, and are often conversationally fluent. However, conversational fluency is insufficient to certain academic tasks required in school.

Researchers such as Cummins (2000) and Collier (1995) concur that it takes ELL students a long period of time—five to seven years—to develop the academic language fluency required to accomplish certain schooling tasks. Cummins (2000) makes a clear distinction between what he called basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), or conversational language, and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)—academic language. Cummins (2000) argues that the difference between the two lies in the academic registers of language. He states:

Oral classroom discussions do not involve reading and writing directly, but they do reflect the degree of students' access to and command of literate or academic registers of language. This is why CALP can be defined as expertise in understanding and using literacy-related aspects of language. (2000, 70).

Two features of academic registers are syntax and vocabulary. The latter often includes common words with specialized meanings. The same word that ELL students can fully understand while engaging in conversations with their peers might be

challenging to comprehend if used in context-reduced task that requires academic language/register. For example, the word “corrupt” can be used in different contexts and mean different things. Some advanced ELL students might understand what is meant by “corrupt leaders.” However, if they come across the ‘corrupt’ in a different context—for instance the sentence “something is corrupt in the computer”—they may be unable to fully grasp its contextual and scientific meaning. Moreover, for ELL students who have not developed academic language, complex sentences, i.e. sentences with multiple clauses, might be challenging for them to fully understand, as they are cognitively more demanding than simple sentences with fewer clauses.

Another category of ELL students lack academic language to a greater extent. These are émigrés from countries experiencing war who arrive in the U.S. as refugees, often after spending months in refugee camps. Helping these students grow academically can be a great challenge for teachers, especially those working in schools with insufficient resources. Because these students and often move from one region to another to protect their lives, they necessarily experience a discontinuity in their schooling. Such discontinuity impacts their learning, preventing them from fully developing literacy skills and academic language in the first place. As a result, when they enter the U.S. school system, they often lag behind because they never acquired the academic language and concepts that peers of their age developed.

Although these refugees want to achieve in school, the students often experience academic failure and are unable to be at the same level of students who start school with a strong academic background. In *Closing the Academic Gap*, Freeman, Freeman and Mercuri (2002) best explain this situation by stating that:

Many of these refugees have experienced war, persecution, pestilence, and famine. Their living conditions have often made schooling impossible. They hope to find a better life in their new country and have dreams of success for their children. Their dreams are not always realized, though, in part because the children begin school here without having had the educational experiences teachers in this country expect. Many have had little schooling, or none at all.

At the same time ELL students face the challenge of grappling with content subjects, such as math, many of them are hard-pressed to master the English language of instruction. All too often, the teachers who are expected to meet their academic needs are “unprepared to make the linguistic expectations of schooling explicit to students” (Schleppegrell, p. 3). Ultimately, U.S. schooling is a new experience for many ELL students, with many linguistic, cultural, and social obstacles to overcome (e.g. Darder, 1995; Cummins, 2007).

Furthermore, for many second language learners, learning another language equals a new way of being, as language is intrinsically linked to culture. Many ELL students enter the U.S. school system a few months after they arriving from their native lands. This leaves them with insufficient time for cultural adjustment. While they are expected to take on school tasks, they must also become familiar with the school’s cultural environment, which is, for many, in stark contrast to the environment to which they are accustomed. Despite these challenges, ELL students are often expected to grow academically at the rate of their monolingual peers. Yet progressing academically requires these students to develop new ways of using language, to make meanings as expected by the school system. Often the way these students use language to participate in social interactions and communicate with members of their community and family does not prepare them to engage in “advanced literacy school-based tasks” (Schleppegrell, 2004).

Many scholars (e.g., Schleppegrell, 2004; Bernstein, 1988; Christie, 1998a) have demonstrated that children from non-mainstream home environments and communities do not use language in ways approximating typical school environments. This puts them at a disadvantage to advance academically. As Schleppegrell (2004) clearly states:

Our schools serve students who speak different languages and dialects, who have been socialized in different ways, and who face different kinds of challenges in their daily lives. Students whose cultural practices are similar to those of the school may be able to transfer those practices to the school setting, but students from other backgrounds may need to focus on the ways that language contributes to meaning-making as they engage in new social and cultural practices in order to succeed in achieving advanced literacy. (p. 6)

Learning to use language in new and different ways, as suggested by Schleppegrell, can be a daunting task for those who have yet to master the English language. Christie (1998a), explicating the significant impact of the language component on student learning, called language the “hidden curriculum” of schooling. Language is indeed vital, and plays a major role in student learning. Everything that is done in classrooms, from asking and answering basic questions to engaging in new types of texts and construing meanings embedded in these texts, requires the use of language, frequently in very specific ways. Consequently, for ELL students whose English proficiency is often limited, such advanced schooling tasks involves challenges beyond knowledge and reasoning skills.

Furthermore, to navigate through and accomplish complex schooling tasks, students sometimes need to draw on specific academic registers. Schleppegrell (2004) defines register “as the constellation of lexical and grammatical features that realizes a particular situational context”(p. 18). Schleppegrell goes on to add, “register illuminates the relationship between language and context” (p. 19). However, many ELL students

have yet to develop academic register, and are unable to make the connection between language and context. As noted earlier, although they might have achieved relative fluency in spoken English, this is insufficient to enable them to use language in specific contexts. Those who never developed an academic register in their first language find it even more difficult to draw on lexical and grammatical resources in the English language to accomplish difficult language-based academic tasks. Christie (2002a) argues that, as they move into complex literacy tasks, students are expected to draw on features of academic registers to construct the abstraction and generalization needed to deconstruct meanings embedded in texts. How can ELL students accomplish this difficult task when many of them are struggling to learn the basics of the English language?

If, despite linguistic and cultural challenges, certain ELL students grow academically, what are the resources that have enabled them to do so? How have they used these resources to acquire academic language to both grow academically and meet the achievement standards set by the school system? My dissertation, drawing on the ethnographic case study of a high-achieving Dominican student, attempts to answer these questions and others that follow from it.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Drawing on data from a three-year ethnographic case study, my dissertation explores resources that contributed to the academic growth of Pablo, who was recognized as an achiever by the institution. In this study, his academic growth is defined as working at grade level in writing, reading, and speaking two years after he started attending an urban middle school with no English skills. Although the middle school that Pablo attended ascribed to him an achievement status, rather than examining how and what

Pablo achieved this study investigates in what ways and to what extent school resources, such as teaching practices, enabled Pablo to grow academically. This study also explores how and to what degree outside resources, such as parental involvement and community support, assisted Pablo's academic growth. In addition, this study examines to what degree Pablo's level of motivation contributed to this growth. Finally, to determine whether or not Pablo's writing changed over time and whether he made progress with his academic writing, I analyze a selective set of essays written by Pablo over the course of one academic year.

The two major research questions guiding this study are: (1) what was the nature of Pablo's growth in academic writing over the course of one academic year? What resources were available to him, and how did he draw on them to sustain his growth in academic writing? and (2) How was Pablo's academic achievement institutionally defined and represented, and what was the connection between the "institutional achiever status" attributed to him and his growth in academic writing?

Significance of the Study

Many studies (Trueba, 1998; Keenan, J. W., Willett, J., & Solsken, J., 1993) have explored the academic growth of ELL students. However, these studies have mostly focused on elementary and high school ELL students. Moreover, these studies generally address the outcome of ELL students' academic achievement, with the exception of Willett's and Solsken's (1993) study looking at both the process and the outcome of such an achievement. In contrast, this study examines a different age group— ELL students in middle school, which in Massachusetts encompasses sixth, seventh and eighth grades — and centers on the processes leading to the outcome of ELL students' academic growth.

In this sense, my study contributes to the small number of socio-cultural studies examining the processes of “successful learning” in a different context. The context of this study differed from others done in suburban areas in that it was conducted at a poorly funded urban middle school located in a city with a high rate of crime and poverty. Furthermore, my dissertation specifically adds to the literature examining the academic growth of Dominican ELL students. These are an ever-increasing group of Latino/a students who, unlike their Puerto Rican and Mexican counterparts, have yet to be fully studied.

Finally, this study is important in that it challenges the assumption that ELL students’ parents’ inability to speak Standard English, or refusal to speak English with them at home, contributes to their children’s academic failure. As I demonstrate later, even though Pablo’s mother could barely express herself in English and she only spoke Spanish at home with Pablo, this did not prevent her from passing on to him the cultural capital that she has as an immigrant mother who is highly educated—she was a lawyer and practiced law for over a decade in her native land.

Limitations of the Study

Being completely objective while conducting research is impossible; researchers inevitably bring to the site their biases and, sometimes, their personal or political agenda. In this sense, researchers can only try to be as objective as possible, preventing their biases from drastically influencing how they go about their research—that is, how they interact with their informants, collect and analyze data, and report their findings to their targeted audience. Moreover, how researchers choose to study certain groups inherently limits their research.

In the case of this study, a major limit is its focus on one Dominican ELL student's academic growth and the various resources that contributed to it. Given the limited scope of this study, one cannot use it to generalize about Dominican ELL students' academic growth. Another limitation of this study is that I did not observe the classrooms of all the teachers who were involved in Pablo's learning, nor did I interview all of his teachers. Therefore, it is impossible to know how the teachers that I did not interview and whose classrooms I did not observe may have contributed to Pablo's academic growth. I only interviewed and observed the classrooms of three of Pablo's teachers: his ELA, Reading/Writing, and Spanish teachers, all of whom were willing to be interviewed and give their insights on Pablo's academic development. Furthermore, I was only able to observe their classrooms once or twice a week. Because of these factors, it is impossible to know what they did in their classes when I was not present that may have contributed to Pablo's academic growth.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in socio-cultural (Vygotsky, 1986; Bloome, 2004; Willett, 1998; Street, 2003; Bahktin, 1986) and systemic functional linguistic (Halliday, 1994; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Eggins, 2004) perspectives. I draw on these theories because of an interest in learning what literacy events and pedagogical choices made by Pablo's teachers may have enabled Pablo's academic achievement. In addition, I explore how Pablo may have used these literacy events to co-construct knowledge with his teachers and peers and develop academic language to produce texts. A text can be the transcript of a face-to-face conversation between two people; the interaction between teachers and students; a lecture a professor gives; or a sample of students' essays. Finally, I use socio-

cultural theory and systemic functional linguistics as conceptual frameworks because they enable me to examine how Pablo used language to make meanings in texts embedded in and informed by both his own classroom situational context and by the cultural context of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. This legislation, as analyzed later, impacted what Pablo's teachers did in their classrooms with their students.

To achieve these goals, I drew on, among other terms, Vygotsky's concept of knowledge construction. According to Vygotsky (1986), knowledge is not constructed in isolation. It is collectively constructed and historically and socially situated. Language plays a central role in co-construction of knowledge and meaning-making. In effect, it is the medium whereby people attribute meaning to and deconstruct meaning from texts. It is also the tool used to produce texts in specific contexts. As Knapp & Watkins (2005) put it:

Texts are always produced in a context. While texts are produced by individuals, individuals always produce those texts as social subjects; in particular, social environments. In other words, texts are never completely individual or original; they always relate to a social environment and to other texts. (p. 18)

The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1923, 1946) took the word 'context' a few steps further, linking it to the social function of language. To better understand and describe in depth the immediate context in which texts are produced, he coined the term 'context situation' which, in his view, needs to be linked to a broader influential context, which he calls 'cultural context' (Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

According to Malinowski (1923, 1946) cultural context helps explain the greater influence that, for example, state and federal mandates such as the NCLB legislation have on texts produced in a situational context such as a classroom. As I argue later, the written texts that Pablo produced in his classrooms were constantly informed and

influenced by pressures placed on students and teachers to be prepared for standardized tests such as the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System).

The language that Pablo used to produce and make meanings through the texts (e.g. short essays and journal entries) has various functions: social, linguistic, ideological, cultural and historical. Social-cultural theorists explore these multiple dimensions of language (Bloome, 2005; Street (2003); Willett, 1996). Bloome et al. (2005) examined the extent to which language is used by teachers and students through classroom interactions to co-construct knowledge and make meanings of texts. Bloome, et al. also (2005) point out the importance of language in conducting research and analyzing literacy events taking place in classrooms, stating that:

Our approach to the micro-ethnographic analysis of classroom language and literacy events is informed by our continuously evolving understanding of language, literacy, and classrooms. For us, language is not a 'transparent' vehicle for the communication of information. Any use of language (spoken, written, electronic, etc.) involves complex social, cultural, political, cognitive, and linguistic processes and contexts—all of which are part of the meaning and significance of reading, writing, and using language. (p. xvii)

What Bloome, et al. point out does not happen in a vacuum; the meaning that people make through the social use of language can be best understood by placing it in context. In Vygotsky's conception (1986), establishing the link between text and context is key in knowledge construction; for example, how students construct knowledge and/or make meaning of texts in their community differs from the way they construct knowledge with and/or make meaning of texts with their teachers and peers.

According to the proponents of socio-cultural theory, language and texts are equally important factors in the domain of knowledge construction. People use language to co-construct knowledge both verbally and textually; as such, texts (written, oral, visual

or otherwise) are the centerpiece of knowledge construction. Just as people construe meaning verbally, they do so through written texts. As Halliday (1994) and Fairclough (2003) illustrate in their scholarly work, the content of texts have different social effects on people depending on how they interpret and analyze them. Making meaning of texts, as Fairclough (2003) eloquently puts it, “depends upon not only on what is explicit in a text but also what is implicit—what is assumed” (p. 11). What is assumed to be in the text is frequently a reflection of the meaning analysts attribute to it. One can therefore only provide one’s interpretation of texts, and such an interpretation needs to be substantiated with evidence from the text (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). This is why making meanings of texts requires situating and linking such meanings to context. Freire (1970) maintains, “The understanding attained by critical reading of a text implies perceiving the relationship between text and context.” In the case of a text written by an individual, “what is ‘said’ in [such] a text always rests upon ‘unsaid’ assumptions, so part of the analysis of texts is trying to identify what is assumed” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 11). In trying to identify what is assumed in texts analysts sometimes bring in their own assumptions into such analysis. However, these assumptions need be critically examined to avoid the possible misinterpretation of texts. As an example, when I first started interpreting and analyzing the texts produced by Pablo in his classes I was unable to unveil or understand the purpose that he was trying to achieve. This may have had something to do with the unchecked assumptions that I brought into his texts. By discussing my interpretation and analysis of Pablo’s texts with colleagues and peers, I gained different perspectives that allowed me to approach Pablo’s purposes for his texts.

Chapter Summary

This orientation chapter outlined the backgrounds of the study. I opened the chapter by explaining what inspired me and led me to be involved in this ethnographic case study. I went on to state and critically analyze the issue that this study aims to address. I defined the purposes that the study aimed to achieve and the research questions that guided it, then discussed the significance and limitations of the study. I ended the chapter by reviewing the theoretical lens that I drew on to frame this study. In the following chapter, I review the literature that I drew on to help answer my research questions; specifically, the literature I review explores the root causes influencing student academic growth. The causes analyzed here include, among others, parental involvement, students' home apprenticeship in academic literacy, socio-economic background, and investment in their studies, and teachers' instructional practices.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature on student academic growth is vast. Many researchers from various fields and with different foci (education, socio-linguistics, linguistics, sociology, teacher education, multicultural education) have attempted to shed light on what has led to and/or impeded student academic growth. This chapter presents a synthesis of the arguments and counterarguments set forth regarding student academic growth. Specifically, this chapter reviews what researchers claim are the determining factors enabling or preventing student academic growth.

This chapter is divided in three parts, covering three major themes relevant to student academic growth. The first part centers on the role social class and school curriculum play in student academic growth. The second part explores the literature on the mismatch between home literacy vs. school literacy, which, according to many researchers (Delpit, 1992; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000), causes the academic failure of many students. The third part analyzes the roles teaching practices and school/family partnerships play in student academic growth. The themes most pertinent to this study are student's home apprenticeship in academic literacy, social class background, and self-investment in their education; parental involvement in student learning; and teachers' teaching practices.

Social Class and Teachers' Implementation of the School Curriculum

Social class is one of the root causes linked to the quality of student academic growth. Scholars such as Anyon (1981), Apple (1991, 1996, 2003), and Bowles & Gintis

(1976) argue that students from privileged background often do better academically because they usually attend schools with adequate resources enabling well-paid and trained teachers to teach more effectively. They further argue that these students are usually from highly educated families who apprentice them at home in schooled-like literacy practices (Schleppegrell, 2004; Snow, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Bernstein, 1990).

Jean Anyon (1981) compared five elementary schools located in different socio-economic communities over the course of a full year. In the working class schools, she found that the teaching procedure was mechanical and involved rote memorization. Students were not encouraged to make decisions on their own or be creative; they had to follow whatever their teachers assigned to them. Students' work was evaluated based on how well they followed what teachers did in class. Students were often told to copy and study what was written on the board; they were often tested on what they were told to copy in their notebooks. In contrast, in schools defined as "middle class," "affluent professional," and "executive elite," students were challenged to be creative, independent thinkers and problem solvers. At these schools, Anyon (1981) noted that there was enough psychological space for teachers' and students' interactions. Teachers taught students in a way that prepared them for jobs requiring independent self-management. Such apprenticeship, however, was denied to working class students, whose schooling prepared them for routine and menial types of jobs. Consequently, this led to an achievement gap between privileged and working class students and reinforced the preexisting class patterns.

Leading thinkers in curriculum studies such as Apple have also analyzed the causes of student academic growth and/or failure. Apple (1997, 2003) did so by looking at it from a micro and macro perspective—that is, evaluating the relationship between what is produced in school settings and the larger world. Apple examined how school curriculum is used in such a way, consciously or otherwise, to put in a far better social position students of privileged class than those from underprivileged families. Apple contends that social power and status are interrelated to knowledge and skills produced in school. He further argues that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds do not have access to higher types of social power and status, because they receive what is essentially a tailor-made clerical and manual skills-oriented curriculum. In Apple's account, the social power and status stemming from the production of knowledge and skills in school are only made available to students of higher socio-economic status.

Similarly to Apple, although more deterministic, Bowles and Gintis (1976) investigated how schools play a major role in reproducing class and race-based stratification. Bowles and Gintis believe that schools serve the interest of the capitalist system by preparing students for specific jobs in the capitalist market. They argue that education offers the “technical and cognitive skills required for adequate job performance” (p. 56). Likewise, students acquire appropriate behavior and interpersonal skills mirroring the dynamics of the labor force—that is, the relationship between workers and workers, and administrators and workers. Referring to Bowles' & Gintis' argument, Giroux (1988) avers, “Within this discourse, schools, teachers, and students have often been written off as merely extensions of the logic of capital.” Bowles and Gintis maintain that whatever students are learning in school is configured to the logic of

the capitalist mode of production. In their view, schools reproduce this cycle to strengthen the economic system:

The educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system, we believe, through a structural correspondence between its social relations and those of production. The structure of social relations in education not only inures the student to the discipline of the workplace, but develops the types of personal demeanor, modes of self-preservation, self-image, and social identifications which are crucial ingredients of job adequacy (Bowles & Gintis 1976).

Anyon, Apple, and Bowles & Gintis address two major factors fundamentally impacting the academic growth of students in many schools in the U.S.: social class, and teachers' different teaching methods and implementation of the school curriculum. Their analysis brings to the fore issues of concern such as (1) social stratification; (2) what is defined and accepted as legitimate knowledge, and who authorizes, values, and has access to it; how this knowledge is produced, reproduced, and circulated through schools and society at large; and (3) the unequal power relations among students and teachers. Moreover, their analysis suggests that schools constitute a site maintaining social class and stratification and reproducing economic systems. What these authors articulate can be an impetus to interrogate which voices and identities are represented in these curricular materials.

However, unlike what Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued about the reproduction theory, the findings of this study suggest that reproduction is not necessarily a negative thing. Depending on how one reproduces knowledge, for example, it can be beneficial to one's academic development. As an example, Pablo's ability to reproduce knowledge and academic literacy skills that he acquired at home and at school enabled him to do well in school and thereby be eventually recognized as an achiever by the institution.

The social class issue that Apple (1997, 2003) analyzed above is worth considering here for it plays a central role in Pablo's academic growth. As illustrated later in the findings of this study, Pablo was able to grow academically and sustain this growth due to the fact that he was apprenticed at home into academic literacy and grew up with a mother who is highly educated and supportive. Specifically, Pablo had developed academic literacy in his first language before migrating to the United States. His academic literacy in his first language enabled him to acquire academic language in the second.

Researchers such as Cummins (1986, 1988, 2000) and Collier (1995) argue that it is easier for students who are literate in their first language to transfer knowledge acquired in that language to the target language. However, with immigrant students who are illiterate in their first language and/or whose schooling is interrupted before arriving in the host, it is much more challenging for teachers to help them develop academic literacy in their second language. Although significant, social class and correlation between academic literacy in L1 and L2 are not the only root causes affecting the academic growth or failure of students. There are other related critical issues at play, namely the mismatch between family and school literacy long considered equally influential.

Home Literacy vs. School Literacy

Many scholars (Heath, 1981; Bourdieu, 1990; Gee 2001a) have explored the extent to which the mismatch between home literacy and school literacy has impacted the academic growth of students. As noted earlier, students whose linguistic and cultural resources are recognized and appreciated by the school system tend to better

academically than those whose resources go unrecognized. Willett & Remberg (2005), Nieto (2005), Freeman & Freeman (2005), among others, have made clear in their scholarly work that all students have resources that teachers can draw on to help them advance academically.

However, as these scholars concur, not all students have had properly trained, adequately supported, culturally and linguistically sensitive teachers who know how to effectively incorporate in their instructions students' cultural and linguistic repertoires. Along the same lines, scholars such as Heath (1983) contends that students' understanding of the way teachers should teach them and teachers' understanding of how students should behave and respond to their instructions too often clash. Heath's (1983) ethnographic study captures how these differences play themselves out in some classrooms in the U.S. school system.

Heath (1983) conducted a ten-year long ethnographic study exploring how families living in two different communities in the Piedmont section of Carolina, "Roadville" and "Trackton," made use of language and literacy practices differing from their use in school. Heath examined how language played a major role in the socialization process between teachers and students at school. Because of the disparity between how language was used at home and at school, students from the "Roadville" and "Trackton" communities experienced linguistic and cultural difficulties in school while middle-class children did not.

Specifically, Heath notes the linguistic challenges that African-American students faced in school with teachers who were not accustomed to non-standard English speech. Heath argues that because the home discourse of these children clashed with the school

discourse, these students had difficulty answering culturally specific questions asked in the school setting. The way they were taught to answer questions at home was different from how questions were asked and expected to be answered in mainstream classroom settings. In consequence, this led to misunderstanding and frustration in the classroom among both teachers and students. However, Heath found that when teachers were involved in multiple literacy activities with the parents and students in the community, they understood each other better and learned from each other's linguistic and cultural differences:

The primary rationale behind the research reported here was simple: if change agents (teachers and parents) were willing and involved, knowledge about language use could proceed along a two-way path, from the school to the community, and from the community to the school (p. 124).

Heath's argument suggests that the collaboration of teachers and parents can potentially lead to the academic growth of both working class African-American and white students.

Cope and Kalantzis (1993) take a slightly different stance regarding the literacy gap between privileged and non-privileged students. They argue that, "it is the role of schooling to make the nature of literacy explicit, particularly in order to provide marginalized groups of students access to literate culture and literate ways of thinking (p. 63)." Cope and Kalantzis (2000) believe that the U.S. school system is set up in a way that privileges monolingual students whose home discourse and literacy match with those of the school. This, according to these authors, put minority students at a disadvantage. Challenging the proponents of progressivism supporting the process-oriented teaching strategy and student-centered curriculum (e.g., Dewey, 1916) Cope and Kalantzis believe

that minority students need to be taught directly the literacies of power. In their view, doing otherwise will be a disservice to historically marginalized groups.

Similarly, Delpit (1992) maintains that, unlike privileged students who have early exposure at home to the print-immersed environment (e.g., homes full of books), literacy, and knowledge valued and reflected in mainstream classrooms, minority students are at a disadvantage in a school system that embraces a certain white, middle-class type of literacy. Therefore, to avoid perpetuating the academic gap already existing at school, Delpit holds that teachers are obligated to ensure that poor minority students have access to the dominant school code. Delpit contends that teachers can do so successfully by taking control of the teaching process as opposed to simply letting students organize their own learning at their own pace. What about minority students who may have access to the school dominant code and yet still fail? Furthermore, how about students who might prefer to take ownership of their own learning rejecting the classroom structure and teaching methods that Delpit and Cope & Kalantzis propose? Does this mean they would not learn and achieve in school?

Losey (1995) also contends that the gap between home literacy practices and school literacy practices has a significant impact on student academic growth. Further, Losey argues that a parent who apprentices children into a home literacy differing from school literacy has little influence on whether children will succeed in school. Losey recognizes that a child exposed to home literacy matching that of the school is in a far better position to succeed in school. Losey points out that parents might benefit from training in apprenticing their children in literacy practices similar to what Sarah Michaels calls “school talk.” Michaels (1981) believes that “learning how to talk about

decontextualized text” might help parents from non-dominant social classes further their children’s academic growth. She urges teacher practitioners to be mindful of the complexity of decontextualized texts, which has proven challenging to students whose literacy background is different from the literacy valued in mainstream classrooms.

Snow (1996), Scollon & Scollon (1981), and Bernstein (1990) have established the correlation between students’ academic growth and early home literacy apprenticeship, which many ELL students lack. Snow and Scollon & Scollon believe that caregivers’ and students’ co-construction of knowledge and linguistic competence at home will later help young children face academic challenges in school. In a study Scollon & Scollon conducted on the interaction of caregivers and children, they find that certain literacy practices helped prepare young children for later schooling challenges. One of the practices entails adults adding new information to children’s utterances when they interact; with the assistance of the adult, the child is able to expand and elaborate on what he/she utters and eventually create new structures of language. Scollon & Scollon also find that the co-construction of language at home between parents and children prepares the latter for the types of interaction, meanings, and language use that take place in school.

With respect to the language of schooling, Snow (1996) also conducted research with a middle-class family, where parents engaged their children in literacy practices aimed at preparing them to face the academic challenges of school. The parents whom Snow studied deemed it important to teach their children the middle-class model of school language. Knowing the type of literacy practices valued in school, these parents read stories imitating those practices aloud to their children. Does Snow’s and Scollon &

Scollon's research suggest that middle class parents' aspirations and goals for their students shape what happens in the U.S. classrooms? Or, is these parents' determination to apprentice their children at home in school-like type of discourse and literacy practices aimed to adapt their children to the status quo and maintain it in the process of doing so?

Snow's findings are in line with Bernstein's theory of coding orientations. That theory illuminates the major role schooling language plays in academic growth. Bernstein (1990) notes that students from diverse linguistic and social class use language in school in different ways. Once again, these findings indicate that schools tend to favor the way middle-class students use language. Bernstein maintains that middle-class students understand how to construct certain kinds of meanings when being asked open-ended questions; furthermore, these students know what verbal strategies used to answer these kinds of questions. They also understand the contextual relevance of these verbal strategies—when and where to use them. Working-class students, on the other hand, lack these strategies due to a home discourse that does not prepare them for the school linguistic code. Consequently, many of them do not succeed in U.S. classrooms.

In these authors' viewpoints, student-centered learning only favors privileged students introduced at home to the types of discourse valued in school. This, therefore, puts them in a far better position than marginalized students who need to be told explicitly by their teachers what to do in school. As Delpit (1988) argues, "If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier (p. 34)." Building on Delpit's argument, Cope and Kalantzis summarize the whole argument about student-centered vs. teacher-centered curriculum in the following terms:

The cultural bias of progressivist curriculum unconsciously favors certain students. The process writing teacher, waiting while the child struggles for control and ownership, actually favors White, middle-class students. Consider the 'natural' advantage children from print immersed environments have in the process classroom. Their homes are full of newspapers, computers, books, and letters. They already have an inkling of how a text works--its beginnings, middles and ends--and how text and image relate. They know what text does. In a very tangible way they can see the point of gaining for themselves the sort of control and ownership that comes with literacy. No amount of inner struggle, however, will tell students who do not come from such backgrounds what text is for and how it works. Writing is from a world outside their experience. These students need to be told the things that privileged students will be able to find out themselves.

The major argument here holds that at certain schools, teachers and students often share the same or similar social, cultural, and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1990).

Therefore, neither these students nor these teachers have to cope with the cultural and linguistic mismatch between home and school (e.g., Heath 1983) that underprivileged students experience. What these scholars argue also suggests that the content of curricular materials used at the school usually reflects the social class reality of privileged students. Consequently, it becomes easier for these students to relate to these materials and unpack the meanings embedded in them. However, students whose home discourse clashes with that of the school often fail academically; they fail because they do not know how to use the "language of schooling" (e.g. Schleppegrell, 2004; Cazden, 1988). As Vygotsky (1978) maintains, the "everyday language" through which they socialize at home is different from the "scientific language" used and valued in school, and which can be acquired through social interaction with "more adult experts." For students not introduced to the language of schooling at home, it is suggested that they be taught the "code of power" (Delpit, 1992) if they are to succeed in school.

While Delpit's argument might be relevant to the needs of some students, it is important to point out in passing that there is a fundamental difference between being directly told the "code of power" and being long apprenticed into it. If teachers whose teaching practices are constrained by standardized preparation tests could teach their students the code of these tests, more likely than not they would do so. As the findings of my study showed later, Pablo's academic growth did not stem from the code of power that his teachers taught him at the school, but rather from long home apprenticeship in academic literacy. This is not to suggest it is useless or pointless to directly teach students the school code of power, as it may have some value and be helpful for some students. My point is that teaching directly the code of power to students does not necessarily guarantee that they will succeed in school. Further, there is no empirical documentation to suggest that those who do not have access to this code are doomed for academic failure.

Ramanathan (2005) to some extent supports Delpit's, Cope's and Kalantzis' conclusions. He believes that marginalized students should be taught the genre of textbooks. Ramanathan contends: "Genre knowledge is especially important given that much recent research in education has pointed out ways that minority and L2 students are disadvantaged because genres are not explicitly taught" (p. 83). He also highlights the importance of unpacking the ideology and cultural specific terms embedded in textbooks for students who may not possess the necessary background, explicitly giving them lessons in both the unpacking and the cultural specifics. Textbooks, by virtue of their content, are ideological tools; when using these textbooks to teach writing to ESL students Ramanathan encourages teachers to be cognizant of their ideological content. In

Ramanathan's view, it is crucial for these teachers to understand not only the content of a textbook but also the politics behind it.

L2 learners taught writing through these books are "doubly disadvantaged: not only do they have to grapple with specific social problems, but they must also deal with tools that are in themselves problematic" (p. 94). By 'problematic' tools, Ramanathan means shared cultural knowledge in the L1 culture that L2 learners lack. In contrast, when students share the socio-cultural background of the L1 culture they have an easier time with what is presented to them in school through these textbooks.

Many teachers have attempted to implement what Ramanathan, Delpit, and Cope and Kalantzis suggest above. Lipman's (2000) research shows three high school teachers who manage not to let the incompatibility between students' language and culture and that of the school impair their learning. Lipman's (2000) subjects empower their students to challenge and unpack various beliefs embedded in the materials used in class. Lipman argues that these teachers were successful in doing so because (1) they are fully aware of the interconnection between culturally congruent pedagogy and social class, and (2) they embrace the cultural and linguistic resources that their students brought with them to school. These teachers apprentice their students into the dominant code, allowing those students to navigate the mainstream discourse. Having access to the dominant code enables the students to develop a bicultural identity challenging and resisting the dominant system.

Other case studies have observed how some teachers use curricular materials in a manner culturally, linguistically, and historically congruent to the needs of their diverse students. For instance, Dyson (2003), through ethnographic research situated in an urban

primary school, presents the social world of students and their academic progress. Dyson finds that learning takes place when teachers draw upon on their students' "unofficial world" to allow them to simultaneously challenge and learn from the "school official world." Dyson believes that teachers can succeed in doing so by engaging in a dialogic relationship with students, which in turn allows pedagogic spaces for the co-construction of knowledge between teachers and students. This study finds that students can come to engage in the dynamics of the class if their home literacy and language are valued and respected in the classroom.

Similarly, other researchers such as Patricia Gandara (1995) and Celia Zentella (1997) show through case studies how linguistically and culturally diverse students grow academically despite their lack of access at home to the "language of schooling" (Schleppegrell; 2004). The students whom Gandara and Zentella observe maintain their home literacy, linguistic and cultural resources even as they differed from those valued in school.

Gandara's study involved 50 Mexican-American students. Approximately 84% of these students who succeeded academically were from families where only Spanish was spoken. These families made sure that their children stayed attached to, valued and embraced their cultural and linguistic roots. Two-thirds of the students spoke only Spanish when they started school; and their families did not apprentice their children at home into schooled-like literacy. This, however, did not lead to their academic failure.

Zentella documents a similar case in a study of 19 families living in a disadvantaged Latino/a community in New York. The students involved in her research were predominantly low-income Puerto Ricans. Those classified as the most successful

students were enrolled in bilingual programs where teachers used the native language as an asset that they could build on to effectively teach them. These students did not have to abandon their native tongue and home literacy in order to succeed in school; nor did their parents pass on to or teach them literacy skills that the school valued. Yet, they were able to achieve in school for they had teachers who appreciated and drew on their linguistic and cultural resources to explicitly teach them.

Although these studies do not necessarily apply to or reflect the reality of all marginalized students, they highlight how speaking a language at home other than English, or not being able to speak Standard English, is not and should not impede the academic growth of linguistically and culturally diverse students. The findings of this study concur with this perspective. As an example, Pablo's mother did not stop speaking Spanish at home with Pablo fearing this would prevent him from doing well in school. Nor did Pablo's Latina teachers hesitate to use Spanish as an additional instructional language to facilitate Pablo's academic growth. In short, speaking Spanish both at home with his mother and in school with his teachers did not prevent Pablo from advancing academically. Therefore, blaming parents for students' academic failure because they refuse to speak English at home with them is not a strong argument. Indeed, leading figures in family literacy and language acquisition such as Catherine Snow (1997), Lourdes Diaz Soto (1997) and Jim Cummins (2000, 2007) demonstrate that parents' persistence and consistency in speaking their native tongue with children is cognitively beneficial.

Snow (1997) argues that, "the greatest contribution immigrant parents can make to their children's success is to ensure they maintain fluency and continue to develop the

home language.” Similarly, one conclusion drawn by Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut (2001) in their book *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*, is that students who are fully bilingual tend to stay in school and progress academically, while those with limited bilingualism tend to leave school.

These studies further show that mainstream classrooms do not have to be a site documenting only the failure of marginalized students. They can be settings fostering the academic growth of these students. The academic growth of Gandara’s and Zentella’s informants amply demonstrates the ability of students to succeed despite early home literacy “deficit” and lack of “language of schooling.”

The following section elaborates on the deficit theory, which has been used to attribute the academic failure of marginalized students to their parents’ inadequate economic, educational and cultural backgrounds, and lack of interest in their children’s education. As a counterargument, I review literature demonstrating how the cultural and linguistic resources of non-mainstream parents can be used in joint efforts by teachers and families to foster student growth. I also survey studies demonstrating how effective teaching practices can lead to student academic growth.

The Flaw in the Deficit Theory

Although most pervasive in the 1970’s, the deficit theory is a recurrent theme in academia. According to this theory, the failure of underprivileged students in school correlates to the poor backgrounds and lack of guidance and support from the family. Poor students’ home environment is often deemed inadequate and chaotic, and therefore hostile to their learning. Baratz and Baratz (1971) observed the home environment and social class background of poor African-American parents in relation to the education of

their children. These backgrounds are called “sick, pathological, deviant, or underdeveloped” (Nieto, 2005). Such classifications suggest that students from this environment will likely fail in school. The danger with this theory is that it fails to point out that while some families may be seriously dysfunctional most are not. Worse, the deficit theory fails to interrogate and deconstruct these stereotypes and stigmas, which do not accurately reflect the reality of single, poor, minority, or working class parents. The deficit theory also further disregards the effort and sacrifice these parents may make to ensure that their children succeed in school.

Delgado-Gaitan (1990) conducted a study with twenty Mexican parents in Portillo, a town historically known as home to many generations of Mexican immigrant families. Delgado-Gaitan found these families supportive of their children’s education. Parents enrolled in adult ESL classes, aware that improving their own English skills would let them better help their children with schoolwork. They also participated in monthly meetings at their children’s school. Delgado-Gaitan observed these Mexican families trying to read to and with their children using literacy skills acquired in ESL classes.

My ethnographic case study is similar to Delgado-Gaitan’s. Pablo’s middle school runs an adult ESL program designed for parents to improve their English skills, allowing them to be involved with their children’s work. Pablo’s mother enrolled in this program; she wanted to better support Pablo with his homework while at the same time establishing a stronger relationship with his teachers. As an ESL student at the same school her son attended, Pablo’s mother regularly participated in school activities

involving parents. According to Ms. Mirlanda, who taught both Pablo's and his mother, the latter was outstanding in her involvement with Pablo's education.

Auerbach (1995) and Hidalgo, et al. (1995), having conducted several studies of family literacy, also find willingness within many underprivileged and poorly educated families to help their children become successful learners at school. Auerbach notes that these parents often trust their children's teachers and are thus usually inclined to do what is asked of them to ensure their children do well in school. Therefore, school personnel would do well to use a participatory approach enabling non-mainstream parents to acquire school literacy practices, which they could then transfer to their children.

Building on Auerbach's argument, Hidalgo et al. maintain that a strong link or, better yet, a well-established partnership between school and family is key to fostering student academic growth. The Hidalgo study observed four non-mainstream Puerto Rican families. These parents involved their children in many cultural and literacy activities in their communities. Hidalgo therefore suggests that teachers incorporate these activities in school curriculum to potentially promote student academic growth.

Rogers' (2003) case study of the Treader family is a prime example of the dedication, determination, and willingness of economically and educationally disadvantaged families to help their children in school. Rogers relates the willingness of a poorer African-American family who opened their doors to her as a researcher in the hope of improving their literacy skills and those of their children. This family has a daughter struggling at school who was consequently labeled "at-risk" by school personnel. Because of her perceived inability to learn at the speed her teachers expected, she was subject to placement in a special education program, an institutional decision the

parents opposed. Throughout the book, Rogers narrates the unshakable determination of the Treader family to support their daughter's schooling despite their lack of resources, and their resolution to fight a school established bureaucracy whose cultural and literacy practices differed sharply from their own.

As the preceding case studies indicate, the deficit theory fails to acknowledge that economically disadvantaged parents have desires and dreams for their children, and are willing to work as hard to enable them as privileged parents. This theory also fails to realize that these parents have resources that teachers can incorporate into lesson plans to teach linguistically and culturally diverse students more effectively. The deficit theory does not recognize either the sacrifices and efforts teachers and parents, through school-family partnerships, can make to ensure that students of all backgrounds advance academically. Nor does this theory offer any suggestion as to how school personnel might promote parental involvement with literacy programs designed to apprentice parents into school literacy practices.

To understand how and why marginalized students do or do not achieve in school requires closely and carefully examining at what goes on in classrooms: how teachers teach, interact with, construct or fail to construct knowledge with students. It is also critically important to examine the role family plays in the academic growth of linguistically and cultural diverse students. Teaching practices and family involvement in the education of students are crucial; however, they cannot work alone. Larger social factors also play a major role in the academic success or failure of many students. Both the state and federal government have a responsibility to tackle poverty and the high crime level destroying many communities where underprivileged students live. The roles

teachers and parents play their students in students learning must be correctly understood; otherwise, social factors contributing to or hindering ELL students' academic growth may be overlooked.

Educators such as Ravitch (1988), Hirsh (1987), and Bloom (1987) have long placed the blame for academic failure on teachers whom they claimed fail to give students strong English, math, reading and writing, and phonics skills. In an Op-Ed piece in the New York Times, Diane Ravitch (2005) states:

To really get at the problem, we have to make changes across our educational system. The most important is to stress the importance of academic achievement. Sorry to say, we have a long history of reforms by pedagogues to de-emphasize academic achievement and to make school more "relevant," "fun" and like "real life." These efforts have produced whole-language instruction, where phonics, grammar and spelling are abandoned in favor of "creativity," and fuzzy math, where students are supposed to "construct" their own solutions to match problems instead of finding the right answers.

In a similar vein, Hirsh (1987) calls for teaching underprivileged students "the set of cultural knowledge that these students need to succeed in society" (p. 24).

Unlike Apple (1991) and Kozol (1991), who link the achievement gap between privileged and underprivileged students to poverty and unequal distribution of resources in schools, Hirsh and Ravitch (1988) attack a perceived lack of rigor in teaching practices. They do not share the view that such a gap is engendered by a preexisting resource disparity among students of different racial, economic, social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, as manifested in the divide between poorly-funded and well-funded schools. Rather than advocate adequate resource allocation for public schools, Hirsh and Ravitch see public schools as having misused their resources, resulting in students' poor reading and writing skills, lack of command of the English language, and low scores on high-stakes tests. That argument is grounded in the premise that students

from uneducated families and poor socioeconomic backgrounds can succeed in school when provided with rigorous instruction and good teaching practices.

The common assumption informing such arguments holds that learning will always take place provided that there are trustworthy, certified, and well-trained teachers. Good teachers, in this view, can undoubtedly find ways to effectively teach their students despite horrible teaching and learning conditions, including a lack of material resources, overcrowded classrooms, and crumbling buildings. Unfortunately, this view romanticizes the work of a handful of extraordinary teachers, to the detriment of all others. This unfairly excuses the state and federal governments responsible for the schools' safe and comfortable physical and cultural environment.

Moreover, this view offers others a further alibi by placing responsibility for student achievement on teachers' shoulders alone, while failing to factor in the poverty and racial inequalities that negatively impact the learning of many students. In *Savage Inequalities* (1991), Jonathan Kozol brilliantly describes how these factors cause schools in cities like Louisville to fail many African-American students despite the hard work of some teachers. Most poverty-ridden inner city schools lack the resources teachers need to teach effectively. In stark contrast, teachers in schools located in rich suburbs generally have more than adequate resources made available to them.

These social factors are related to this study, for it looks at broader institutional and cultural practices and how these practices impact urban teachers' pedagogical choices and how these teachers and students make meaning. At the same time my interest in this study lies in what can be accomplished on a local level with the immediate participants, harking back to the parent-involvement, students' early apprenticeship in

academic literacy, and teachers' teaching practices as analyzed above. The next section surveys literature underscoring the importance of school-family partnership. Specifically, I review school-family programs focusing on the literacy apprenticeship of non-mainstream parents into school literacy, as well as school personnel's apprenticeship into parents' home literacy. This partnership can play a crucial role in students' academic growth by strengthening fluent communication between the two spheres of literacy. In addition, I outline several case studies closely examining the role of teachers' instructional practices and family involvement in student academic growth.

School-Family Partnership & Student Academic Growth

FLAME (Family Literacy: Appriendo, MeJORando, Educando [Learning, Improving, Educating]) is a community-based family literacy program used in the Chicago public school system in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago. This exemplar of school-family partnership literacy programs runs on the assumption that parents who are strongly supported by the school and community can positively influence the learning of their children (Rodriguez- Brown, 2003). Also informing this program is the belief that parents who are highly confident and successful learners themselves can potentially be better teachers for their children. Through FLAME parents are given the opportunity to improve their English skills and get involved in school activities. Parents are also given the opportunity to share their own literacy practices with school practitioners while learning the school-literacy skills. FLAME values parents' home literacy and the treats parents as source of knowledge and support for children. Rodriguez-Brown avers that "parents have been great teachers in my endeavors to support their needs as the most important teachers of their young children" (p. 134).

Similar to FLAME is the International Literacy Program (ILP) designed by Paratore (2003). ILP is a collaborative family-school literacy program between Chelsea Public Schools and Boston University School of Education students. This program provides a framework for parents to share their literacy experiences and practices with teachers, their children, and friends. Parents are encouraged to actively participate in literacy activities with their children, by writing short stories and reading together; the journal entries parents and children wrote together were published. By so doing, parents become active members and agents in their children's learning process.

Another goal of program is for teachers to be apprenticed into parents' literacy practices so the teachers could incorporate these literacy practices—these resources—into the school curriculum. Paratore, et al. (2001) eloquently explained the goal of this school-family relationship and its implications for student learning in the following terms:

The ILP is a carefully and thoughtfully designed family literacy program that could represent both premises in the conflict facing family literacy educators; ILP could teach 'the codes' (Delpit, 1995. p.45), identified as necessary for knowing if one is to participate successfully in the mainstream of American life and, at the same time, could uncover, recognize, and build on the household 'funds of knowledge' described by Moll and his colleagues. (Diaz, Moll, & Mehan 1986).

Similarly, the California Parent Center (CPC), located in San Diego, creates space for parents and school staff to work collaboratively in support of students. A training center reaching out to parents statewide, CPC established programs bringing together parents, school district staff, and teachers to work as a team to foster student growth.

Through partnerships with John Hopkins University, the California Department of Education, the California State PTA, and the California Association of Compensatory Education (CACE), the CPC holds a Leadership Development Training Conference. This conference creates a platform for parents and school staff to discuss issues related to

student academic growth, and develop ways to foster it. CPC also offers a Parent Involvement Liaison Certificate Program. This certificate program is designed for para-professionals willing to serve as a liaison between school and family. These para-professionals receive 15 hours of professional development training to prepare them for this task. In addition, CPC makes important information about parental involvement available monthly to parents and school staff through e-news posted online.

Numerous studies (Matos, forthcoming; Olsen & Mullen 1990; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Moll, 1988; Keenan, Willett, & Solsken, 1993) illustrate the extent to which teaching practitioners have found ways to create space for family involvement in student learning while foregrounding pedagogic spaces promoting active student participation in classroom activities. These studies also suggest ways in which curricular materials can be built upon and/or can emerge from “students’ funds of knowledge” (Molls, 1986).

The Keenan, Willett, & Solsken (1993) study is a case in point underscoring the importance of family involvement in student learning. This study documents a teacher/family collaborative project in which an urban teacher worked collaboratively in community-oriented language arts education. In their findings, the researchers report that bridging the gap between school and community requires the teacher’s persistence in attempting to reach out to students’ parents to arrange family visits to classrooms. They also maintain that teachers need to explore the knowledge and skills family members have and encourage them to share these with children. Further, teachers should reassure family members that not being able to speak English fluently cannot and should not hinder teachers and parents’ and school-home collaborations. These researchers contend

that parents will be more inclined to change their attitudes towards schooling and get involved in the education of their children if school personnel reach out to them and embrace and value their funds of knowledge.

Likewise, Olsen & Mullen (1990) document how 36 mainstream teachers in California found effective ways to teach minority students. The “success” of these teachers in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students stems from a teaching approach grounded in an intimate knowledge of their students’ learning styles, lived experience, language, and culture. Effectiveness further involves teachers’ sound understanding and application of second language acquisition (e.g. Gebhard 1999; Cummins, 1988); high and clear expectations set for students; and continuing teacher education to learn how best to teach diverse students. For instance, some of the teachers involved in this study took Spanish classes while teaching, or obtained the equivalence of language development credentials, to better accommodate the linguistic and cultural needs of their students.

Olsen & Mullen’s (1990) study also demonstrates how outstanding teachers in certain schools sought ways to meet the educational needs of minority students. These teachers did not assume that minority students were falling behind in school because of their socio-economic background or different language and culture. Instead, they made the effort to learn the language of their students and found ways to communicate with them and their parents.

Moll (1988) observes two outstanding urban elementary teachers who drew on students’ “funds of knowledge” to teach them critical reading and writing skills. These teachers were successful in doing so because they created pedagogic spaces for their

Latino/a students who felt that their stories, personal and community experiences mattered in the classroom. These teachers' classrooms were places where students and teachers co-constructed meaning from texts, and where teachers co-constructed knowledge with students by using the latter's preexisting knowledge and communal resources. They emphasized that content matters as much as English proficiency. The teachers' carefully assessed students' language growth through the social context in which their language was used. Students were eager to participate in class discussions because the subject matter was meaningful and pertinent to their lives.

Carmen Mercado (2005) follows bilingual teachers and students' parents as a liaison between the two. The study documents how teachers' effort to reach out to Latino/a parents could make a difference in the learning of Latino/a students. Mercado created space or, better yet, a liaison between these bilingual teachers and Latino/a parents; through this liaison, teachers explored and became knowledgeable about the cultural, communal, and spiritual resources of these parents. Mercado argues that this teacher-parent rapport enabled these bilingual teachers to develop a teaching pedagogy and method incorporating family resources and literacy to effectively teach their bilingual students.

Other studies have shown that high-achieving marginalized students have parents actively involved in their education (Clark, 1983; Rich, 1987; Henderson, 1988; Myers, 1985). Clark associates high achievement among these students with parental behaviors conducive to academic growth:

1. Parents established clear, specific role boundaries and status structures with the parent as dominant authority.
2. Parents frequently engaged in deliberate academic growth-training activities.

3. Parents had explicit academic growth-centered rules and norms.
4. Students showed long-term acceptance of norms as legitimate.
5. Parents exercised firm, consistent monitoring and rules enforcement.
6. Parents provided liberal nurturing and support.
7. Parents deferred to child's knowledge in intellectual matters.

Inferable from these studies is that teachers do not necessarily have to act as reproductive agents who, through teaching practices and pedagogic choices, lead students to reproduce the dominant ideologies that permeate curricular materials. Instead, they can be social agents who open spaces for pedagogic possibilities, and create communal forums allowing teachers, students, and family to collectively share their knowledge, learn from each other, and co-construct new knowledge. These studies also show that teachers should involve parents in their children's learning and treat them as co-constructors of knowledge regardless of their racial, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In this study, Ms. Rosa's attempts to do so are notable.

The research of Moll (1988) and Keenan, Willett & Solsken (1993) particularly highlights the importance of such interaction. They call for transformative pedagogies building on students' linguistic and cultural interests and family resources to ensure students' success in school and beyond. Ideally, pre-service and in-service teachers will use school materials in a way that is inclusive, culturally sensitive, and family and community oriented. Another key component of teaching practices is teachers' level of care. Nel Noddings (1992) calls this the "ethic of care." In Noddings' view, teachers' care or lack thereof is as critical as other structural factors contributing to or impeding student academic growth.

In her study with Latino/a students in Chicago, Nilda Flores-Gonzales (2002) underscores the importance of this care in teacher-student interaction and relationship building. She found that the high level of care teachers invest in daily literacy activities in which they engage their students significantly and positively impacts student learning. Specifically, Flores-Gonzales argues that when teachers show they care for their students, by valuing the culture and language they bring to class and setting high expectations for them, students do better in school.

Angela Valenzuela's (1999) three-year study of Mexican and Mexican-American students in a Texas high school also shows that the success of many of these students correlated to the high level of care exhibited in teaching practices and teacher-student interaction. These teachers showed they cared about students by respecting and affirming their diverse linguistic and cultural heritage, building relationships with them, and holding high expectations for their success. This respectful attitude on the part of teachers challenging what Valenzuela calls the "subtractive" form of schooling: a mechanism through which students' cultural and social resources are disregarded and expunged in school. Valenzuela argues that such disrespect puts marginalized students in a very vulnerable position often leading to academic failure.

In *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* (2005), Nieto documents the case studies of two students who succeed in school despite the horrible social and economic conditions of their families and their involvement in actions that society defines as deviant and/or criminal. In refutation of the deficit theory, Nieto maintains that these students did well in school because their teachers cared for them and respected, valued, and affirmed their language and culture.

Both [Ron Morris and Paul Chavez] live in poverty with large families headed by single mothers; both have been involved in antisocial and criminal behavior; and both have had negative schooling experiences. One might be tempted to write them off because of these circumstances, but both Ron and Paul are now learning successfully in alternative schools.

Nieto avers, “Deficit explanations of school academic growth cannot explain their success” (p. 256). It is necessary to understand that caring for students does not mean giving out hugs and sugarcoating the realities of school and life. Teachers do a disservice to students by pitying them or holding them to low standards. As Nieto eloquently puts it, “Care means loving students in the most profound ways: through high expectations, great support, and rigorous demands” (Nieto, 2005). Teachers’ caring attitude towards students is relevant to this study; nonetheless, as demonstrated later, factors such as social class, parental involvement, and student motivation and investment played the key roles in Pablo’s academic growth.

Chapter Summary

In reviewing the literature on student academic growth—the main theme that informs this study—a recurrent theme is the resources or lack thereof enabling or preventing student growth. This literature encompasses explorations of the role social class plays in student academic growth; the arguments and counterarguments about the mismatch between school literacy and home literacy, and the impact this has had on the academic growth of student; and to what degree teaching practices, school-family partnerships, and parental involvement influence student learning.

The overview of this review of the literature suggests that social class, family background, parental involvement in student education, and teacher care all play a role in promoting student academic success. Each can become a resource used to further student

academic growth. This case study examines these multiple resources and shows how they come together to create an ecology that leads to the academic growth of Pablo. The next chapter describes the methodology used for the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter lays out the data method collection, organization, and analytical framework used for this study. I begin by describing how I collected data for this study and the nature of these data. I go on to delineate how I organized the data. I then provide a detailed description of the participants involved in the study. Further, I explain the analytical tools with which I approached the data. I end by briefly discussing the importance of such issues as validity, credibility, reliability, and reflexivity, and describing how these concepts are taken into account throughout this study.

Data Method Collection: Collecting Ethnographic Data

Ethnographic research entails, among other things, collecting data through participant observation and keeping an ethnographic record. This “includes taking field notes, taking photographs, making maps, and using any other means to record your observations” (Spradley, 1980, p.33). My role as a participant-observer in this study allowed me to take field notes and conduct informal and formal interviews with the subjects. Some of these interviews occurred during the course of my participant observation. I collected artifacts, such as essays that Pablo produced over the course of one academic year and his scores on standardized tests including Step up Springfield. In addition, I videotaped the classrooms I observed to fully capture what was happening, and to allow me to review and interpret what I saw and heard. From these videotaped sessions, I extracted transcriptions of student/teacher and student/student interactions.

Over the course of three years at the site I collected a rich set of data. It consists of audio/videotape recordings of teacher-student interactions, transcripts of teacher/student and student/student interactions, field notes, questionnaires, Pablo's test results, as well as samples of his writing and classroom projects. Other sources of data originated from interviews conducted with subjects including Pablo's mother and teachers. I systematically collected these data from September 2005 to May 2006, again from September 2006 to May 2007, and from October 2007 to early spring 2008. Below, I divide my data collection by year and my data analysis by stage to provide the reader with a chronological map of the study.

First Year of Data Collection

By "making broad descriptive observations descriptions" (Spradley, 1980, p. 33), I developed a feel for the site: a sense of the literacy events that occurred in Ms. Rosa's and Ms. Mirlanda's classrooms, the social interaction taking place between the subjects, and of the culture of the school. After collecting and sorting data, I narrowed my research and began making focused observations. Preliminary analysis of the data and continuing observation of the classrooms led to a further narrowing of focus and therefore a more selective process of observation. Organizing the information in stages helped me determine what data would allow me to answer the proposed research questions. The 2005-2006 data set documents Pablo's early struggles as he tried to learn the English language in Ms. Rosa's class. During the first academic year, 2005-2006, I went to the site twice a week, each time spending a maximum of 1 hour observing Pablo in his ELL class. I observed him in Ms. Rosa's class until the second year; at that point I decided to follow him in other classes. While observing Pablo in Ms. Rosa's class I took field notes,

which, according to Yin (2003), “constitute the database of qualitative research.” Initial notes taken during field observations were in condensed form and unelaborated, denoting selective phrases, short and unconnected sentences, and my perceptions of what I thought happening at the site. I jotted down these observations in my notebook while observing and interacting with the informants.

To expand these notes (Spradley, 1980, pp. 69-70), I added relevant and detailed information and events that I remembered from the classrooms but did not record immediately. My field notes consisted of observations of the interactions between Pablo, Ms. Rosa, and his peers. They included the words my focal student and his teachers spoke during my interaction with them. Finally, my field notes consisted of written notes derived from informal interviews conducted with subjects of this study.

Second Year of Data Collection

The 2006-2007 data collection enabled me to examine, through a comparative method analysis of Pablo’s essays, to what degree his writing changed over time. During the second year, I increased the hours spent at the site. I observed Pablo in more than one class; in addition to observing Pablo in Ms. Mirlanda’s class, I followed him in his reading class. I divided my days in the following way: on Tuesdays I spent about 45 minutes in his ELL class. On Thursdays, I spent about 30 minutes in his reading class and 45 minutes in ELL class. In total, I spent about 3 hours a week at the site. I participated in small group discussions where Pablo was involved. I was involved in students’ in-class group projects. I took field notes and videotaped individual and group writing sessions in which Pablo and his peers were involved. There were some instances where I did not take any field notes while observing Pablo in his classes. Instead, I sat next to him and

observed what he was doing. I interacted with him, while the video camera was aimed at where we were sitting, capturing our interactions. To obtain further insights about Pablo's learning progress, I participated in weekly team meetings attended by his teachers.

When I was not in the classrooms observing teacher-student and student-student interactions and taking field notes, I had lunch with the teachers, sometimes in their classrooms and sometimes in the cafeteria. During these meals, teachers allowed me to conduct short interviews with them about the literacy events in which I had seen them engage Pablo. I seized this opportunity to ask them further questions about literacy events in which they engaged Pablo during days when I was not at the site. This type of information allowed me to figure out if there was gap between the literacy activities that I documented and those that occurred when I was not on site. At home, I spent on average two hours a week reviewing the classroom videotapes, looking for the literacy events that Pablo's teachers engaged him in that may have contributed to his academic growth. I also looked at how Pablo and his peers responded to these activities. Although my focus was Pablo, I tried to pay attention to the other students to gain a fuller picture of what was going on in the classroom. I transcribed most of the interactions between Pablo and his teachers and his peers. Additionally, I compiled samples of Pablo's writing over a year.

Third Year of Data Collection

The data I collected during the fall semester 2007 and early spring 2008 allowed me to analyze and document regularities, irregularities, and patterns in Pablo's writing skills, and whether his writing changed over time or not. I collected approximately 10 samples of his writing work for such a purpose, and compared the writing assignments he produced near the end of the second year with those he produced the year before.

Moreover, during these two semesters I conducted more formal and informal interviews with Pablo and Ms. Mirlanda to gain further insight into which resources may have contributed to his academic growth. All these interviews took place at different times in different settings—some were conducted in the teachers’ classrooms, others in the office of the coordinator of the adult ESL program. Some of these interviews were audiotaped in deference to subjects uncomfortable with being videotaped. Some interviews were neither videotaped nor audiotaped; I simply took notes while asking questions. I relied on my memory to transform those notes into field notes right after the interviews. My notes were sometimes organized immediately following the interviews; other times I did so when I returned home from the site.

Table 1: Graphic Summary of Data Collection

2005-2006	Field notes & Transcripts, Audio and videotape recordings of teacher-student	Students’ texts, School’s mission statement and Copy of MCAS practice tests/textbooks	Interviews with Ms. Rosa
2006-2007	Ten writing samples of focal student; one copy of focal student’s test outcome	One Interview with focal student, his mother, and three short informal interviews with Ms. Mirlanda	Transcript of student/teacher and student/student interactions; Questionnaires designed for parent, teacher and focal student
2007-2008	Five more writing samples of Pablo; one interview with focal student. Two more short interviews with Pablo’s teacher, Ms. Mirlanda	Field notes taken from Adult ESL program attended by Pablo’s mother	Transcription of interview conducted in Spanish & English with ESL coordinator and Pablo’s mother

Table 1 is an overall graphic representation of my data set and the people involved in this study. The digital tape recorder I used for audiotaped interviews allowed me to upload all these interviews onto a computer, providing easy reference during writing. This also enabled me to quickly verify if the content was accurate, especially

with those transcriptions done by others. I replayed the interviews on my way home from the site for immediate review. All taped interviews were transcribed.

Selection & Background of the Participants

Seven people took part in this study, at different times, levels and capacities. These were: three of Pablo's teachers, Pablo's mother and brother, and the coordinator of the adult ESL program which Pablo's mother attended. Initially my data reflected only Pablo's background and his experiences with his teachers. However, I wanted to create a broader picture of his learning environment, which entailed additional information from others who directly or indirectly may have contributed to his academic growth. I felt that it was important to have as much information as possible from all the participants about aspects of their background that may have influenced their role in Pablo's learning. With this in mind, I created vignettes for each participant. In these vignettes, I briefly described their background and the relevance of their participation in this study. As I was a participant-observer, I included a short account of my own background.

Pierre

I was born and grew up in Haiti. I am the youngest child of a working-class family of four children, and was the first to graduate from high school, go to college, and attend graduate school. I came to the U.S. in 1993 to continue my education and seek out greater economic opportunities. I am in my 30's, married with no children. I have a background in Social Work and Linguistics. I am a former ELL student. I currently teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) at a community college in western Massachusetts, which I also taught while conducting this study. Prior to joining the

doctoral program, I was an ESL high school teacher for three years in Boston, Massachusetts. I also taught ESL for a year at a community college in the Boston area.

Pablo

Pablo, the focal student of this study, moved to the U.S. with his mother and older brother in 2005 from the Dominican Republic. Prior to coming to the U.S., Pablo attended school in his native land and reached seventh grade. Because he did not speak English when he first came to the U.S., he was sent back to sixth grade despite his mother's disapproval of such a decision. At the end of this study, in 2007-2008, Pablo was in eighth grade. According to Ms. Mirlanda, Pablo was a very motivated student who showed that he cared about his education through hard work in school and continuous efforts to improve his writing, reading, and speaking skills. In interviews, Pablo spoke of his desire to succeed in school because he did not want to let his mother down; his mother believed in him and expected him to do well in school. Ms. Mirlanda confirmed Pablo's statement by repeatedly saying that Pablo's mother had a great influence on her children.

Throughout my interaction with and observation of Pablo, I found him to be a kind, respectful and ambitious student. Pablo seemed to care a lot about writing, and wrote much on his own. He showed me a few essays he wrote about the history of his country and his schooling experience in his native land. Unfortunately, when I hoped to copy these essays, Pablo informed me that either he lost the notebook where he wrote these essays or someone might have stolen it. At the end of the semester I asked Pablo if I could copy his school essays, as I was interested in finding out how his writing had changed (or not) over time.

At times Pablo could be very talkative and sometimes he could be very quiet. One day while I was sitting next to him, I noticed that he kept putting his head on the table. I asked him what is the matter with him, and he said that he had not been feeling well. I asked him why he came to school if he was ill, and he said that he came to school because he did not want his mother to worry, and that he had to come to school to please his mother. What Pablo said to me regarding his mother puzzled me until Ms. Mirlanda told me that Pablo often said the same thing to her. "He is the kind of student who feels that he has to make a lot of sacrifice to be in school and do well because he wants to please his mother" (field notes, March 2007).

While in class with Pablo, I noticed that he often seemed annoyed by or angry with classmates whose talking in class prevented him from concentrating on his assignments. Based on my observation, Pablo was one of the most focused students in his ELL classes. Ms. Mirlanda and Mr. Carmo confirmed my observation, saying that they were both pleased with Pablo's hard work and consistency with his classroom and homework assignments, which he always took seriously. Although Pablo did seem to enjoy working hard, there were times when he complained about not having a free period where he could go to the gym. During the spring semester of 2007, he lamented the fact that some students were given a period to go to the gym while he was not given the opportunity to do the same. During several informal conversations that I had with him in his reading class, he told me that even though he liked the teacher and enjoyed the class, he would rather be at the gym exercising and having fun with the few friends that he had in school.

During his earlier years at the school, Pablo was a very quiet student, perhaps due to the challenge of adjusting to a new environment and learning a new language.

However, during the academic years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, he was very active in the two classes where I observed him. In his ELA class, Pablo was always eager to answer and ask questions, and to read aloud when his teachers called upon students to do so. He was also eager to verbally share and present his written projects in class, something that he had difficulty doing in the 2005-2006 academic year.

Most of Pablo's Puerto Rican peers were inattentive and very talkative in Ms. Mirlanda's class. Consequently, Ms. Mirlanda often had to quiet them while giving classroom instructions. She sometimes threatened these students with telling their parents that they were misbehaving in her class. In fact, during one of the meetings with parents I overheard Ms. Mirlanda talking about how badly some of her students behaved. Sometimes she would make them stay after school as a form of punishment. This did not always seem to work; I noticed that many of these students continued chatting to one another while Ms. Mirlanda was explaining a lesson or discussing a story with the class.

Pablo did not only talk to me about his motivation and determination to succeed academically, but he also shared with me how isolated he felt for being the only Dominican student among his Puerto Rican peers in some classes. In one journal entry that he wrote for class, Pablo expressed this isolation. Ms. Mirlanda gave out the following prompt question: "Have you ever been in a large group and still feel alone?" Pablo responded: "First of all last year in seven grade I felt alone because I was the only one who was Dominican in my group. Because I was the only Dominican in my class I felt alone because no one was Dominican." Pablo went on, "Second of all not when I'm

with my family in the house. In that home I feel that are people covering my back.” Pablo ended, “Third of all maybe in the school I don’t know no body except myself.”

Pablo did not hesitate to tell me that he got bullied multiple times by his Puerto Rican classmates, who treated him as an “other” despite their shared Latino roots and heritage. “They don’t like [me] because I am Dominican,” Pablo said to me on many occasions. Pablo told me that his Puerto Rican classmates said that he is weird and speaks funny. Ms. Mirlanda and Ms. Rosa knew about the ill treatment Pablo received from some peers.

Ms. Mirlanda and Ms. Rosa told me about the tension between Pablo and some of his Puerto Rican peers, who refused to treat Pablo as an equal and with respect. They often intervened to stop some of their Puerto Rican students from bullying Pablo. They suggested that this tension might have something to do with the way Dominicans are treated in Puerto Rico. According to them, and in line with the limited knowledge I acquired about the social and economic living conditions of Dominicans in Puerto Rico while I was there for about a month, the mostly poor Dominicans who migrate to Puerto Rico are treated badly by some natives. This might explain the bias some of his classmates seemed to hold against Pablo, reflecting stereotypes about Dominicans regardless of their social class background.

Because of the discrimination Pablo experienced by some of his Puerto Rican peers, he was treated as a minority within a minority. However, this did not prevent him from actively participating in class, especially during the academic years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008. More importantly, this did not stop him from making the second rank of the honor roll at his school in fall 2007 and again in spring 2008. Pablo was one of three

students from the school's bilingual program to be on the honor roll. In fact, his status as an outcast may have helped him focus on his academics; this, combined with an academic background much stronger than most of his ELL peers, may have contributed to Pablo's achievement status.

Yolanda (A Pseudonym)

Yolanda, Pablo's mother, is a Dominican woman in her early 40's. In 2005, she migrated to the U.S. with her two sons to seek a better life. She worked as an attorney in her native land before moving to the U.S. Curious to know whether it is common for women in the Dominican Republic to attend law school, I recently had a conversation with three other Dominican-Americans. They claim that the legal field is male-dominated there; any woman with the opportunity to go to law school and work as a lawyer would come from a middle-class background.

Based on information obtained through an interview, I believe that Yolanda did have come from a middle-class family. Although she worked as a lawyer for about ten years in the Dominican Republic, because of the English language barrier she was unable to find a job in her field in the United States. Consequently, she worked as a Certified Personal Care Assistant during the period of my research.

At the time of the study, she was a single mother supporting two children and family back home in the Dominican Republic. Many teachers involved in this study considered Yolanda to be very concerned with and involved in her children's education. She was involved in school activities requiring parental participation. She attended most parents' meetings at the school, and always made herself available when the school needed to be in touch with her. While holding two jobs and going to church every

Sunday, she took an ESL course twice weekly in an adult program at the middle school that Pablo attended.

According to Ms. Mirlanda, Yolanda was the most focused and studious adult student in her class. She never missed classes except when she was sick or had an emergency. When she did miss class for reasons beyond her control, she had her son Pablo get her homework assignments so she could do them before returning to Ms. Mirlanda's adult ESL class. Yolanda was driven and determined to improve her English. During one of our interviews, Ms. Mirlanda stated that, "having Yolanda in [her] class is a positive thing for Pablo because if Pablo sees his mother is trying hard to learn and improve her English, this will motivate him to try even harder himself" (interview, Fall 2007).

I observed Yolanda several times in her ESL class, and interacted with her and other adult students. She actively participated and collaborated with her ESL peers. She sometimes became frustrated when she could not understand something or when she did not do well on a test. Like her classmates, she at times solicited the assistance of Ms. Mirlanda to help understand parts of the classroom assignment.

Ms. Rosa (A Pseudonym)

Ms. Rosa is a third generation American of Mexican descent who grew up in Texas. I was first introduced to Ms. Rosa as a Project Assistant working for ACCELA in fall 2003. Ms. Rosa was enrolled in a Master's inquiry-based program through the University of Massachusetts. As a Project Assistant, I worked with her for four years, helping her collect and analyze data for her master's research project. I critically examined her research and asked questions about it; I helped her make I-movies and

PowerPoints for her research presentations to the principle of her school, her colleagues, and other members of the community.

Ms. Rosa joined the middle school where this study took place in September 2002 and left in June 2006 to teach at another private middle school located near her house. After working at the new school for a year, she moved back to Texas, where she currently teaches middle school. Before joining Chestnut, Ms. Rosa was a reverend in her hometown in Texas. She stated that her decision to be involved with ELL students stems from her own schooling experience as a Chicana going to school in the 1960's. She faced linguistic discrimination in school; for example, she was prohibited from speaking Spanish in class, in the school hallway and in the cafeteria. According to Ms. Rosa, at that time the ability to speak Spanish was not considered an asset; it marked you as foreign and uneducated.

Ms. Mirlanda (A Pseudonym)

Ms. Mirlanda is a U.S.-born Puerto Rican living in western Massachusetts. She is the oldest in her family, and has a younger sister and two younger brothers. Her younger sister was the principal of the school where this study took place. She is a single mother in her early 40's and has three children. Her eldest child, a 22 year-old woman, was also an ELL teacher at the middle school at the time of this study. Her eleven-year old son and 18 -year old daughter were respectively in middle and high schools.

Ms. Mirlanda took over Ms. Rosa's position at the middle school in 2006. She had in her class most of the students that Ms. Rosa had while she was teaching there. Because of this, I continued working in Ms. Mirlanda's class with the same group of students, including Pablo. Ms. Mirlanda had been teaching ELL at the school for three

years. Prior to teaching there, she worked as a social worker for five years and taught Spanish at an elementary school for six years.

Ms. Jessica (A Pseudonym)

Ms. Jessica is a Caucasian woman in her 30's. She started working at the middle school in 2003 and continued until June 2007, when many uncertified teachers were forced to leave the school. Like many teachers at the school, Ms. Jessica taught various grade levels. Unlike the other teachers involved in this study, Ms. Jessica only spoke English. All of her students spoke Spanish, although many of them were proficient in English. This was Ms. Jessica's first teaching experience. She worked in sales before joining the school, and she claimed that she left the sale job because she lost interest in it. She was finishing her first year of teaching when Ms. Rosa introduced me to her as another teacher using the mandated reading curriculum that Ms. Rosa used in her ELL class.

Mr. Carmo (A Pseudonym)

Mr. Carmo is a Puerto Rican man in his 50's. He is married and has three children; he has lived about twenty years in the town where this study took place. He was born and grew up in Puerto Rico and moved the United States about twenty-five years ago. In his native country, he worked in the accounting field. He was also a high school social studies teacher. He has taught at this middle school for fifteen years, in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. I was introduced to Mr. Carmo when I first started working as a Project Assistant working for ACELLA in 2003. Mr. Carmo was one among the first group of teachers who were enrolled in the Master's inquiry-based program through the University of Massachusetts. I worked with him as a Project Assistant until he dropped

out of the program about a year later. After he left the program, Mr. Carmo and I remained friends. I continued to interact with Mr. Carmo at the school. I did so while observing Pablo in his Spanish class, and during the weekly meetings that he, Ms. Rosa, and other teachers had. Mr. Carmo was always eager to discuss the changes occurring in the school at the administrative level, and how these changes affected him as a teacher.

Like Ms. Rosa, Mr. Carmo was dissatisfied with some of the decisions that the school administration took without informing the teachers in advance. For example, Mr. Carmo said that the administration sometimes took students away from his class in the middle of the semester and placed them in different classes without notice. In general, Mr. Carmo was unhappy about the ill treatment that many teachers, himself included, felt they received from the administration. Despite this, Mr. Carmo said he would continue to teach, as he was nearing retirement.

Ms. Jana (A Pseudonym)

Ms. Jana is a Puerto Rican woman in her late 40's. She worked at the site for several years before being laid off for a year. She returned to the school in 2007 as the coordinator of the adult evening ESL program. This program was designed to help Latino/a parents, whose children attended the middle school, to improve their English, allowing them to better help their children with homework assignments. In addition, parents had the opportunity to establish a stronger relationship with their children's teachers through this program. Ms. Jana recruits Latino/a parents for the program, and considers the increasing number of parents enrolled in it a sign of success. She found that more parents were interested in participating in activities at the school, such as teacher-parent meetings and students' cultural events.

Data Organization

I organized data in a binder divided into sections. Section one contained Pablo's writings. Section two contained written documents about the school (e.g., the school's mission statement and bulletin) and a copy of the MCAS tests which Ms. Mirlanda and Ms. Rosa were expected to have students emulate through rote practice. Section three contained transcribed interviews with Pablo, Pablo's teachers, Pablo's mother and brother, and the coordinator of the evening ESL program. This section also contains the written questions used in some of the interviews and the participants' consent letters allowing me to use the data collected from them in this study.

All transcribed interviews, teacher/student interactions, and my field notes were placed in a separate folder on my computer. I marked the date and name of key participants on all the tapes containing important information for the study. I carefully selected clips from each interview and saved them on a CD. I also downloaded video clips onto my computer as backup and set aside important selections.

As an additional technological tool, I used computer software called Hyper Research to organize scanned documents. This software, specially designed to help map textual patterns in writing, allowed me to identify and trace patterns in Pablo's writing. During this process of data organization, I divided my data into four broad categories: teachers' teaching practices, parental involvement, and Pablo's early apprenticeship in academic literacy and motivation.

Data Analysis Processes

Through the ethnographic data collected I mapped the various characteristics—cultural, institutional, situational, physical, and social—of the site (Geertz, 1973). These

data became the basis for my analysis. I first watched and listened to video and audio tapes multiple times, and took notes which I call observation comments (OC). The OC were as detailed as possible, providing preliminary data analysis. I then transcribed the videotaped classroom interactions involving literacy events, and all the interviews conducted with Pablo, his mother, and his teachers. Finally, I selected some of Pablo's essays for analysis and obtained his scores on the Step up Springfield standardized test.

Ethnographic and SFL Analyses

My initial analysis of the data was very broad; later I focused my analysis and became more critical towards the data. I began with the data collected in Ms. Rosa's class, because it was the earliest observational data I had on Pablo; I felt that it was critically important to analyze early classroom literacy practices that may have prepared or enabled Pablo to tackle more demanding and sophisticated literacy tasks as he moved into higher grades. I then shifted my attention to Ms. Mirlanda's ELL class, which Pablo joined a year later after Ms. Rosa left the school. I focused mainly on these two classrooms; having spent most of my observation time there, I drew on data collected in and about these two classes to analyze the degree to which Ms. Rosa's and Ms. Mirlanda's literacy practices may have contributed to the Pablo's academic growth. To examine to what degree Ms. Mirlanda's teaching practices may have helped Pablo grow academically, I analyzed essays that Pablo produced in her class, field notes I took in her classroom, and the content of interviews that I conducted with her. I occasionally observed two additional classes Pablo attended: reading skills, taught by Ms. Jessica, and Spanish, taught by Mr. Carmo. I conducted informal ethnographic interviews with Ms.

Jessica and Mr. Carmo to obtain a sense of how each perceived Pablo as a student, and how each felt they contributed to Pablo's academic growth.

In answering my research questions, I collected data reflecting the teaching practices of Pablo's teachers; this data included videotaped transcriptions of classroom literacy activities in which Pablo was engaged. I also used questionnaires in which the teachers stated what they did in their class to foster Pablo's growth in academic writing. I selected essays that Pablo produced over the course of a year and used a comparative method of data analysis developed by Bogdam and Bilken (1992) to determine whether Pablo's writing changed over time. I also used all these data sources to perform a thematic analysis on the loaded topic of 'achievement.'

Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis

I chose systemic functional linguistics (SFL) as my analytical guide. Schleppegrell (2004) maintains that, "SFL provides a means of identifying the grammatical features that make a particular text the kind of text it is, so the relationship of linguistic choices to the situational contexts in which the language is used can be explained in functional terms" (p. 19). Along the same lines, Fairclough (2003) points out, "SFL is profoundly concerned with the relationship between languages and other elements and aspects of social life, and its approach to the linguistic analysis of texts is always oriented to the social character of texts" (p. 5).

I drew on SFL to analyze Pablo's texts (e.g. essays, journal entries) for several reasons. First, it required me to analyze the situational, institutional, and cultural contexts in which Pablo produced his texts. Second, it allowed me to critically examine to what degree these contexts influenced Pablo's writing (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Third, SFL

enabled me to map out textual patterns, tracing consistencies and inconsistencies in Pablo's writing.

Furthermore, SFL helped me examine what register and lexico-grammatical features Pablo drew on in his texts to make meaning (Halliday, 1994); I accomplished this through a clause-by-clause analysis of his texts in search of linguistic devices he may have drawn on to signal the experiential and interpersonal coherence of his texts (Thompson, 1996, p.147). This analysis also helped me find out how and to what degree Pablo represented the reality of what he was asked to write about. The analytical process was equally aimed at examining whether Pablo, through his texts, aligned with the ideologies of the institution. Finally, through SFL I compared and contrasted essays Pablo produced in the beginning of the school year 2005-2006 to those he produced during 2006-2007; this enabled me to examine whether or not his writing changed over time. In the next sections, I take the reader systematically through my data analysis.

First Stage of Data Analysis

In the first phase of my analysis, I performed a recursive ethnographic analysis of multiple sources of data. I examined how Pablo used various resources made available to him both at school and at home (e.g. parental involvement, support from Pablo's teachers, Pablo's mother educational background, Pablo's early apprenticeship in academic literacy and motivation, and school materials such as textbooks) to foster and sustain the growth in his academic writing. To this end, I selected samples of his writings for thematic analysis across data types to understand how his academic growth was realized. To determine whether Pablo's writing changed over time, I used the comparative method of data analysis developed by Bogdan and Bilken (1992) to analyze

his essays. Although this comparative method is designed for the analysis of multiple sources of data, I compared essays that Pablo produced in fall 2005 to those he produced in spring 2007. This comparative method allowed me to trace regularities/irregularities and patterns in his writing. Drawing on SFL I was able to look for cohesion and coherence in Pablo's texts and how he used these linguistic devices to make meaning. While doing so, I noticed that he was able to restate thesis statement and prompts provided by his teachers to answer journal questions and short essays. I also noticed patterns in his writing, namely a consistent use of temporal connectives to link points to points and elaborate on his ideas. Finally, by textually mapping Pablo's essays, I realized that in earlier essays and journal entries he seemed to lack certain lexico-grammatical features that he could use to fully complete sentences. However, he demonstrated that he understood the structure of an argument and the precepts of academic writing.

Second Stage of Data Analysis

From Pablo's gradual progress in writing, I shifted my analysis in the next stage to what classroom literacy events may have fostered this growth. My field notes and transcriptions of teacher/student and student/student interactions documented what classroom literacy activities may have prepared or failed to prepare Pablo to take on academic tasks. I analyzed the situational context in which Pablo produced his texts through recursive analysis. I tried to determine who could be his audience; what his purpose while writing these essays was; what prompts and scaffolding, if any, he received from his teachers that may have enabled him to achieve his purposes; and how he used language to make meanings informed by the circumstances under which he produced his essays. Using SFL as my analytical guide enabled me to better understand

what purposes Pablo seemed to be trying to achieve. SFL also allowed me to establish the link between the cultural and situational context in which Pablo was operating, and also to understand how the meanings he made were embedded in that specific context (Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Eggins, 2004).

Themes, namely academic achievement, emerged from the data set during this analysis. This prompted me to review my research questions, to determine whether they needed to be modified or not. I realized that my data would not enable me to answer those questions, and this modified my research questions after preliminary analysis. Specifically, I replaced the word 'achievement' by 'growth:' analysis suggested that the latter word captured Pablo's academic development better than the institutional 'achiever' status attributed to him.

Furthermore, while analyzing my data I triangulated information obtained from different sources (questionnaires, interviews, and transcriptions of interactions between students/teacher/students/students), checking back and forth to see if the data remained or diverged in context (Denzin, 1984; Stake, 1995). I also looked for similar events or patterns reappearing in similar sources of data collection. Finally, to ensure that interpretation and analysis of the data was accurate, I had impartial peers review and comment on my analysis.

A very important contribution made by these peers was the suggestion that I should be careful in my representation of Pablo's story of achievement as, if not critically analyzed with substantive details, it can lend itself to overgeneralization. I therefore carefully reviewed the data and my analysis to avoid misrepresenting Pablo's reality or seeming to put him forth as a typical learner.

Third Stage of Data Analysis

In the last stage, I performed content analysis of the interviews I conducted. These interviews explored what the various participants felt they did that significantly made a difference in Pablo's academic growth. The content of these interviews reflects the voices and insight of Pablo's mother and teachers.

For example, in one of these interviews, Pablo's mother shared her insights about Pablo's drive to grow academically; she also offered hints about her background and explained how she helped Pablo with schoolwork. This kind of information was vital, as one of the goals of this study was to examine in what way and to what degree Pablo's family background contributed to his academic growth.

I paid very close attention to these signifiers to gain a good understanding of what in his mother's educational background enabled Pablo to do well in school. In addition to the interviews conducted with Pablo's family, I analyzed interviews with Pablo's teachers. At different times, the participants said different things about Pablo's academic growth; I confirmed and contradicted these statements through triangulation.

After I analyzed these representations of Pablo's academic growth, I reviewed the school mission statement to find out how student academic growth was defined therein. I then took a closer look at the criterion that the school used in granting Pablo achiever status. These factors were Pablo's honor rank, score on the MCAS and Step up Springfield tests, and some of his essays that were noted by his teachers and institutionally valued.

In this way I corroborated whether Pablo's academic performance was in line with the way the school defined student academic growth in its mission statement. More

importantly, this led to consideration of whether the institutional recognition of Pablo's achievement was well grounded and pertinent to his actual academic growth. Finally, I performed content analysis of my interviews with Pablo to examine how he "positioned himself" (Harre, & Langenhove, 1999) against the achiever label given to him.

Validity and Reliability of Qualitative Research Analysis

The most common questions arising about the validity and reliability of qualitative research are: Why should I trust the findings of X research? How do I know what X says or reports in his/her research is accurate? In this study, I took into account and tried to address these issues. What follows briefly surveys the four key terms that are interwoven with the notion of validity. These are: trustworthiness, triangulation, confirmability, and credibility; they are all central to this study.

Trustworthiness/Credibility/Confirmability/Triangulation

In order for research to be deemed trustworthy, researchers must provide a detailed and clear explanation of the way the research is conducted. More specifically, researchers ought to delineate how the data are collected and how they are analyzed, and to what degree the data reflect the daily reality and lived experience of participants in the research. Therefore, researchers need to demonstrate systematically how they arrive at any conclusion drawn from their data; they also need to base their data interpretation on concrete evidence, which readers should be able to find in the analysis.

Taking these factors into account during this study, I have provided a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of my methodology, which includes my data collection method and the theoretical framework that I drew on to analyze data. I have clearly described how I categorized the themes used and analyzed in this study.

Because generalization about an issue can impact the credibility of research, I have pointed out the particularity of this ethnographic case study and acknowledge its limits. At the outset I specifically made clear that the findings of this study might not reflect the academic growth or failure of all Dominican ELL students, as the academic growth or failure of each individual is contextual. In addition, I have provided an in-depth description of the site where the study took place, as well as a description of the background of participants in the study. This takes the reader step by step through the study. By giving detailed information, the reader can picture the characteristics of the subjects and map out the environment in which this study took place. This is particularly useful for an ethnographic case study. I took further steps to demonstrate the validity of my research. First, I explained the purpose of the study to all its participants. This entailed writing a consent letter detailing what the research was about and why their participation in it was important. I carefully explained to the teachers, the focal student, and the focal student's mother the content of the consent letter. I also informed them of their right to refuse to participate in this study.

Second, to confirm the validity and accuracy of data used in this study, Pablo's mother, the teachers, and the ESL coordinator all read my field notes and reviewed the transcriptions of the interviews that I conducted with them. In this way, they could check the accuracy of the data. In the event that I misinterpreted or failed to fully capture what was said in the interviews, they had the opportunity to voice their opinion about it and make corrections where necessary.

Third, Pablo's mother, the teachers and the ESL coordinator all had copies of their videotaped interviews, so they could match the information contained in the

videotapes with the transcriptions of the interviews. Fourth, while transcribing the interviews and the classroom interactions, Spanish words were uttered throughout by both students and teachers; I solicited the help of a native Spanish speaker to help me capture accurately the cultural meaning of these words.

Fifth, I had my peers read my interpretation and analysis of the data. I met with two of my peers once a month to look at the data and comment on the interpretation and analysis thereof. This peer critique of my interpretation and analysis confirmed that, as LeCompte and Goetz (1982) eloquently put it, “external reliability addresses the issue of whether another researcher would discover the same phenomena or generate the same constructs in a same or similar situation” (p. 32). My peers found that some of the claims that I made throughout the study were not substantiated with evidence. I therefore reviewed the data in search of evidence to support these claims, and was able to avoid drawing erroneous conclusions in the study. By saving the raw data in my digital videotape and computer database, I was able to consistently check my interpretations against original data.

Chapter Summary

This chapter laid out my method of data collection and analysis. I began by providing a clear explanation of how I collected data for this study. I went on to provide detailed backgrounds of the participants in the study. In addition, I explained how I organized and analyzed the data. Finally, because the validity of research is often contested, I outlined how I incorporated and applied key concepts such as trustworthiness, credibility, confirmability, and triangulation in this study. In the next chapter, I discuss the cultural, institutional, and situational context of the study.

CHAPTER 4

CULTURAL, INSTITUTIONAL & SITUATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Setting the Tone

This chapter describes the cultural, institutional, and situational context of the study. Systemic functional linguistics provides a theoretical framework elucidating the notion of context (Malinowski, 1923, 1946; Halliday, 1994; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Eggins, 2004). According to these scholars, context is not limited to the physical and cultural characteristics of a place or institution.

Therefore, it is important to link what is happening in a situational context such as a classroom to what is happening at a policy level. The reason for this is that a classroom does not operate in a vacuum; rather, the pedagogical choices teachers make in their classrooms, literacy events in which they engage their students, and lack of resources they experience at schools are all influenced by district, state and federal policies.

Aspects of both the situational and cultural context relevant to this study include: literacy practices in which teachers involve students; their attitudes towards standardized tests including the MCAS and Step up Springfield; how teachers balance their instructional goals with the necessity of preparing students for these standardized tests and the demands of district, state and federal policies such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates; and socioeconomic factors shaping the way students and teachers make meaning.

Pablo, an ELL immigrant student from the Dominican Republic, entered a poorly funded middle school tremendously affected by accountability discourse and practices, located in a poor city that had known a high level of crime rate and undergone

demographic changes. In this chapter I begin by describing the city where the school is located, my access to the school, and the cultural and physical characteristics of the school. I then discuss the No Child Left Behind legislation, one of the most influential government mandates ever to shape instruction and school curriculum. I briefly review the No Child Left Behind mandate as it impacted the teaching practices of Ms. Rosa and Ms. Mirlanda, two teachers involved in this study. I also provide a detailed description of the social, learning, and teaching dynamics of their classrooms.

Both Ms. Rosa and Ms. Mirlanda maintain that the emphasis on preparation for standardized tests including MCAS, Step UP Springfield, MEPA [Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment], MELA- O [Massachusetts English Language Assessment- Oral], and SRI [Scholastic Reading Inventory]), left them without sufficient time to pursue their classroom goals. Ms. Rosa stated that she spent approximately 80% of her time teaching students to the test. As I show later, these tests, which constitute a very structured accountability system, reduced the teaching space of Ms. Rosa and Ms. Mirlanda mostly to standardized preparation.

I describe in detail the context of Ms. Rosa's classroom, as it was there that I met Pablo when he first arrived in the school. Observing Ms. Rosa's class, documenting her interactions with her students through field notes and videotaping, and constantly engaging in dialogue with her about her teaching practices afforded me a broader understanding of how teacher instruction was affected by test-driven practices and mandated curriculum.

This also enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the context of Ms. Rosa's classroom and some of the challenges she faced while trying to meet the academic needs

of her students. Therefore, my description of Ms. Rosa's classroom context and her struggle with standardized tests is more detailed than that of Ms. Mirlanda.

This does not mean that I am not familiar with Ms. Mirlanda's classroom context. The difference in my relationship with these two teachers lies in the fact that the length of time I spent observing Ms. Rosa's class and working with her exceeds the time I spent in Ms. Mirlanda's class. Consequently, my relationship with Ms. Rosa over the course of three academic years developed further and had a greater impact on my research.

It is worth noting, however, that my relationship with Pablo became stronger as I observed him in Ms. Mirlanda's class. Having already established a relationship with Pablo while he was in Ms. Rosa's class, I continued observing him in Ms. Mirlanda's. By spending approximately two years observing Pablo in Ms. Mirlanda's class, I was able to collect an extensive set of data, including texts he produced in that class; all the journal entries and essays analyzed in this study were produced in Ms. Mirlanda's class.

Demographics of the City Where the Study Was Conducted

I conducted this study at a middle school located in a western Massachusetts city, near a major highway, surrounded by public housing and abandoned factory buildings. This city is the third largest in Massachusetts and fourth largest in New England. It has the third largest school district in Massachusetts, operating 38 elementary schools, six middle schools (6-8), six high schools, and seven specialized schools. (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2007).

According to the 2005 U.S. Census Bureau, the demographics of the city and the state were as shown by the following Table 2. Through constant questioning and news analysis, I learned that the city was racially and economically segregated.

Table 2: Demographics of the City & the State

Household Relationship	The City	The State (MA)
Population	Number	Number
Gender for Households	146,948	
Male	71,184	2,998,038
Female	75,764	3,184,822
Age for Households	Number	Number
17 or younger	40,127	1,450,671
18-24	13,603	488,929
25-44	43,472	1,844,004
45-64	32,782	1,602,468
65+	16,964	796,788
Average age (years)	35.11	37.71
Race and Ethnicity for Households	Number	Number
White alone	70,402	5,156,426
Black or African American	33,582	363,095
American Indian/Alaska Native	338	13,708
Asian alone	3,101	292,537
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander alone	59	626
Some other race alone	35,436	269,564
Two or more races	4,030	86,904
Hispanic or Latino	52,571	490,839

The following tables 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 represent a graphic breakdown that lays out the characteristics of the student population at the school in terms of race, social class, gender, race/ethnicity language for the academic year, 2005-2006, 2006-2007 (Massachusetts department of education, 2005-2006/2006-2007).

Table 3: Educator-Data: 2005-2006

	School	District	State (MA)
Total # of teachers	109	2,308	73,593
% of teachers licensed in teaching assignment	72.5	79.9	94.4
Total # of teachers in core academic areas	98	1,889	62,301
% of core academic teachers identified as highly qualified	69.4	77.7	93.7
Student/teacher	11.3 to 1	10.9 to 1	13.2 to 1

Table 4: Enrollment 2005-2006

	School	District	State (MA)
Total Count of Race/Ethnicity/Gender/selected populations (%)	1,230	25,206	972,371
Race (%)			
African American %	16.9	25.4	8.3
Hispanic %	67.6	50.8	12.9
Native American %	0.0	0.1	0.2
White %	13.1	17.6	72.4
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0	0.1
Multi-ethnic	1.4	4.0	1.4
Gender (%)			
Male	49.7	51.5	51.4
Female	50.3	48.5	41.6
Selected populations (%)			
Limited English proficiency	21.1	13.7	5.3
Low Income (%)	82.7	76.2	28.2
Special education (%)	25.1	20.5	16.5
First language not English	31.2	20.3	14.3
Migrant	33.3	1.5	0.1

Table 5: Enrollment 2006-2007

	School	District	State (MA)
Total Count of Race/Ethnicity/Gender/selected populations (%)	1,155	25,791	
Race (%)			968,661
African American or Black %	15.5	25.5	8.2
Hispanic %	69.9 0.5	49.9 2.1	13.3
Asian	0.5	2.1	4.8
Multi-race, Non-Hispanic	2.0	4.1	1.7
Native American %	0.0	0.1	0.3
White %	12.2	18.3	71.5
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0	0.2
Gender (%)			
Male	49.8	51.7	51.4
Female	50.2	48.3	48.6
Selected populations (%)			
Limited English proficiency	20.7	13.7	5.6
Low Income (%)	83.8	77.5	28.9
Special education (%)	26.0	22.0	16.9
First language not English	34.2	21.8	14.9

Table 6: Educator-Data: 2006-2007

Total number of Teachers	School	District	State (MA)
	88	2,215	73,176
% of teachers licensed in teaching assignment	86.1	95.4	95.4
Total of teachers in core academic areas	78	1,792	60,604
% of teachers in core academic subjects who are highly qualified	77.6	80.7	95.1
% of teachers in core academic subjects who are not highly qualified	22.4	19.3	4.9
Student/Teacher ratio	13.1 to 1	11.6 to 1	13,2 to 1

Table 7: Additional Teacher Information about School

Classroom Teachers	106
Guidance Counselors	3
Adjustment Counselor	1
Educational Team leader	1
School Psychologists	1
School Nurses	2
Percentage of Teachers with advanced degrees	62%

At the time of the study, I regularly read one of the city major newspapers, The Republican, and watched the local news to keep informed of what was happening in the city. In addition, I constantly asked students and teachers at the school about the city and the neighborhoods in which they lived. As mentioned before, I was aware of the racial and economic segregation of the city. White middle- and upper-middle class residents were concentrated in the East Forest Park and Sixteen Acres sections of the city. Asians lived predominantly in the lower part of Forest Park, while a few lower-class Blacks, Latinos and Italians were in the south and north of the city. A higher black population was concentrated in the Pine Point neighborhood; working-class Irish and a handful of French lived in the eastern part of the city.

In 2005 a great number of Somalians migrated to the city. Eight of these immigrants were placed in Ms. Rosa's class. Ms. Rosa often shared with me her

frustration at not being able to communicate with her Somali students, whose English skills were extremely limited. She also lamented the fact the school administrators did not try hard enough to find a paraprofessional who could speak with her Somali students. While observing her class, I witnessed some of her frustration. She often said, "How can they throw these students like this in my class and expect me to teach them without having a paraprofessional who speaks their language?"

A lack of paraprofessionals in Ms. Rosa's class may be the result of the city's financial constraints. In a message on June 27, 2006, the city's Finance Control Board Executive Director stated that, "The deficit was \$41 million in September 2004, [and] was reduced to \$22 million in June 2005. In June 2006 the deficit will be \$5 million: this is \$1 million less than originally projected. This represents a decrease of \$36 million in less than two years." On June 7, 2007, the Director said that, given the size of the city, it

"should have approximately \$50 million in stabilization reserves. The city's current balance in its "rainy day" fund is only \$8 million. The City should have a multi-million dollar program of annual capital renewal, but is currently only able to invest on a limited basis. The backlog of deferred maintenance in school buildings exceeds 3100 work order requests, with \$190 million in new construction and major renovation projects needed."

The question then becomes: To what degree did the city's budget constraint impact Ms. Rosa's teaching practices and the academic growth of her Somali students, as well as that of her Latino/a students including Pablo? Based on the above statements by the Finance Director, a reasonable interpretation is that the financial difficulty faced by the city trickled down into the school, shaping the pedagogical choices that Ms. Rosa made and the way she and her students made meaning in her classroom. It is worth asking if the school district's personnel seriously thought about the impact that placing Somali students in Ms. Rosa's class, without any paraprofessional support, would have

on her classroom dynamics. When I returned to Mr. Rosa's class in spring 2006, she informed me that the Somali students had been transferred to a neighboring school; she did not know how or why this decision was made.

Although the city as a whole faced a considerable level of crime and poverty, the parts where people of color lived suffered higher rates of both (The Republican, 2006). The news reports and newspapers regularly featured stories about city deaths due to gunfights among drug dealers. Robberies and shooting incidents frequently made headlines.

I lived approximately 10 miles away from the city, and explored many parts of it with some people I knew who lived there. I saw abandoned factory buildings and huge piles of trash left on the streets while visiting friends who were living in the eastern part of the city. The abandoned buildings spread their own dereliction to the surrounding neighborhoods, and I learned from Ms. Rosa and close friends that city sanitation employees were selective in picking up trash. Ms. Rosa told me that the street where her daughter lived with her family was always clean, while the poor neighborhood where she herself lived was often dirty. Ms. Rosa did not only the blame on the city—she knew that some of her neighbors did not take good care of their neighborhood and often threw empty cans, bottles, and other types of trash on the street after they finished using them. I witnessed some of this while going to the affordable supermarket PriceRite located in the poor neighboring city of Chicopee, Massachusetts.

Gun violence was widespread. A good friend of mine moved out of the city due to the constant gunfire in her neighborhood. This study took place roughly a mile away from downtown, a common area for prostitution and drug trafficking; a friend teaching

Spanish in a nearby elementary school said that she was always afraid of walking alone at night, fearing that drug dealers would mistake her for a prostitute. In sum, although the city has famous places like the Basketball Hall of Fame and numerous schools of higher education, it suffered a high crime rate while I was doing this study. Below is a graphic summary of the crime that took place in the city in 2006 represented by Table 8 (Crime Statistics and Data Resources, 2006).

Table 8: Summary of Types of Crime Occurred in the City

Crime Type	Total 2006	Per 100,000 People	National per 100,000 People
City Violent Crimes	2260	1480.6 553.5	11007 7210.94479.3
City Murders	15	9.8	7
City Rapes	115	75.3	33.1
City Robberies	682	446.8	205.8
City Aggravated Assaults	1448	948.6 336.5	
City Burglaries	2178	1426.8 813.2	
City Property Crimes	8747	5730.3 3906.1	
City Larceny/Thefts	4963 3251.4	2601.7	
City Motor Vehicle Thefts	1606	1052.1 501.5	
City Arsons 1	75	49.13	N/A

An increasing of number of homeless people lived on the city streets, including children as young as 15 (The Republican, 2006). The city tried to alleviate the homeless problem with shelters and other social services, although this was insufficient.

Meanwhile, as in the rest of the country, the gap between economic classes was widening. At the time of this study, poverty and crime were the two major issues in the rhetoric of candidates running for city office, including the mayor.

As I point out in the review of the literature, scholars such as Anyon (1981, 2000) and Apple (1997) have conducted studies showing the correlation between poverty and the academic growth of students. Although policy-makers consider these factors while

designing and enacting state and federal school policies, they continue to blame teachers and families for student academic failure. Some politicians have taken note of this unmerited criticism; while addressing parents, teachers, students, and community members at a middle school in western Massachusetts in January 2004, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney stated that “educators had used poverty in Holyoke as the excuse for low performance and stated that from then on no excuses would be accepted. Though silent during the speech, many educators present heard that they were being blamed for what was beyond their control” (Willett & Rosenberg cited in Pease-Alvarez & Schecter, 2005). Rather than allocate sufficient resources to schools so that urban teachers can teach more effectively, many policy-makers and politicians continue to hold these teachers and parents accountable for academic failure.

Entering the Site

The first task when conducting research is gaining access to the site where the study will take place. This is often challenging, as some institutions have strict rules and regulations concerning outside access and documentation of internal events. I accessed the middle school where I decided to conduct this study indirectly, through the ACCELA program. First, the principal investigators of ACCELA, Professors Jerri Willett and Margaret Gebhard, contacted the school principals who employed teachers enrolled in the master’s inquiry-based program and received permission to send ACCELA Project Assistants to work with those teachers. Second, they made sure that the parents of students at those schools were fully informed of the purpose and goals of ACCELA, and that they agreed to their children’s participation. Towards that end, the principal investigators wrote permission slips in both English and Spanish, sent them to the parents

and/or guardians of children involved in the study, and waited for their approval. Finally, once permission to conduct the research from the principals and parents was granted, ACCELA Project assistants, myself included, were allowed to enter these schools.

My position as a Project Assistant enabled me to enter the site and establish a good rapport with the teachers involved in this study. The initial contact that I established with these teachers in my capacity as a Project Assistant through ACCELA was tremendously helpful in gaining access and familiarity with the school site before embarking on this research. For instance, the secretary, the custodians, the discipline coordinators, the police, and many teachers already knew that I was working with some ELL teachers at the school. Having earlier established 'insider connections' (Rogers, 2003, p.3), no one was suspicious of me while I worked alone in the school hallway or talked to students in the school cafeteria. Unlike other visitors, I did not have to carry a visitor pass to identify myself as such.

However, although I felt welcome at the school, I encountered some minor challenges when I started observing the evening ESL adult classes taking place at the same school. These classes, attended by the parents of many children who attended the middle school, were taught by some of the same teachers that I worked with in the morning. The afternoon staff—some teachers, one assistant principal, and some custodians that I did not get to know well—did not know that I was a Project Assistant at the school; I was stopped several times and asked what I was doing at the school and whom I knew there. However, after the first three weeks or so I got to know almost every member of the evening staff, whom I found to be as friendly and welcoming as the morning staff.

Having access to the site in the evening allowed me to observe the ESL class that Pablo's mother attended. This allowed me to interact and have several informal conversations with her about Pablo. This also allowed me to observe a special dynamic between Yolanda and Ms. Mirlanda, who taught both mother and son. Ms. Mirlanda stated that she was able to develop a much closer relationship with Pablo's mother through this dual level of teaching. She witnessed Yolanda's determination to improve her English skills, so she could best help herself and Pablo with his homework.

Physical and Cultural Characteristics of the Site

Given its impressive architectural design, when seen from the outside, one might reasonably assume that this school is well equipped with school materials and resources such as books and computers. However, as I started exploring the school, I learned through its teachers that there were not enough resources (e.g. sufficient books and computers) available at the school's library for students to carry out research projects. The small school cafeteria was always crowded with students. Students were constantly running around, making lots of noise, and verbally fighting in the school hallway. During the course of my research, students intentionally activated the fire drill three times, which forced all students and the school personnel to leave the school building and stand in the cold weather. The school police often had to intervene to break up fights among students and prevent them from causing disturbances.

I arrived at the school around its opening a few times, to observe the protocol and procedure students were expected to follow before entering the school. Students were expected to arrive at the middle school around 7:00 a.m., entering through a main door and remaining in designated areas. The school police and another Puerto Rican man in

his 30's, who were in charge of discipline at the school, always stood by the main entrance door as students were arriving, often reminding them of the school rules and exhorting them to "stand on line." I found this procedure rather ritualistic.

On one occasion, I noticed that three students were sent to the principal's office; I later learned that these students failed to comply with school rules by standing in non-designated areas. The school's code of conduct stipulates that all "persons at the school have the right to be educated in a safe, respectful, and productive setting. That code is in effect from the time a student leaves home until the time the student returns home, on school grounds during school hours, on school related transportation and at all school sponsored activities." The school personnel were very strict about enforcing student compliance with these codes.

According to Ms. Rosa and Ms. Mirlanda, students were allowed to enter the school at 7:20 for breakfast as long as they followed the appropriate grade level entrance to the school. Each grade level had to enter the school through a specific door. The sixth grade entered the school through the main office entrance, the seventh grade via the auditorium entrance, and the eighth grade through the D-Wing Entrance located near the gymnasium. Once school was over, 2:20 p.m., all students exited the school through similarly designated doors. If a student left the school building through an unauthorized exit, s/he would be punished. One potential punishment forbade that student to re-enter the building to get on the school bus home; this conveys rather an odd message to the school's students, teachers, and parents.

The neighborhood in which this middle school is located has a reputation for gang activity. Some teachers noted that police officers regularly patrolled the area, and

robberies frequently occurred. Once, Ms. Rosa's car was stolen from the school parking lot; police found it several hours later, a few blocks from the school. Ms. Rosa further stated that it is unsafe to walk at night at the intersection where the school is located.

The school itself was a brick building put up in 1998. The school was previously located in a derelict building that could no longer contain the student population; that old building has been left vacant. The student population and staff have continued to grow since the relocation in 1998. District-level changes have also affected the school, including the earlier restructuring mandating Boundary Schools: all students are assigned to their neighborhood/boundary school, with the exception of students in the Talented and Gifted (TAG) and Low Incidence Special Education Programs (LISEP).

While the city was in receivership, the teachers went four years without a contract. Consequently, the school lost many highly qualified and experienced teachers. In addition, the yearly contract of many uncertified teachers was not renewed. The teachers who replaced them often left after just a few years of teaching. While conducting the study, I learned from Ms. Rosa that a local newspaper was scheduled to come to the school to randomly interview students about these changes. In Ms. Rosa's words, many students were not happy with having new teachers every year at the school.

Characteristics of Students and the School Personnel

At the time of the study, there were approximately 1,225 students attending this school, nearly 70% of them Latino. Most students who attended this school came from a working-class background and received free lunch. Approximately 250 students spent their academic day in an exclusive English Language Learners program, and 320 students received some level of special education. There were four Assistant Principals at the

school. One was in charge of the sixth grade and that grade's Inclusion Special Education programs along with the Developmental Skills, Life Skills, and Language Learning Disability program; the seventh and eighth grades each had a counterpart assistant principal. The other assistant principal was in charge of the Bilingual program and supervised the self-contained special education programs and the Social Emotional Behavior Support program.

According to the coordinator of special education, previously one of the four assistant principals covered all the special education programs. The school then decided to involve all assistant principals in the special education program at some level, so they would be familiar with the laws and regulations regarding special education programs. Although English was the primary language of instruction in all classrooms, the learning environment was multilingual. Approximately one third of teachers who taught at the school spoke Spanish, which was partially integrated into student learning. Many teachers, including Ms. Rosa and Ms. Mirlanda, used Spanish as an additional language of instruction to interact with recently arrived ELL students. Because many students' parents were native Spanish speakers, the school bulletin was in two languages, English and Spanish; so were letters or memos that needed to be sent to students' parents or guardians.

The school had three computer technology labs; nine full-scale science labs; classrooms specifically designed to support the visual and performing arts; a basketball court; and an Olympic-size swimming pool. Special programs included an after-school program; the Talented and Gifted program (TAG); Connected Math; weekly student

banking; the National Junior Honor Society; the English Language Learners program; an evening English for Speakers of Other Languages program for adults; and a drama club.

Each program had its objective and functions. The after-school program was designed to support students who needed extra help with their academic work. Many ELL students, including Pablo, took full advantage of this by regularly staying after school for extracurricular activities. The TAG program was created for students who exceeded academically at the school, and involved all grade levels. According to Ms. Rosa, ELL students rarely entered the TAG program; she believed that this was due to the fact that ELL students' academic advancement was hindered by so many factors, including the linguistic difficulties they faced at the school and their low scores on high-stakes tests such as the MCAS, MEPA, and Step up Springfield.

Both Ms. Rosa and Ms. Mirlanda believed that many students were not successful due to the lack of training among many of the teachers at the school in teaching ELL students. Consequently, many ELL students failed classes and had to repeat grades. This delayed their academic advancement, effectively cutting them off from the TAG program.

The evening English for Speakers of Other Languages program was created for parents who wanted to learn English. The same teachers taught in the morning and the evening. The Connected Math program helped students who were struggling with math, while encouraging and honoring those who demonstrated strong math skills. The National Junior Honor Society is for students who made the honor roll. Each semester the school identified and selected students who met the grade-average criteria and showed considerable academic growth. The students who made first honor had to have an A

average while those who make second and third honor have to have a B or above and a B- or above average respectively. At the time of this study, only three ELL students, including Pablo, made second honor; Pablo was the only ELL student who made second honor three times in one single academic year.

At the time of the study, the school was rebuilding the staff, which, according to both Ms. Rosa and Ms Mirlanda, had a considerable impact on students. The school had known many changes at administrative levels; in six years, there had been five principals. In addition, the school curriculum, instruction, testing, and assessment practices were increasingly influenced by the NCLB mandate. Before I left the site, I learned from Ms. Mirlanda that the school was on the verge of becoming a pilot school, due to the students' low scores on standardized tests.

The NCLB Legislation: A Brief Overview

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), signed into law on January 8, 2002, was supported by a "powerful coalition of business leaders, politicians, and elite universities with the money, expertise, and political power to force the nation's schools to construct an accountability system designed to control the outcomes of education, and persuade the voting public to support it" (Willett & Rosenberger in Pease-Alvarez & Schecter, 2005, pp.191-192).

For these stakeholders, this legislation represented positive structural and educational changes. However, for others such as urban teachers and progressive educators, this legislation continues to pose a threat to their autonomy and constitutes a false hope for bridging the achievement gap between wealthier and poorer students. As required by state and federal law, urban school district personnel, teachers, and school

administrators are obliged to implement the dictate of NCLB legislation regardless of their opinion about or opposition to its content.

In Massachusetts, this legislation, coupled with the passage of Question 2 (which eliminated the bilingual program in 2002), pressed teachers to align “their curriculum with standards and implement high-stakes accountability practices in exchange for disciplined students and involved parents” (Willett & Rosenberger, 2005). Many teachers felt pressured to adjust their curriculum in accordance to the dictate of the NCLB legislation.

Moreover, because of this legislation, teachers were and are required to provide teaching licensure. Uncertified teachers may lose their positions regardless of competence or devotion to the profession. Ms. Rosa, who failed the Massachusetts Test for Educators Licensure (MTEL), often expressed concern about the safety of her teaching position, which was contingent upon her passing this test. Ms. Rosa was not the only teacher facing the threat of losing her job. According to Ms. Rosa, several of her colleagues who failed the MTEL test received a warning letter from the school district stating that they would be terminated if they were not certified by the end of the school year.

Ms. Rosa was one of many whose contracts were not renewed for 2006-2007 because they did not pass the test. Teachers without licensure are given up to five years to attain it. During these five years they have to demonstrate significant progress, by taking courses designed to prepare them for the MTEL and attempting that test. Ms. Rosa, who was able to teach for four years without her licensure, was terminated. Although she

completed her coursework, her failure to do the practicum and pass the MTEL test cost her the teaching license.

The NCLB mandate has brought issues related to the education of ELL, low-income, and minority students to the fore; however, the legislation has not proven effective in closing the academic gap between these students and their more privileged counterparts. Standardized test scores, now held as the best of academic measurements, have never been proven a clear indicator of student learning.

Nonetheless, urban teachers are pressured to teach students technical and test-driven skills in the hope that these skills would “prepare” them for standardized tests. However, as the MCAS test results of 2005, 2006 & 2007 illustrate below in tables 9, 10 and 11, the majority of students at this middle school did not reach proficiency level despite near-constant tutorials in test-taking.

Table 9: Graphic Display of the School Test Results-MCAS Tests of Spring 2005
(Percent of Students at Each Performance Level)

Grade and Subject	Advanced		Proficient		Needs Improvement		Warning/ Failing		Students Included
	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State	
Grade 06 – Mathematics	4	17	15	29	24	30	58	23	398
Grade 07 – English/ Language Arts	5	10	33	56	39	27	23	7	407
Grade 08 – Mathematics	5	13	10	26	22	30	63	31	383
Grade 08 – Science and Technology	1	4	11	29	33	41	55	26	383
NOTE: Select Grade and Subject for Item Analysis									
NOTE: Performance level percentages are not calculated if student group less than 10									
Data Last Updated on January 30, 2006									

Table 10: Graphic Display of the School Test Results-MCAS Tests of Spring 2006
(Percent of Students at Each Performance Level)

Grade and Subject	Advanced		Proficient		Needs Improvement		Warning/ Failing		Students Included
	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State	
Grade 06 – English/ Language Arts	6	10	32	54	35	28	27	8	359
Grade 06 – Mathematics	4	17	14	29	23	29	59	25	360
Grade 07 – English/ Language Arts	5	10	39	55	31	26	25	9	357
Grade 07 – Mathematics	2	12	10	28	23	33	65	28	355
Grade 08 – English/ Language Arts	7	12	37	62	31	19	26	7	383
Grade 08 – Mathematics	3	12	12	28	16	31	69	29	380
Grade 08 – Science and Technology	2	4	11	28	29	43	58	25	380
NOTE: Select Grade and Subject for Item Analysis									
NOTE: Performance level percentages are not calculated if student group less than 10									
Data Last Updated on February 14, 2007									

This was, among other things, the larger context in which Ms. Rosa and Ms. Mirlanda were expected to help their ELL students acquire academic skills. Too often these teachers had to ‘teach to the test,’ as the school district’s first priority was improving students’ scores on standardized tests. The importance given to these tests resulted in the standardization and regimentation of Ms. Rosa’s and Ms. Mirlanda’s teaching practices. It is worth noting here that ACCELA, through which Ms. Rosa received rigorous professional training while working on her master’s, did not focus on test preparation. The MCAS test results of 2007 in Table 11 follow.

Table 11: Graphic Display of the School Test Results-MCAS tests of Spring 2007
(Percent of Students at Each Performance Level)

Grade and Subject	Advanced/Above Proficient		Proficient		Needs Improvement		Warning/Failing		Students Included
	School	State	School	State	School	State	School	State	
Grade 06 – English/ Language Arts	2	9	34	58	35	25	30	7	305
Grade 06 – Mathematics	4	20	13	32	24	28	59	20	301
Grade 07 – English/ Language Arts	5	9	43	60	24	23	28	8	360
Grade 07 – Mathematics	2	15	13	31	24	30	61	24	357
Grade 08 – English/ Language Arts	6	12	44	63	28	18	22	6	330
Grade 08 – Mathematics	3	17	12	28	20	30	64	25	325
Grade 08 – Science and Technology	1	3	12	30	35	44	51	24	324
NOTE: Performance level percentages are not calculated if student group less than 10									
Data Last Updated on October 3, 2007									

Ms. Rosa: Teaching in Time of Test-Driven Accountability

“No matter what I tried and did in my class to prepare my students for the MCAS they still don’t do well,” said Ms. Rosa. She made this statement while I was asking for her insight as to how standardized tests such the MCAS and Step Up Springfield influenced her instructional practices and the learning growth of her students (field notes, March 2006).

As this quote suggests, Ms. Rosa was frustrated and felt powerless to help her students do well on these standardized tests. Ms. Rosa is not alone in this struggle. Urban teachers across the U.S. public school system have had to cope with the tremendous

stress of these tests and consequent low morale when they do not improve scores across the board. While Ms. Rosa tried to prepare her students for these standardized tests, she was enrolled in an inquiry-based master's program through ACCELA. As mentioned earlier, ACCELA is a home/university partnership established between the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and two urban school districts. This partnership was designed by professors at the university and sustained with the assistance of doctoral students who served as Project Assistants. As Gebhard, Harman, and Seger (2007) maintain:

This partnership was established in 2002 to support teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and researchers in understanding and responding to the combined influences of No Child Left Behind legislation, statewide curriculum frameworks, high-stakes tests, the passage of an English-only referendum, and the adoption of mandated approaches to literacy instruction. (p. 2)

Through this partnership, the Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies at UMass-Amherst enabled urban teachers to enroll in an inquiry-based master's program where they acquired theories and methods in first and second language acquisition and multicultural education (ACCELA, 2005, 2006).

This program encouraged and supported these teachers in their efforts to reach out to their students' parents and communities. Many of these teachers, including Ms. Rosa, successfully created spaces for parents to be involved in their children's learning, as demonstrated later. To support these teachers while they finished their masters, the principal investigators of ACCELA, Drs. Jerri Willett and Margaret Gebhard, hired, trained, and guided several doctoral students to assist these teachers with data collection and analysis for their research projects. One of the purposes of the teachers' research projects was to critically examine their own teaching practices while exploring more effective ways to help their ELL students to acquire necessary academic skills.

The doctoral students also assisted these teachers with technological requirements, as many of them were needed to incorporate technology in their teaching practices. One of the major structural practices of this partnership was a half-day conference organized by project assistants and professors involved in the project. This district-based conference created space for teachers, school administrators, and community members to critically examine district, state, and federal policies and institutional practices that impact teaching practices and the learning growth of ELL students. At this half-day conference, the teachers presented their final projects to the principals of their respective schools, parents, colleagues, and other members of the community.

Ms. Rosa presented her research project at this conference. I worked closely with Ms. Rosa to help her meet her master's degree requirements. Because of the relationship that I built with her as an ACCELA assistant, I had a unique opportunity to witness at first hand some of the struggles and challenges she faced in the classroom, notably in her efforts to prepare her students to meet the state benchmarks of the MCAS, MEPA, and Step up Springfield tests.

Ms. Rosa's last classroom had four boys and eight girls in the sixth grade; their ages varied from 8 to 12 years old. They were all born in Puerto Rico to low-income families, with the exception of the Dominican Pablo whose mother was highly educated. Pablo was in Ms. Rosa's class for about a year. He joined her class with very limited English skills; he only spoke Spanish with her and his classmates.

Some of Ms. Rosa's students had migrated to the United States when 5 or 6 years old; one 11-year old had arrived just six months earlier. They were fluent in their native

language, which they often used in class to communicate with each other and with Ms. Rosa. According to Ms. Rosa, some of the students had schooling in Puerto Rico, while others did not. In Ms. Rosa's account, students who did not have any schooling prior to attending the school were the most challenging students to teach: "I constantly have to switch back and forth in class from Spanish to English so those who don't speak the English language won't get lost" (Interview, November 2005). Like many students at the school, Ms. Rosa's students had to be tested twice per semester to keep track of their learning progress. This included the MCAS, which is mandatory for all public school students in Massachusetts.

A typical day in Ms. Rosa's class consisted of having students answer journal questions, followed by teaching them certain genre features and techniques to help them with the standardized tests. Some of this was done by emulating and practicing questions from previous MCAS tests. Later, Ms. Rosa's request, students read their answers aloud, which Ms. Rosa often commented on. The remainder of class was usually divided between reading a few passages from mandated reading materials, class discussion about these passages, and approximately 20 minutes given to students to share the content of their journal entries.

Ms. Rosa often taught her ELL students how to use contextual cues to understand the meaning of words without having to look them up in a dictionary. She drew upon her students' first language to explain what the word "contextual" means. For instance, she challenged her students to reflect in Spanish on the prefix "con-" embedded in the word context and come up with its definition. After several unsuccessful attempts to find the meaning of "con-," most students replied that "con-" means "with." Ms. Rosa replied,

“OK. The word ‘context’ in English means ‘with text’.” (Field notes, March 2006). This activity was designed to help her students prepare for the MCAS and Step up Springfield tests. According to Ms. Rosa, if her ELL students can use their first language as a resource to deconstruct certain words in English, this would help them do better on standardized tests.

Ms Rosa had adopted various positions about the MCAS. Her positions shifted throughout the two semesters that I observed her class. In one of two interviews conducted with Ms. Rosa about the MCAS, she positioned herself as a teacher who had control over the test. As she pointed out, “the MCAS doesn’t make me change what I do in my class.” However, in an informal conversation later, she said, “no matter what I tried and did in my class to prepare my students for the MCAS they still don’t do well on it.” Furthermore, at other times Ms. Rosa positioned herself as an opponent of high-stakes tests, as evidenced in the following statements she made while interacting with her students in class:

Ms. Rosa: I don’t think a test is a real way of really measuring how much you know. Do I give you a lot of tests besides the MCAS?

Students: No.

Ms Rosa: You know why?

Students: because it’s too much...

Ms. Rosa: no, not too much, but because I rather hear you speak, I rather hear you tell me. When I’m interacting, that’s a test. When I ask you: what do you think about this? And then somebody says this. Then I ask you what do you think about that? And we discuss stuff that we read. If you’re discussing, and you’re telling me how you feel, then, I know you understand it.

However, in other statements, Ms. Rosa somewhat contradicted herself, highlighting to her students the importance of taking any kind of test seriously, especially

tests she believed would affect their lives. She often talked in those terms about high-stakes tests. Her changing positions suggest that she may have felt constrained to abide by the No Child Left Behind mandates. She followed the school curricular mandate by administering standardized practices tests to her low-income students.

At the time of this study, the discourse of accountability dominated and shaped class discussion in Ms. Rosa's class. Ms. Rosa not only lectured her students on the tests but that she also guided her students through MCAS procedures and regulations. She felt that it was her responsibility to teach her students to the tests considered so important by the state. What follows is an excerpt from a videotaped classroom interaction of Ms. Rosa and her students, focusing on the MCAS.

We're gonna finish to practice the MCAS. Why do you think it is important? I think it's important because all the rest of your lives, if you're gonna take any kind of test like... If you wanna be a plumber, you gonna have to take an exam; if you wanna be an attorney, you have to take an exam; if you wanna be a teacher, you're gonna have to take an exam; if you wanna be a dietitian, you're gonna have to take an exam. So, all I'm trying to teach you how to take...exams. Exams that are important in your lives, that are gonna make a difference in your lives. Whether it's fair or not. You're still gonna have to take those exams. So, my job and what I wanna do is to teach strategies to take the MCAS, because right now is MCAS, after high school it might be a beautician, it might be an attorney exam, it might be whatever you wanna do in the rest of your life. And my concern is to teach you not to freak out. Whether is fair or not, that's the law and we have to take it. So, as a teacher the only thing I wanna do is to make sure is that you guys pass this. Because like I said, it's gonna affect your grades in the future.

Like many urban teachers, Ms. Rosa was put in a position where she had to follow the "law," as she put it, by preparing her students to pass the MCAS. "Whether it's fair or not," her students have to take the MCAS and pass it. Therefore, as a teacher expected to abide by school policy and meet state expectations, Ms. Rosa felt that she had to teach her students "how to take exams ...exams that are important in their lives." To

stress the importance of exams, she points out to her students that if they “want to be an attorney, a plumber, a teacher, a dietitian” they will have to take an exam.

In a recent follow-up phone conversation (June 29, 2008) with Ms. Rosa, she said that she spent about 80% of her teaching time on standardized test preparation, and that her curriculum was geared to preparing her students for standardized tests. Ms. Rosa also stated that out of the 90 minutes she had to teach a lesson, sometimes she was able to take only 30 minutes to engage her students in literacy activities not directly related to standardized testing. Finally, she claimed that she was not the only teacher who had to implement scripted curricular materials designed to help students learn necessary skills for standardized tests in her classroom.

At times Ms. Rosa positioned herself in class as an authority figure who advised her students to take high-stakes exams seriously on the premise that being apprenticed into taking these exams would be beneficial to them. Possibly, this is related to her home state of Texas, where high-stakes tests dominate the life of teachers and students; having personally experienced the consequences of not passing required tests like the MTEL, she felt that she had to encourage her students to take standardized tests seriously despite their opinions of the tests purpose or fairness.

Like many teachers, Ms. Rosa expressed her disagreement, discontent, and frustration with the MCAS; however, she did what was expected of her as a teacher: prepare her students for high stake tests through mechanical drill practices. I observed that, while taking standardized practice tests, some of Rosa’s students often talked to one another or fell asleep. Others complained that, “it’s boring;” and, “why are we taking this,

Ms.?" Despite this, Ms. Rosa continued to have her students spend several hours weekly taking old standardized tests so they could familiarize themselves with the format.

Ultimately, Ms. Rosa succumbed to the pressure of teaching to the test. Moreover, despite her personal opinion about these tests, she feels that she has to prepare her students for them. What is not clear, however, is whether real learning took place in Ms. Rosa's class, which was dominated and consumed by test drills.

Given this context, I wondered what skills Pablo may have acquired from Ms. Rosa's class that prepared him to take on the academic tasks of Ms. Mirlanda's class. Given the data presented above, it is possible that, because Ms. Rosa consistently engaged students in writing practice tests, Pablo acquired some writing practice skills that helped him to tackle the test-driven practice skills in Ms. Mirlanda's class. If this is the case, what about the other students whose writing skills were not as advanced as Pablo's? Again, a reasonable interpretation is that Pablo was able to draw on the extensive tests to improve his writing in ways that his peers were not able to due to his previous academic background.

It must be noted that, although Ms. Rosa was hard-pressed by the state mandate and the school to teach her students to the test, she sometimes took risks with her students, engaging them in literacy activities unrelated to test preparation. One of these was a unit on Greek mythology. While working on this unit Ms. Rosa invited her students' parents to her classroom so they could take part in the projects their children were doing on myths.

This unit was part of the mandated curriculum given to Ms. Rosa. She started by brainstorming with her students about Greek mythology. At first, her students seemed to

have difficulty understanding what Greek mythology involved. Ms. Rosa then decided to begin with the word 'mythology' to engage her students in discussion. Ms. Rosa's students were able to define a myth, but were not able to describe a Greek myth. Instead of merely defining 'Greek', Ms. Rosa used examples to situate it in a specific context, drawing on her own childhood experience to do so: "In every culture, there are myths. In our culture, there are a lot of myths. I know in my culture, there are a lot of things people believe that are not necessarily true. When I was a child, I believed these things were true. Now I am an adult I don't believe in them anymore" (field notes, 2005). After explaining to her students what mythology entails across cultures, she opened up space for her students to voice their opinion and share their knowledge about myths with the class. She divided them into small groups to talk about myths; she called on individual students and asked them to share what they understand about myths.

Ms. Rosa engaged her students in classroom discussions about myths for about two weeks, during which students answered journal questions emerging from classroom discussions on the topic. In addition, Ms. Rosa asked them to do a mini-project. For this project, she required that her students interview their parents to seek more information about the myths that shape their culture. Having researched myths at the school library with the help of Ms. Rosa and at home with their parents, Ms. Rosa's students did a formal presentation on myths in class and put up posters in the school hallway and Ms. Rosa's classroom walls. In Ms. Rosa's view, these posters were proof to parents, who visited the school once a semester for parent-teacher visits/meetings, that their children were given the opportunity in her class to draw on their cultural resources to conduct school-based projects. According to Ms. Rosa, the public display of their projects on

Greek/Spanish myths was also intended to show the school personnel, including the principal, some of what was happening in her class.

Ms. Rosa, a caring teacher, found ways to creatively engage her students in family-based, cross-cultural projects; she also took time to listen and counsel her students. She showed that she cared for her students by having high expectations of them, and advising and morally supporting them when they were facing personal and familial problems. As a participant-observer in Ms. Rosa's class, I witnessed the multiple roles she played in her classroom; she did not merely teach students to the test, but she also treated them with care and solicitation.

For instance, she often advised students on issues related to drugs and alcohol. She took time to listen and counsel students who needed immediate attention, such as a student who had ceased actively participating in class. Ms. Rosa took him out the class to talk to him; she later told me that this particular student was not actively participating in class because he was concerned about his girlfriend, who was physically and psychologically abused by her mother.

Ms. Rosa shifted her roles from moment to moment. One moment she was the "tough teacher" with high expectations of her students, who wanted every single one of them to follow instructions in class and concentrate on classroom assignments. At another moment, she gave students "play time," when they could play cards and run around the classroom. While she showed that she cared for her students, Ms. Rosa the authority figure was respected and admired by her students. One student commented, "Ms. Rosa is like a mother to many of us" (field notes, April 2006). However, Ms. Rosa's caring and loving attitude, though important for relationship and trust-building between

her, her students, and her students' parents, was insufficient for policy-makers who required that she pass a standardized test. Ms. Mirlanda, who took over Ms. Rosa's students, taught in this same test-driven atmosphere.

Ms. Mirlanda's Classroom

Like Ms. Rosa, Ms. Mirlanda was required to engage her students in rote standardized practice tests. Ms. Mirlanda had 16 students in her class at the beginning of this study: one Mexican, one Dominican (Pablo), and the rest Puerto Rican. According to Ms. Mirlanda, all of her students were from modest working-class backgrounds with the exception of Pablo. The following semester, Ms. Mirlanda's class fell to 10 after school personnel determined that six students were ready for mainstream classrooms.

Ms. Mirlanda often had her students read silently in class, in the hope that this would prepare them for the reading sections of standardized tests. She believed that students need to learn how to read by themselves and at least initially try to understand the content without a teacher's prompt; "when it is time to take any standardized test, no one will be there to help them read and understand what they read" (field notes, April 2007). Sometimes, Ms. Mirlanda read to her students and sometimes she had them read aloud to her to assess their reading comprehension. She kept track of who took more turns than others did. She assigned different reading roles to each student; Pablo was often given and/or volunteered to play the narrator role while his peers read other parts.

Class discussion often took place after the reading. Pablo participation in classroom discussions was exceptional; he constantly asked questions and made comments related to the reading. In addition to having her students read passages in textbooks and discuss them in class, Ms. Mirlanda had them work on small projects when

she was not having them practice for standardized tests. One project was on the Titanic. For this project, students had to research the history of the Titanic to find out how many people lost their lives and how many survived the boat crash. To this end, Ms. Mirlanda took them to the school library where her students looked up information online.

Ms. Mirlanda's students were visibly excited about this project. Many were eager to share with me information they found about the boy and girl in the movie who met on the boat and fell in love. While I took field notes, Ms. Mirlanda went back and forth among students to check if they needed assistance with their project.

This, however, was not a literacy event typical in Ms. Mirlanda's classroom. The mandated curriculum, "Chunk and Chew," left Ms. Mirlanda with very little time to create her own teaching space. This scripted curriculum was designed to help teachers more effectively prepare students for the reading component of standardized tests. Ms. Mirlanda explained what the Chunk and Chew scripted curriculum entails:

For example, in our school we do what we call "Chunk and Chew," which is taking like, let's say a paragraph. Ok? The child is reading a paragraph, and then they are reading it to somebody else, and that person, the partner who they are reading to is supposed to come back and say "well, this is what you meant" "this is what I understand that you meant." And that is so that when the child is actually reading for the MCAS, by that time, by the time they get to the MCAS, they are able to pick up the most important information from the context so that they can answer their questions. (Excerpt from phone interview, June 29, 2008).

The necessity of incorporating "Chunk and Chew" into her classes meant that most of the "literacy" activities in which Ms. Mirlanda's engaged her students were geared towards the content of standardized tests. Indeed, Ms. Miranda stated that "the whole school curriculum was designed to prepare students for the MCAS and other tests." While observing her class, I noticed that Ms. Mirlanda spent approximately fifty minutes out of the 90-minute class teaching her students how to write a five-paragraph

essay. When I asked her how much time she spent preparing her students for the MCAS, she replied, “the whole year.” Asked how much teaching time she dedicated on weekly basis to standardized preparation tests, she stated, “at least two days a week.”

Teaching the writing steps designed to prepare her students for standardized tests was a ritual in Ms. Mirlanda’s classroom. Each time I went into her class, her students were engaged in rote writing practices. These mechanical writing activities had students applying certain writing conventions—thesis statement, and use of temporal connectives (First, Second, Third, Finally). Students were given writing prompts that they were expected to build on in five-paragraph essays. Finally, Ms. Mirlanda taught them how to use direct quotes from a story and incorporate these in their essays. However, Ms. Mirlanda did not provide detailed feedback on their writing, rather evaluating essays with checkmarks.

Doggedly teaching these test-driven skills did not help Ms. Mirlanda’s students pass the school district formative assessment test in spring 2007. Ms. Mirlanda’s students scored below proficiency level; Pablo and a few of his peers scored above the class average, but they fell below the school and the school district average. For this formative assessment test, Ms. Mirlanda’s class average was 37%; the school averaged 58%; and the school district averaged 52 %. Pablo scored 40%; what does this say about the correlation between his “achiever status” and actual test performance? Should the word ‘achievement’ even be used in Pablo’s case?

Like Ms. Rosa, Ms. Mirlanda was very discouraged and frustrated: “Even though the test scores of my students don’t tell much about what they learn in my class, I’ll still get the blame for their low scores” (field notes, May 2007). Ms. Mirlanda shared this low

morale while discussing her students' MCAS scores. In the era of high-stakes testing, where "tests are widely regarded as an index of the quality of instruction within a particular school or district" (Cummins, et al. 2007), teachers commonly share Ms. Rosa and Ms. Mirlanda's frustrations with the system. The No Child Left Behind mandates have put a great amount of stress and pressure on urban school teachers to meet state mandates for test scores, despite their higher proportion of culturally diverse, low-income, and non-English proficient students (Heubert, 2000; Koretz et. al, 1991). As a result, urban teachers, who often already feel overwhelmed by the special demands made of them inside their schools, have taken varying positions about the culture of high-stakes testing. Many of these teachers have temporarily discontinued their normal teaching practices to deliver mandated curricula to their students (Lipman, 2000, 2001a, 2004), in the hope of passing standardized tests and thereby conforming to expectations based on very different student populations.

With the enactment of the No Child Left Behind mandate, the emphasis on high-stakes testing became more prevalent than ever. Despite differences of opinion as to whether high-stakes tests are a valid measurement of students' learning and teachers' performance, these tests continue to be used as a barometer in school improvement plans. Some researchers even argue that high-stakes tests are a driving force behind fundamental change in schools (Heubert, 2000; Shepard, 1993; Lipman, 2000, 2001, 2004; Neil, 2000). Whether or not this type of change leads to school improvement is an empirical question. What may be frustrating for many teachers and family is that students' own resources and academic growth may go unrecognized, if what they accomplish at school is measured only in test scores.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the context of the study. As demonstrated through the analysis of the situational and cultural context of the school where this study took place, standardized tests have been used as an instrument to reward or sanction schools for their academic performance as measured by these tests. Some states, such as Massachusetts, have drawn upon the results of high-stakes tests to determine whether a school is performing or not. As noted, the middle school that Pablo was attending was facing the threat of becoming a pilot school due to students' low scores on standardized tests. What does this environment mean for student academic growth? Can such growth occur when teaching space is reduced to teaching students to the test? Did Pablo's academic growth happen because or in spite of this context? To assess his growth, in the next chapter I present and analyze the data collected for the study.

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSES

The Growth of Pablo's Writing Skills Over Time-Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the collected data set to help answer the questions guiding this study: (1) What was the nature of Pablo's growth in academic writing over a two-year period? What resources were available to him, and how did he draw on them to sustain his growth in academic writing? (2) How was Pablo's academic achievement institutionally defined and represented, and what was the connection between the institutional "achiever status" attributed to him and his growth in academic writing?

This first section presents and analyzes data originating from early classroom literacy events in which Ms. Mirlanda engaged Pablo. Analyzing these early literacy events enabled me to determine whether or not they helped prepare Pablo to later tackle more sophisticated school-based tasks. Specifically, the analysis of these data illustrate the impact of Ms. Mirlanda's teaching practices on Pablo's early literacy development as an ELL student. I begin with the content analysis of an interview with Ms. Mirlanda about Pablo. I conducted the interview with Ms. Mirlanda in order to gain additional insights about Pablo's academic development in her class. I then use the selected journals and essays by Pablo to examine how his writing changed over time.

I go on to analyze interviews that I conducted with Pablo and his mother to (1) examine to what extent his level of motivation and investment in his studies played or not a role in his academic growth, and (2) to what degree his mother's educational background and support contributed or not to this growth. Below is the transcribed,

videotaped interview with Ms. Mirlanda (a mapping of lines 1-28). This interview took place just after I observed Pablo in her class. I began the interview by asking how Pablo had been doing in the class since joining it in the fall of 2006.

Transcript #1: Interview with Ms. Mirlanda (Theme: Teacher's Verbal Evaluation of Focal Student)

1. Researcher: oh, I see! So, how would you, umm, assess his performance? I know he has been in your class since September of last year. Have you seen any progress? If so, how?
2. Teacher: Oh, definitely. Pablo is progressing everyday...
3. Researcher: Everyday?
4. T: Everyday...
5. R: Wow!
6. T: ...I can see his, um, his progress.
7. R: So, when he first got to your class, how was he?...in terms of, uh, speaking skills, writing skills, and reading skills.
8. T: He's getting better; I mean a lot better. He, um, he came in pretty strong.
9. R: Pretty strong?
10. T: He came in pretty strong, and he's getting stronger by the day.
11. R: Um...what do you mean, what do you mean by "strong"?
12. T: Well, Pablo, this is not his first year...
13. R: Um...
14. T: ...in an English class.
15. R: Yeah, that's right.
16. T: Ok, so he's got some of his basic ski... he brought some of the basic skills that he got from previous year.
17. R: Ok.
18. T: Ok, so, where I tend to focus on the beginning skills of other students, Pablo is already advancing to the next level.

19. R: What has...what has he produced in your class in order to support that claim? What exactly did he do in your class that's really...?
20. T: Well, his writing is getting better; his journals are getting better, they are making more sense and more organized, they are getting longer; his details are deeper; he's got better details...
21. R: Um, um.
22. T: Ok? His, his oral skills are getting better. He's able to speak, uh, more fluently...
23. R: Ok.
24. T: ...and with less hesitation. Ok? With less mistakes.
25. R: Ok.
26. T: His reading is getting a lot better.
27. R: Right.
28. T: He's able to read; he's able to decipher his points, I mean, he is reading alone [inaudible].

Interpretation and Analysis of Interview

Ms. Mirlanda provides a rather positive assessment of Pablo's academic development in her class. According to Ms. Mirlanda, Pablo progresses daily with his writing, reading and speaking skills (line 2). She attributes Pablo's steady progress to the previous background and skills that he drew upon. In Ms. Mirlanda's words, Pablo "came in pretty strong and he's getting stronger by the day" (lines 10, 12 & 16). Ms. Mirlanda indicates improvements in his writing, specifically in his journals, which are more organized, longer, and detailed (lines 20 & 22).

Ms. Mirlanda also recognizes that Pablo makes fewer mistakes and speaks more fluently, with "less hesitation" (line 24) than before. She goes on to claim that Pablo is able to read alone and "decipher his points" (line 28). Significantly, Ms. Mirlanda notes that, "I tend to focus on the beginning skills of other students, because Pablo is already

advancing to the next level” (line 18). However, she fails to mention what she did differently with Pablo so he would not remain stagnant in her class. Based on field notes and my recollections of what I observed when I was in her classroom, Ms. Mirlanda did not in fact do anything different with Pablo, except by pairing him with less advanced students whom he could help with classroom assignments.

While accepting Ms. Mirlanda’s assessment of Pablo at face value, it is illuminating to explore to what degree her teaching practices may have contributed to Pablo’s academic growth. I document this through field notes taken in her class and a questionnaire I designed, asking specific questions to determine what pedagogical choices she made that may have enhanced the academic development of her students, including Pablo. I triangulated the answers that Ms. Mirlanda provided in the questionnaire with other data sources, such as selected samples of Pablo’s writing, to examine how her teaching methods/strategies may have contributed to Pablo’s academic development. In what follows, I present and briefly analyze the answers Ms. Mirlanda provided to questions regarding her teaching methods and strategies.

My questionnaire included the following:

1. What classroom activities which you engage Pablo in might have contributed to his academic achievement?
2. Are there any other things you have done for him, or said to him, which you think might have motivated him to work hard and succeed in school?
3. How often do you communicate with his parents? And how do you do so?
4. Do his parents know how he is doing in your class? In other words, what do you do to make sure his parents are involved in his education?

Ms. Mirlanda responded to these questions in the following terms:

1. “In order for me to help this student succeed, I do a lot of modeling, visual and hands-on activities.”

2. "I try to give the class positive feedback as often as I can before pointing out mistakes and doing corrections. I also try to point the child at the right direction if child is confused."
3. "I try to communicate with parents as much as I can via notes and telephone."
4. "His mother is very involved in this child's education. Therefore, she is aware of everything that is going on in the child's education. She inquires about his progress at least once every two week."

As a participant observer in this study, I used the detailed field notes taken in her class to confirm and disconfirm some of these responses. I have no evidence supporting Ms. Mirlanda's claim concerning her contacting students' parents via notes and telephones. I can confirm that she had a good relationship with Pablo's mother, who was in an evening ESL class Ms. Mirlanda taught at the same middle school that Pablo attended. Having visited that class several times and interacted with both Pablo's mother and Ms. Mirlanda during it, I noticed that Ms. Mirlanda and Pablo's mother had a good rapport as parent and teacher. They often chatted before and after class.

With regard to teaching strategies, Ms. Mirlanda used modeling, hands-on activities, using graphics and visual tools with her students. In preparation for standardized tests, Ms. Mirlanda engaged her students in various writing activities. Most of the writing activities taken place in her class resulted from standardized test preparation. Her students did a lot of writing practices, which involved answering prompt questions emerged from short stories she read and discussed in class with her students. While engaging her students in writing practices geared towards standardized tests, Ms. Mirlanda tried to teach them certain technical writing skills by having them chart conventions and format.

For example, she posted graphics on the wall of her classroom containing the major components of an essay, such as topic sentence, thesis statement, and supporting

details. In addition, Ms. Mirlanda often had students work collectively on their project in class and present their work individually and/or in small groups. Finally, she evaluated students' short essays and journal entries, including those of Pablo. She indicated satisfactory achievement with check marks, as illustrated in Pablo's essays and journal entries.

Whether or not Pablo took full advantage of the classroom literacy activities in which Ms. Mirlanda engaged him is therefore best determined through examination of the work he produced in that class. To this end, I look closely at and analyze essays and journal entries written by Pablo in Ms. Mirlanda's class over the course of one academic year. I selected essays and journal entries that Pablo produced at the beginning of the 2005-2006 Spring semester and compared them to those that he produced later in that semester and during the 2006-2007 school year.

Specifically, these samples of essays/journal entries that Pablo wrote over a thirteen-month period trace his progress in writing skills. I draw partially on the systemic functional analytical tool conceptualized by Eggins (2004) to analyze how Pablo manipulated the English syntax and made use of grammatical features such as connectives, modality, and clauses to make meanings.

Pablo produced texts in a very specific situational and cultural context; the cultural norms influencing the production of these texts are embedded in these contexts. In specific terms, Ms. Mirlanda engaged Pablo and his peers in writing activities aimed at preparing them for standardized tests. Hence, a reasonable interpretation is that the texts that Pablo produced may have been influenced both by the classroom context and by the cultural context in which they were produced.

The writing genre features in which Ms. Mirlanda engaged Pablo and his peers were mostly those of journal entries and five-paragraph essays. Her students wrote journal entries every day. According to Ms. Mirlanda, these journal entries are designed to help her students develop writing fluency and familiarization with the writing process, and improve their vocabulary.

Further, she believed the journal entries, “help her figure out if they understand what she does in class with them and what she needs to focus on to help her students with their writing” (excerpt from an informal conversation, July 2008). Accordingly, the themes in these journal entries sometimes emerged from short stories read in class; other times, these themes precede the short stories.

For example, I recall the process surrounding a discussion of Jackie Robinson. Before discussing a short story about the baseball player, Ms. Mirlanda conducted what she called a pre-reading exercise, which entailed some prompting oral questions about baseball. Without mentioning that she was going to talk about Jackie Robinson, Ms. Mirlanda asked her students: “Who likes baseball? Does anyone know any famous baseball players? Have black and white baseball players always been allowed to play in the same major league baseball?” (field notes, March 2007). The process was often used prior to reading stories with her students.

After discussion of a story with her students, usually lasting a week or two depending on the unit, Ms. Mirlanda would have them write a five-paragraph essay on the story. She first had her students come up with a topic sentence, on which she then asked them to elaborate. In one instance, her students (including Pablo) wrote a five-paragraph essay deriving from a story they read about a man named Casey. She helped

her students work step by step on this essay. Each student had to come up with three topic sentences for each body paragraph. For each topic sentence, they had to say three things that best captured and described Casey's personality and give concrete examples to substantiate their argument.

To clarify how Ms. Mirlanda supported her students throughout this writing process, I had an informal conversation with her (July 6, 2008). Ms. Mirlanda stated that she guided her students while they were editing the first and second drafts of their essays, and gave them feedback. I have no specific evidence of this; Pablo's essays contained checkmarks and short phrases indicating how Ms. Mirlanda felt Pablo was doing with his essays and his writing in general.

I observed that each of Ms. Mirlanda's students had a folder containing the essays and journal entries they produced over time. Ms. Mirlanda states that she went through these folders once to twice a month to check her students' progress with their writing, and to assess what she needed to further teach or emphasize. Again, I have no evidence to support this claim since she did not examine her students' essays in my presence.

Pablo wrote his first journal entry for Ms. Mirlanda a month after starting her class. Before analyzing the entry, Ms. Mirlanda's rationale for engaging her students in this literacy activity must be emphasized. She believes that creating space in her classroom for students to write daily journal entries, and teaching them how to write "good" five-paragraph essays, would help prepare them for the writing component of standardized tests such as the MCAS, Step up Springfield, and MEPA.

As noted, Ms. Mirlanda often evaluated these journal entries and five-paragraph essays through checkmark notations and/or phrases such as "Good start," "Good Job,"

“Your writing is getting better.” Students who followed and applied the writing steps that Ms. Mirlanda taught received a checkmark with a “plus sign” on their journal entries and essays. Pablo generally received checkmarks for his writing.

For his first journal entry, Ms. Mirlanda asked Pablo this prompt question: Should all children be entitled to the same education? Pablo was asked to write a paragraph explaining whether he agreed that all children should be entitled to the same education regardless of their backgrounds. As the nature of the question indicates, Pablo was expected to take a position and defend it through concrete examples.

As evidenced in his response, Pablo was unable to completely answer the question. In interpreting and analyzing the content of his journal entry, I make certain assumptions as to what may have prevented Pablo from fully tackling the assignment. I draw on my field notes, observation of Pablo in class, and knowledge of his background to make these assumptions.

As in-depth analysis of the entry reveals, Pablo understands that the question requires him to make an argument, and that the context of the classroom necessitates more formal syntax. However, he seems to lack the language to fully and successfully take on the task.

Sample #1: Pablo's First Journal Entry

1/23/2006

Teacher's prompt: Should all children be entitled to the same education? Write a paragraph. Why/why not.

Pablo's answer: First should all children be entitled to the same education? Yes because to do a great work done every children is good job of...

Table 12: Clausal Analysis of Pablo's Text

Ideational	Use of nouns (e.g. children) to demonstrate who does what to whom
Interpersonal	Use of formal tone to take a stance of authority and use evidence to support his position (e.g. Yes, because to do a great work done every children is good of...)
Textual	Restating of thesis and use of connectives (first) attempting to connect points to points in a coherent manner and elaborate on them (e.g. First should all children be entitled to the same education?)

Interpretation and Analysis of Pablo's Journal Entry

As shown in the journal entry and the analysis shown in Table 12 above, Pablo picks up on the prompt given by Ms. Mirlanda to answer the question. Specifically, he repeats the question that Ms. Mirlanda posed and before answering, "Yes." By doing so Pablo demonstrates that he understands the convention of academic writing where one does not merely answer a question that is asked but also restates the question. Furthermore, he maintains logical relations and links points in his response by using the temporal connectives "first" in the opening sentence.

Moreover, to show that he understands the question being asked, he responds "Yes," and then proceeds to give the reasons why he agrees, as illustrated by his use of the adverbial clause "because to do a great work, done... ." Pablo attempts to give a rationale for believing that "all children should be entitled to the same education." However, he is not fully successful at elaborating on this thesis statement by connecting points substantiating his argument.

Given that Pablo was a sixth-grade bilingual student with limited English vocabulary, it is quite plausible that the word "entitle" was difficult to grasp, thus preventing him from fully answering the question. However, careful analysis of Pablo's attempt to answer the question clearly reveals that he lacks the lexico-grammatical features to complete his intended meanings. Pablo was not able to write a whole

paragraph as the teacher requested; the last sentence is incomplete, suggesting that he ran out of time or simply ran out of language. Quite possibly, Pablo was unable to provide a full answer to the question due to his limited English vocabulary and very basic understanding of the English language.

Nonetheless, through the short answer he provides, he demonstrates that he is able to represent the reality expected of this particular genre, that he understands the fundamental structural differences between oral and written language, that the grammatical choices that one makes depends on whether one is talking or writing. Therefore, from this journal entry one can infer that Pablo is familiar with academic writing, and that this academic literacy might be responsible for his ability to tackle the complex literacy of the assignment. For example, his English syntax is formal in the writing, not colloquial; his writing does not read as if he was talking, which is so often the case for students not apprenticed into academic discourse. Although incomplete, this text demonstrates Pablo's readiness to "further develop his skills in writing argument, as well as the multi-generic nature of many texts" (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 191).

To examine whether or not Pablo's writing was supported by his teacher and changed over time, I selected writing samples (examples #2, 3 and 4) that Pablo wrote four months, nine months, and thirteen months later, respectively. Textual analysis of these writings deconstructs embedded textual meanings—"meanings about how what we're saying hangs together and relates to what was said before and to the context around us" (Eggins, 2004, p. 13)—and delineates how Pablo used the English language contextually to make these meanings. Analysis further examines to what extent the meanings embedded in Pablo's writing were influenced by the situational context in

which he produced his essays, and to what degree Pablo represented what exactly in this context informed his writing.

Additionally, I draw on how Pablo uses English syntax to determine whether or not he makes interpersonal meanings through these essays—“a strand of meaning running throughout the text which expresses the writer’s role relationship with the reader, and the writer’s attitude toward the subject matter” (Eggins, 2004, p. 12). Towards this end, I look at Pablo’s choices of grammatical features, such as modality, voice (personal voice and interpersonal voice) and connectives, and examine whether those choices helped him achieve his purpose.

The following example is Pablo’s explanation of what he would do if he could make his dreams come true. As with the first journal entry, Ms. Mirlanda provided Pablo with a prompt; for this piece, Pablo was supposed to point out at least three things that he would do if he could make his dreams come true. Like his peers, to answer the question Pablo had to follow and use basic writing genre features, including grammatical features—such as the parts of speech that were helpfully posted on the classroom wall.

The basic genre features posted in the classroom display what writing components must be included in a “good essay:” topic sentence, thesis statement, body paragraphs, and supporting details for each body paragraph. I noticed that, while writing, Pablo and some of his peers often got up to look at this list on the wall. In my follow-up conversation with Ms. Mirlanda (July 2008), she stated that, “these writing features are posted on the wall for the convenience of the students who could look at them whenever they needed while writing.” Ms. Mirlanda made sure to remind Pablo and his peers to

follow the genre writing features on the poster when involved in any classroom writing activity. If they did so successfully, they received a checkmark on their essays.

Sample #2: Pablo's Journal Entry, Four Months Later

Teacher's prompt: If I could make my dreams come true, I would wish for...
because

5/24/06

Pablo's answer: First is If I could make my dreams come true, I would wish for a house for my mother to make my mother so happy and buy a car too. Second is one of a lot of kond to make. I would wish of be a person how to be so genius to know about everything to do everything I know.

Table 13: Clausal Analysis of Pablo's Text

Ideational	Use a variety of generic and specific nouns (e.g. dreams, mother, genius, happy, car) and a range of verbal processes to communicate with the reader (e.g. know, make, buy).
Interpersonal	Use of modalities to make a statement of family care and support it with evidence; using words such genius to represent a reality of achievement thereby aligning with the ideology of the institution (e.g. If I could make my dreams come true, I would wish for a house for my mother to make my mother so happy and buy a car to; I would wish of be a person to be genius)
Textual	Restating thesis and use of connectives attempting to connect points to points in a coherent manner (e.g. First is If I could make my dreams come; Second is one of a lot of kond to make).

Interpretation and Analysis of Pablo's Journal Entry #2

As with the first example and the analysis shown in Table 13 above, Pablo restates the prompt question before proceeding to answer the question that being asked. However, unlike in the first journal entry, Pablo is consistent in his use of temporal connectives such as "first" and "second," with which he coherently links points to points and while elaborating on each point he makes. Furthermore, the modals "could" and

“would” effectively demonstrate the level of his desire to buy his mother a house and become a genius.

Sentences such as, “If I could make my dream come true, I would wish a house of my mother and make my mother so happy...” show growth in both argument length and coherent organization. The main themes of this journal entry, desires and aspirations, hold relevance to Pablo’s inner life, which may have allowed Pablo to better elaborate on his points, something he was unable to accomplish in the previous journal entry. Moreover, because the vocabulary words used in the prompt question may be more predictable than those used in the first essays, Pablo seems to more easily perform the task outlined by the teacher and the text: reproduce in his writing the prompt question he was given and expand it on his answer. Moreover, through choices of words such as genius and family, Pablo shows that he aligns with the ideology of the school district’s expectation of achievement, which aligns with his family’s belief.

Although Pablo does not fully succeed in using prepositions correctly in sentences such as “I would wish of be” (rather than “I would wish to be”), this does not seem to stop him from expressing his thoughts and aspirations (indeed, preposition misuse seems to be one of the most common—and relatively unproblematic—mistakes made by non-native speakers of any language). Pablo shows that he knows what he was asked to talk about, and attempts to do so despite some language difficulty.

Egins (1994) argues that, “Any use of language is motivated by a purpose, whether that purpose be a clear, pragmatic one, or a less tangible, but equally important, interpersonal one (p. 2).” In this example Pablo uses language to make specific meanings, and these meanings are informed in part by the dream that he has to buy his mother a

house and become a genius. This somewhat confirms what scholars such as LeCourt, (2004) and Zamel & Spack (1987) claim about writing: when the purpose of writing is clear or made clear to students and/or when they have the opportunity to write about what matters and is relevant to their identities, writing can be very meaningful to them.

However, this is one of the few times Pablo was asked to talk about himself and his family in Ms. Mirlanda's class. At most times Pablo had to follow writing genre features essentially designed to emulate standardized tests.

The content of this piece not only indicates the improvement in Pablo's writing, but also shows that he is ready and able to move on to a more advanced stage of writing. This stage requires, among other skills, a writer's ability to move from the personal to the impersonal voice—use of a neutral pronoun such as “one” instead of the personal pronoun “I”—and the use of nominalization, the ability to use abstract knowledge to make an argument (Knapp & Watkins, pp. 206 & 208). However, for Pablo to achieve these goals, he needs scaffolding and explicit instruction in whatever he is asked to do. According to Vygotsky (1996), explicit instruction is necessary for teachers to move a child from his or her actual development to his/her potential development. Vygotsky contends that, “Instruction is one of the principal sources of the schoolchild's concepts and is also a powerful force in directing their evolution; it determines the fate of their total mental development (Vygotsky, 1996, cited in Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 77). Vygotsky coins the phrase “Zone of Proximal Development” to describe the gap between these two stages of development.

Based on the daily classroom writing practices in which Ms. Mirlanda engaged her students, it is reasonable to assume that she showed willingness and determination to

help her students improve their writing skills. However, there is no clear evidence that she was successful at helping, for example, Pablo move from his “actual development to his potential development” (Vygotsky, 1996) though Pablo’s writing may have improved over time as a result of steady and consistent test-driven writing practices. My assumption is based on the evidence that, for the essays/journal entries Pablo produced in Ms. Mirlanda’s class, she provided checkmarks but no real constructive feedback. That feedback could allow Pablo to figure out the next step to take to reach his full potential in academic writing. The necessity of spending more than half of the teaching time engaging students in “literacy events” mostly geared towards test preparation may not have left enough room for Ms. Mirlanda to involve them in literacy activities that could have made a difference in their academic life. Mere programming or training students to do well in standardized tests, “reduce[s] creative forms of writing, such as narrative, to structures and formulas” (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 16).

Teaching students how to write in an academic fashion is challenging, especially when teachers must do so in a classroom situational context greatly influenced by problematic mandates such as the NCLB legislation. Because of this legislation, Ms. Mirlanda’s teaching methods seem restricted to having her students follow simplistic writing formulas, which, while highly effective in establishing basic writing techniques, are not capable of taking students such as Pablo to the next level of writing skill. Learning more sophisticated writing skills requires explicit and various teaching techniques. As Knapp & Watkins (2005) point out, the aim of such advanced instruction “is not to provide students with simplistic formulas or rules and regulations for ‘correct’ English. While rules and formulas have their uses, on their own they do not produce

powerful writers, writers who will become competent, confident and articulate users of the English language” (p. 17).

Based on data interpreted and analyzed thus far, it is reasonable to say that plausibly Pablo’s apprenticeship in academic writing and his strong investment in his own learning are possible resources that enabled him to follow and apply through his writing the technical writing formulas and rules taught by Ms. Mirlanda. This, in turn, may have helped improve his writing to some extent. Moreover, his ability to follow classroom instructions and ‘do school’ contributed to the institutional achiever status he earned. As the analysis of the next writing sample demonstrates, Ms. Mirlanda did not give Pablo detailed and explicit feedback on his writing that could have enabled him to figure out the next steps to take to further strengthen his writing skills. Minimally, through substantive and detailed feedback Ms. Mirlanda could have helped Pablo strengthen his ability to say coherently and cohesively what he wanted to say in a text. Furthermore, she could have drawn on Pablo’s resources (e.g. his stories and dreams to buy his mother a house and a car) to engage him in more creative and meaningful writing activities that could have given him a clear purpose and a meaningful reason to write.

Pablo wrote the following essay (sample #3) five months after the second sample and nine months after the first sample. Unlike the second essay, in this expository essay, Pablo is asked to express his point of view and take a position. Implicit in the assignment is a demonstration that Pablo can follow the writing steps written and posted on the classroom wall. This is different from the first essay in that Pablo is required to use information from another text rather than from his personal knowledge to justify a position. Before writing this essay, Pablo and his peers read a short text on global

warming. First, Ms. Mirlanda had each student read this text silently. Then, she had each student read a portion aloud. Finally, she engaged the whole class in a discussion about the text, as a way of assessing reading comprehension. After this discussion, each student was to write an essay stating three major things that might happen to the world as a result of global warming. According to Ms. Mirlanda, the main purpose of having her students write short essays in response to reading passages is to familiarize them with the format of standardized tests.

Sample #3: Pablo's Writing, Nine Months Later

Teacher's prompt: Consider global warming, what will happen? Two paragraphs.

10/15/06

Pablo's answer: If we go into global warming it will get hot, the north and south pole will melt we could die. First it will get hot because the temperature will go up the humidity will go up with the heat the rivers could dry up. Secondly, the north and south pole will meet and the oceans will rise. The penguins will die the north and south pole will separate. Lastly we could die because our plants will be because they could die. We will not have fresh water, we will not have a place to live.

Table 14: Clausal Analysis of Pablo's Text

Ideational	Use a variety of nouns to make meanings (e.g. north, south, plants, temperature, oceans, fresh water)
Interpersonal	Use of impersonal voice, modality, and a formal tone to make a statement (e.g. it will get because the temperature will go up; We will not have fresh water we will not have a place to live)
Textual	Restating thesis and use of connectives (first) attempting to logically link sentences to sentences in a coherent manner (e.g. If we go into global warming; First, secondly)

Interpretation and Analysis of Pablo's Writing Sample #3

Pablo begins by writing a thesis statement signaling the three points that he will be making and elaborating on. The analysis of his text is shown in Table 14 above. He then lays out three things that could happen as a result of global warming. Pablo's use of the temporal connectives "first," "second," and "lastly" connects points in his argument. Moreover, he shows that he understands the need to elaborate on each point made in academic writing, through proper use of causal conditional connectives such as "because." In all, Pablo demonstrates that he is capable of putting forward a point of view and using concrete examples to support it.

As with sample #2, Pablo consistently uses modals of possibility in sentences, such as, "The river could dry up;" "We could die" to express his projective viewpoint. Pablo uses these modals in a more sophisticated way in this essay than in earlier samples. Furthermore, there are two important new developments in his writing: Pablo uses phrasal verbs such as "dry up," and "go up" to make meanings; and he uses future tense to indicate that he is referring to things yet to come.

More importantly, Pablo makes intertextual links between his text and the text on global warning he read in class. That is, he strategically draws on some of the information and words such as humidity, heat, dry provided in the text to take a position and justify it with evidence.

Structurally, this essay shows improvement in organization and flow from the first two essays that Pablo wrote. His command of modals, connectives, verb tense, punctuation and sentence structure is stronger. Equally important, in this essay Pablo makes statements through which he represents the "reality" about global warming.

However, there is no clear evidence that these writing practices in which Ms. Mirlanda engaged Pablo and which Pablo took on led to his intellectual development.

Ms Mirlanda acknowledges Pablo's writing improvement by commenting, "Your writing is getting much better." However, I wonder to what degree this type of evaluation helped Pablo advance his academic writing skills. Since this is an exposition essay, which "involves the consideration of an issue from a number of perspectives" (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p.194), Ms. Mirlanda could have better furthered Pablo's academic growth by challenging him to think about other perspectives of the topic, perhaps instructing him in counterarguments one might make about global warming.

Moreover, detailed feedback could have helped Pablo elaborate further on his arguments and make them stronger. The simple statement, "Your writing is getting better," does not indicate what exactly Pablo is doing well, what he could improve, or how he might do so. In short, this evaluation offers no content that would help Pablo evaluate his writing for himself.

As with the earlier writing assignments, the goal seemingly set for Pablo to achieve is apprenticeship into a type of writing that fits the logic of standardized tests. The situational context in which Pablo and his teacher engage for the production of these essays suggests two relationships influencing and informing this genre: a micro context (the school itself) and a macro context (the school district).

The situational context—the push to imitate the writing format of standardized tests—in which Pablo is asked to produce this essay reflects the unfortunate primacy of test scores in educational priorities. Rather than extensive development of skills and knowledge, the purpose of these exercises was to apprentice students, however

superficially, into appropriating a writing genre serving the very particular purpose of standardized test preparation.

Essentially, the way Pablo was taught to manipulate the English syntax suggests that his writing may have been influenced by the competitive, goal-oriented expectations set for students by both the school and the school district. The hoped-for outcome is high performance on standardized tests through acquisition of a specifically designed writing technique. This, however, does not necessarily strengthen the academic writing skills Pablo and his peers need to face future academic challenges in high school and beyond.

To continue documenting possible improvement in Pablo's writing over time, I selected and analyzed an essay that he wrote about a year after starting Ms. Mirlanda's class. Before writing this essay Pablo read a short story about a character named Casey. After reading and discussing the story, Pablo and his peers had to write a short essay describing Casey's personality, supported by details and direct quotes taken from the story.

Sample #4: Pablo's Essay, Thirteen Months from Sample #1

Teacher's prompt: Do you think Casey was arrogant during this game? Give your reasons why you think he was arrogant or not arrogant.

2/17/07

Pablo's answer: I think Casey was arrogant during this game. Here are my three reasons, he didn't care about the game, he showed off and didn't pay attention to the ball. First of all he didn't care about the game. He come to bat and did nothing. To the first bat he said "that ain't my style." Second of all he thought he was the most valuable player.

“There was pride in Casey’s... and a smile in Casey’s face.” Finally he didn’t pay attention to the ball. He didn’t notice when the pitcher throw a spheroid ball.

Table 15: Clausal Analysis of Pablo’s Text

Ideational	Use a variety of nouns and a range of verbs (e.g. arrogant, pitcher, great, good, job, children, show off, come, notice)
Interpersonal	Use of personal voice with authority to present his argument, (e.g. I think Casey was arrogant. Here are my three reasons, he didn’t care about the game. He come to bat and did nothing.
Paratactic	Use direct quotes from text to substantiate argument in an attempt to convince readers of its worth (e.g. To the first bat he said, “that aint my style.” He thought he was the most valuable player. “There was pride in Casey’s... and a smile in Casey’s face”)
Textual	Restating question before answering and use of connectives (first) to connect ad elaborate on points being made through text (e.g. First of all, second of all, finally)

Interpretation and Analysis of Pablo’s Essay

Table 15 above shows the analysis of Pablo’s text. Throughout the selected essays/journal entries, Pablo consistently shows that he understands what academic writing entails even as he seems to lack sufficient vocabulary to elaborate at length on the points he makes. In this essay, he lays out the three major arguments that he will make to demonstrate Casey’s arrogance. Each reason is matched with an example to illustrate his point, sometimes directly quoting the text. Pablo shows engagement with the complexity of the story through argument-making based on textual evidence. Pablo’s writing has progressed: to his earlier use of temporal connectives he adds superlatives and adjectives such as “the most valuable player.” Furthermore, his transitions from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph have improved. In the first two samples, Pablo’s sequential phrases were incorrect: sample #2 contains “First is...” and “Second is...” rather than the “First” and “Second” he correctly used in sample #3. This essay continues the progress, moving from “First...” through “Secondly...” to “Lastly...”

In the first and second sample, Pablo shows difficulty with proper use of verb tense, prepositions and adjectives; in this essay, he is consistent in his use of past tense verbs: "he didn't care about the game. ... he didn't pay attention ... He didn't notice when the pitcher throw the ball" More importantly, his analysis is stronger in that he is able to substantiate his arguments with concrete examples from the story. The content of this essay confirms Ms. Mirlanda's statement regarding Pablo's gradual progress in reading comprehension and writing skills. That "his reading is getting a lot better ... he's able to read; he's able to decipher his points," is confirmed by Pablo's ability to excerpt direct quotes from the story to substantiate the points he makes about Casey's personality.

Moreover, the grammatical structure of this essay is stronger and more coherent than that of the previous samples. His sentences contain more details and transition more coherently and smoothly. This essay amply supports Ms. Mirlanda's assessment that, "his writing is getting better. His journals are getting better; they are making more sense and more organized. They are getting longer. His details are deeper. He's got better details."

This essay demonstrates that Pablo's writing skills have grown over the course of thirteen months. They also show that Pablo's ability to use rhetorical devices to persuade and make an argument, as well as his ability to draw on textual and syntactical language to make coherent sentences and paragraphs, is getting stronger. In sum, Pablo not only demonstrates that his use of English syntax has gotten better, but he also shows that he is able to use that syntax to make an argument and substantiate it with evidence derived from the text.

Nonetheless, the progress shown through analysis of his writing was not reflected in the last formative assessment test Pablo took in June 2007. As noted before, he obtained 40% on that test, slightly above the class average of 37%. However, his score did not match the school and district tests score averages, 58% and 52% respectively. What does this suggest about the achiever status granted to Pablo by the institution, about the expectations held for ELL students, and about the school district's conception of learning and achievement? According to this culture, "everyone believes and acts in accordance with the belief that all learners can achieve. All actions with students and parents illustrate and confirm commitment to the belief that all learners can achieve. Students learn continually and are surrounded by others—teachers, administrators, and other adults—who are also learning all the time. Creating a community of learners in the Springfield Public Schools will require a dedication to continuous improvement in learning on the part of all students, staff, and parents."

(<http://sps.springfield.ma.us/webContent/Culture%20OF%20Achievement.DOC>).

To what degree does Pablo's achiever status fit the school district's culture and definition of achievement? Conversely, to what extent does the school district's definition of achievement capture Pablo's achievement as contextually defined by the institution?

Interviews With Pablo and his Mother

This section contains content analysis of the interviews that I conducted with Pablo and his mother. I talked with Pablo's mother about her son and the role she felt that she played in his academic growth. Literature on student academic growth frequently examines the role parental involvement plays in fostering or hindering such growth. Family resources influences academic growth include basic support, educational

backgrounds, and “funds of knowledge” (Moll, 1996) which students often draw on to achieve in school. My interview with Pablo’s mother focused on these resources, exploring to what degree the support he received from his mother may have contributed to Pablo’s academic development. The interview was conducted in Spanish because Pablo’s mother felt more comfortable being interviewed in her first language. The text of the transcript has been translated into English, attached in brackets to the full transcription (which appears in full in the appendix). Presented below are excerpts of the English version of the interview (a mapping of lines 1-26).

Transcript #2: Interview with Pablo’s Mother (Theme: Mother’s Assessment of Pablo)

1. Researcher: I started working with your son, Pablo, about two years ago. And today I’d like to ask you a little bit about Pablo. What can you tell me about Pablo, as a student?
2. Pablo’s mother: He is very dedicated. He does his work. When he agrees to do something, he does it. I mean, he puts a lot of effort into it, he does his work, studies, sets up his hours to study, too.
3. Ok. So do you help Pablo with his homework?
4. Pablo’s mother: Sometimes.
5. R: Sometimes?
6. PM: I help him, yes, I help him. He tells me “mom, can you help me?” and I help him.
7. R: Ok. And...sometimes, but it is not everyday.
8. PM: No, not everyday because he normally knows how to take care of his classes.
9. R: Oh! So, he doesn’t need much help from you.
10. PM: No.

11. R: Ok. And...do you have time to help him? Because there are families that don't have time because they have to work really hard; they have two jobs, therefore, they don't have time to help their sons or daughters. In your case, that is...that is not your case.
12. PM: No, I find time to help him.
13. R: So, you don't work...your work doesn't, doesn't get in the way? Right? To help out Pablo?
14. PM: No, it doesn't get in the way.
15. R: And last year, for example, Ms Martinez, no this one, the other one, invited some parents to come help in class. So, for example, if Ms. Martinez invites you to come to her class to help Pablo and other students, do you think you'd be able to do it? Would you have the time to do it?
16. PM: Yes.
17. R: Yes? Would you do if you were asked to do it?
18. PM: Of course, if it is for my son.
19. R: And before he moved here, how was he as a student?
20. PM: Very involved in his school as well. A good student, good behavior.
21. R: Did he learn English before moving here?
22. PM: Very little.
23. R: I'm going back to my first question, you told me that you help Pablo sometimes, and how many times does he ask you to give him a hand?
24. PM: when they give him certain type of homework, and when they give him something about the dictionary, in Spanish, about the meaning of words. For mathematics, he has asked me for help. With some projects too, and so on...
25. R: So, it is not too difficult for you to help Pablo.
26. PM: No, I help him as long as he wants me to; it is not a burden for me.

Interpretation and Analysis of Interview

Throughout the interview, Pablo's mother, Yolanda, represents Pablo as a studious, serious, trustworthy, hardworking, and independent student. She states, "He is very dedicated. He does his work. When he agrees to do something, he does it. I mean, he

puts a lot of effort into it; he does his work, studies, sets up his hours to study, too” (line 2). According to Yolanda, before Pablo moved from the Dominican Republic to the United States he was “very involved in his school as well” (line 20). She goes on to say that as a student in his native land, Pablo was “A good student,” and had “good behavior” (line 20). Yolanda sums up her son’s overall academic progress in the following terms: “I think he is doing well. Well, in two years, he has learned English, and he is doing well in his class as well” (line 22). Clearly, Yolanda shows is proud of her son and thinks highly of his academic achievements.

When asked how often she helps Pablo with his homework, Yolanda replies “sometimes” (line 4) and goes on to say that “normally he knows how to take care of his homework” (line 8). Although Yolanda represents Pablo as a capable and independent student who rarely needs assistance, she makes herself available in the event that Pablo needs her. To better help Pablo with homework, Yolanda felt that it was critically important for her to learn English at an adult ESL program, which was given at the middle school Pablo attended. When asked why she decided to learn English, Yolanda invoked both Pablo’s work and her own needs (field notes, 2007).

Unlike many single parents whose jobs can take up so much time that helping their children with school work is difficult, Pablo’s mother says work “doesn’t get in the way” of helping Pablo (line 14). In any case, she makes his needs a priority: “No, I help him as long as he wants me to, it is not a burden for me” (line 30). She also asserted that this attitude towards his schooling would extend to his teachers’ requests for her time.

Yolanda wants Pablo to succeed in life. To that end, she hopes that he will become a professional and holds him to high standards. She wants Pablo to be “a good

man, serious, honest, polite, hardworking” (see appendix). When asked if she allows Pablo to play outside by himself, Yolanda states, “No! I don’t allow him to go out in the streets; he plays with his family, his cousins.” She feels that they have a good relationship, and that Pablo is “very affectionate with her.”

A lawyer in her native land, Yolanda practiced law for many years. As predicted by the literature, parents from higher educational backgrounds tend to set high expectations for, and are generally in the best position to academically support their children. Growing up with a highly educated mother could have been educationally beneficial to Pablo. To borrow Pierre Bourdieu’s term, the “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1999) Pablo received from his mother may have prepared him to take on school-based tasks. This explains why Pablo was “a good student” (line 20) in his native land, and how that carried over into academic achievement in America: “in two years, he has learned English, and he is doing well in his class” (line 21). So many immigrants to America come specifically because they were poor, uneducated, and otherwise marginalized in their home countries; that Pablo’s mother’s educational background is atypical of Latino immigrants in this district that serves students from poor uneducated families may also explain why Pablo was the only ELL student, among hundreds at his school, who made the honor roll three times in one single academic year; received by the institution multiple awards and certificates for his academic achievement; and was recommended by the bilingual team at his school to the Latino/a Chamber of Commerce that honored young future Latino/a leaders for their outstanding academic achievements.

As with many immigrants, Yolanda was not able to practice her former profession in her adopted country; she works as a Personal Care Assistant to support herself and her

two sons. However, this did not prevent her from passing on to Pablo her own intellectual and cultural resources and strong family values. As an educated woman, Yolanda expects her son to become a professional as she was in her native land; she wants him to follow in her footsteps. While setting high expectations for Pablo, she makes time to assist him so he can meet these expectations.

As discussed previously, the ethics of care (Noddings, 1992) and issues of trust play a significant role in student learning. Yolanda positions herself as a parent who cares for her son and his success. His needs are prioritized in her life. Furthermore, Yolanda believes in Pablo; she believes that he can succeed and trusts that, "When he agrees to do something, he does it" (lines 2 & 20).

Other immigrant parents have high hopes for their children and do what they can to help them achieve their goals. However, not too many of them have access to the cultural capital that Yolanda, an educated professional, may have drawn on to support Pablo. Moreover, many of these immigrant's children may not have access to the early home discourse to which Pablo was exposed. As noted, Pablo more easily understands classroom assignments than some of his peers and was thus asked to help them. In an interview I conducted with him, Pablo explains that.

But I feel bad about the people that didn't get good grades like mine. Sometimes, I help them, but not like cheating. I help them before the test ... some of my classmates; I help them before the test... If they don't get the things with the teacher, and the teacher is giving the class, I, because I understand it, I show them: "This is like this, and that is like that." And they understand me. (See full interview).

That Pablo is able to take on this role might stem from the prior knowledge and background he gained through early apprenticeship at home and in school in the Dominican Republic.

In addition to social class background, religious values may positively influence the education of children in school. In Pablo's case, his mother expects him to cultivate the Christian faith, to "be a good man, serious, honest, police, hardworking." Yolanda makes sure that Pablo attends church with her regularly because, according to her, children learn right from wrong at church. The church is therefore another resource that Pablo's mother draws on to support both Pablo and herself educationally, morally, and spiritually.

As demonstrated through the interview, Pablo's mother drew on multiple resources (intellectual, familial, cultural, and religious) to support her son in school. In addition, Pablo received advice, support and encouragement from his teachers. Yet Pablo's achievements during his three years in middle school suggests that he primarily drew on the resources and support that he received from his mother. Part of my interview with Pablo was done to assess the extent to which Yolanda contributed to his academic growth.

In the following excerpts from the interview (see appendix for the complete transcription), Pablo explains to what degree his mother and brother supported him academically. He also talks about what motivated him to work hard and do well in school. The main source of his motivation appears to be his mother; throughout the interview, Pablo refers to his mother as the impetus for his efforts: "I do it because I want to make my mom happy." Pablo also received encouragement and advice from his teachers, another incentive to succeed in school. Moreover, as seen in the excerpts below (a mapping of lines 1-37), Pablo is a very independent learner. His ability to do things independently suggests a long apprenticeship into certain academic discourses, allowing

him to take on academic tasks with little help from his mother, brother, and teachers. Finally, Pablo demonstrates that he is very aware of his potential, by explaining how he took advantage of available resources to take control of, foster, and sustain his academic growth.

Transcript #3: Interview with Focal Student, Pablo (Theme: Pablo's Reflection on His Learning Process)

1. R: I've seen how you have progressed over time; so, uhmm, last semester and this semester you made it to the honor roll. Can you tell me who really inspires you to work so hard to make it to the honor roll?
2. P: Ummm...I don't really get help now because I know now better English. I do almost everything myself; my mom helps me a little; my brother...no, maybe. yeah (laughs).
3. R: Umhu.
4. P: And we...I do it because, I want to make my mom happy...
5. R: You want to what?
6. P: Make my mom happy and...
7. R: Oh, you want to make your mom happy
8. P: ... and to get better grades so when I go to other schools, they will accept me because I get good grades not because...you know.
9. R: Umhu.
10. P: So, I just do my thing...
11. R: You just do your thing?
12. P: Yeah!
13. R: So, why do you wanna make your mom happy? Tell me.
14. P: Yeah, I don't wanna make her mad.
15. R: Aha, aha.
16. P: But, I like when she's happy so, she gives... she gives me things because I get good grades, so that's good for me...

17. R: Aha, aha. Ok, tell me what really drives you, what really makes you wanna work so hard to... to do well in school.
18. P: Ummm...to get a good job in the future, you know...
19. R: In the future...
20. P: Yeah, to get a good job.
21. R: Ummhu.
22. P: Like, my mother would say...my teachers, my math teacher here would say "think college now."
23. R: Umhu.
24. P: And when I hear that, I'm always thinking about that.
25. R: What, what do they say? think college?
26. P: Think college now.
27. R: Think college now, ok.
28. P: So, when I hear that "think college now" makes me like think about what I'm doing now so I don't need, I don't need to be embarrassed in the future.
29. R: Ok, so you're trying hard so you won't be embarrassed in the future.
30. P: So I can be proud of myself when I was a child.
31. R: Oh! ok. oh, I see, you want to be proud of yourself when you are child, so looking back.
32. P: Yeah, when I look back, I gonna be like "oh [inaudible] ...and all the things I did."
33. R: Ok, ok, tell me how your mom influences you-influences your education?
34. P: She always tells me like, ah, "did you do your homework?" she always knows if I'm lying or not. She's "go do your homework."
35. R: Aha.
36. P: I always do, you know, she always tells me if she doesn't think so, she says "bring me the book bag" ...she, everything, she checks if I did it you know, like that. But...
37. R: So, she always check if you did your homework.

Interpretation and Analysis of Interview

Although Pablo says that he gets help from his mother and brother, he presents himself throughout the interview as an independent learner: "I don't really get help now because I know now better English. I do almost everything myself. My mom helps me a little; my brother ... no, maybe" (line 6). Many of Pablo's incentives to do well in school stem from his mother: getting good grades will please her (lines 8 & 16); bad grades will make her angry (line 18); his mother will reward him for good grades (line 20). Pablo's hard work in school is informed and nourished by the level of respect that he has for his mother and his desire to please her.

Pablo's mother also plays an important role in making sure that Pablo does his homework:

She always tells me, like, ah "Did you do your homework?" She always knows if I'm lying or not. She's "Go, do your homework."... I always do, you know. She always tells me if she doesn't think so. She says, "Bring me the book bag." ... she, everything. She checks if I did it, you know, like that. But ..." (See full interview in appendix).

Pablo's mother expects him to do his work, and he in turn feels the need to live up to that expectation. By making her expectations clear and enforcing her standards, Yolanda has instilled in Pablo a good work ethic. Pablo's desire to do well to please his mother is directed outside himself. However, he also points out self-directed reasons for his efforts. Beyond the obvious benefit of getting a good job, Pablo foresees profound benefits from doing well in school: if he works hard now he will not be embarrassed in the future (line 36); and he can be proud of his earlier achievements later in life (line 38).

Pablo confirms some of what his mother says in the interview about his abilities as a student. Referring to Pablo, she says, "He doesn't need much help from me ...

because he normally knows how to take care of his classes” (lines 8 & 10). Pablo self-assessment of his academic abilities also validates Ms. Mirlanda’s statement about his accomplishment in making the second honor role three times in a row: “Pablo did it all on his own. His motivation; he is motivated. He wants to succeed. He wants to do good. He wants to please his mother. I mean, he is just an outstanding student” (excerpt from interview, Fall, 2007). Pablo is aware of his achievements and therefore has confidence in his ability to succeed. Pablo positions himself as a student inspired by and acting upon the advice received from both his mother and his teachers:

Like my mother would say ... my teachers. My math teacher would say “think college, now,” and when I hear that, I’m always thinking about that ... When I hear that “think college, now” makes me, like, think what I’m doing now so I don’t need, I don’t need to be embarrassed in the future... So, I can be proud of myself when I was a child... When I look back, I gonna be like, “Oh!... and all the things I did.” (See full interview in appendix).

Moreover, throughout the interview Pablo describes himself as a student who works tirelessly to do well in school so that his mother and his teachers will not be disappointed. Most importantly, he does not want to disappoint himself either; he is a learner who believes in working hard now to prepare for his future (line 37).

Pablo translates his motivations into hard work and consequently was recognized for it by the school. Yet he seems to dismiss the institutional achiever status attributed to him: “I don’t wanna be like, like that ... I don’t ...I just wanna be ... to be good ... to go to high school, pass high school, do the MCAS, get to graduation and all that” (see full interview in appendix). While Pablo appreciates the praise he gets from his teachers for making second honor, saying “it feels good, it feels good,” (lines 80 & 82), he feels bad about his classmates who do not do as well in his classes. Pablo maintains, “ But I feel

bad about the people that didn't get good grades like mine. Sometimes, I help them, but not like cheating. I help them before the test ... some of my classmates."

Pablo's ability to understand what his teachers do in class, his desire to help his struggling classmates, and his inner drive was not created in a vacuum. This suggests that he came to Ms. Mirlanda's class with a stronger academic background than his classmates. Therefore, as predicted by the literature, his early home apprenticeship into academic discourse prepared him to take on academic tasks more easily than peers lacking this apprenticeship. Scholars in second language acquisition and bilingual education (e.g. Cummins, 1988; Darder, 1994; Trueba, 1989) acknowledge that, for bilingual students who have already developed academic language in their first language, the transfer of that academic language to the target language is not so challenging once they acquire fluency. This seems to be the case with Pablo. He joined the middle school with a strong academic background, but was initially stymied in his efforts to succeed academically; Pablo's interview suggests that the English language may have been a temporary barrier preventing him from successfully tackling early school assignments. However, as he gained confidence in his English, his academic abilities became apparent.

In sum, Pablo's academic trajectory in America seems to bear out the cultural and social theories reviewed in this study (Bourdieu, 1990). Pablo uses the cultural capital passed on to him by his family to create his own successful path in his education. His achiever status notwithstanding, he is more concerned with his success on his own terms. This self-directed motivation, when combined with the external support from his mother and teachers, helps drive Pablo's academic accomplishments. However, despite the

achiever status attributed to him by the institution, the fact remains Pablo did not perform as expected by the school district after being at the school for three years.

His case contradicts and challenges the state and federal policies that expect ELL students to be proficient in the English language within three years and able to compete with native speakers. As mentioned earlier, studies have demonstrated that second language learners need at least seven years to be fully proficient; this would enable them to take on academic tasks in the target language (Cummins, 1988, 2007; Collier, 1995). Pablo's case can help us better understand the reason why policy makers punish schools when they are not able to achieve impossible standards.

Chapter Summary

This chapter covers the data related to my research questions; I interpreted, discussed, and analyzed the data with particular attention to Pablo's writing samples and interviews with him and his mother. Throughout, the evidence shows that Pablo's apprenticeship in academic discourse and support from his single mother influenced his academic growth. Data analysis also demonstrates that Pablo's motivation and his ability to find ways to make meanings through a variety of texts may have enabled him to foster and support his own growth in academic writing. This, in turn, may have led to his institutional status as an achiever, although that status may have paradoxically shadowed his full potential as a student. While the "achiever" status reflects the school personnel's perception of Pablo as a "good student," this status may have paradoxically hindered his learning process. In the chapter that follows, I discuss the findings of the study and draw specific conclusions from the data analysis presented above.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I briefly revisit and synthesize what was discussed in the previous chapters. I then discuss the findings of the study, which are divided in two major categories: (1) findings related to Pablo's background in academic literacy, parental involvement in his education, and linguistic and cultural support received from his teachers; and (2) findings related to Pablo's motivation and investment in his own learning. I conclude this chapter—and the study—by drawing on these findings to indicate its implications for further research.

Summation

Many studies have explored the roots of student academic growth and/or failure. This topic is not only educational but political, the center of a debate between policy makers, politicians, and citizens all with diverse ideological standpoints. I provided a detailed review of the many studies that have explored this issue in chapter two, highlighting the major arguments and counter-arguments they articulate. I examined the extent to which students' cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds; teaching practices and school/family partnerships; and students' motivation and investment in their own learning may lead to student academic growth. The review of literature illustrates that the roots of such growth are diverse and multifaceted. Therefore, focusing on to what degree a single resource enabled Pablo's academic growth would have limited the scope of my research, and prevented me from fully capturing interwoven factors.

While all the factors examined play a role in student academic growth, I argue that one can only assess to what extent by observing teacher/student, student/student interactions in classrooms. Specifically, anyone seeking to judge classroom effectiveness must document how teachers engage students in literacy activities, which may or may not lead to academic growth. Moreover, merely assuming that the “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1990) students bring with them to school ensures success is over-simplistic. To confirm the validity of such a statement, one needs to observe and analyze in a classroom context what discourses and knowledge are privileged, validated, embraced, and incorporated in teachers’ lesson plans and teaching practices.

This is not to say that home literacy and apprenticeship in academic discourse does not place one in a far more advantageous academic position than others, as Pablo’s case illustrates. However, this theory needs to be tested and documented through rich ethnographic case studies and other empirical studies. Otherwise, one might question its validity, as “Theories have value only when they can be demonstrated and used in daily practice and when they offer concrete possibilities” (Grant & Sleeter, 2003, p.vii).

As the data analysis of this study revealed, Pablo’s academic progress was mostly made possible due to his literacy background, his previous schooling, and the support he received from his mother. Although Ms. Mirlanda acknowledged, valued, and embraced Pablo’s cultural and linguistic resources, she never gave him detailed and constructive feedback on his writing that would have helped him develop further. Pablo was able to pick up details without feedback and/or explicit discussion and accomplish academic tasks because of his background. Furthermore, his own motivation and investment in his education had a major positive impact on his academic growth.

Generally, students find their comfort zone and do well in school when the resources that they bring with them are recognized and appreciated. As pointed out through the literature reviewed in this study, even in the most segregated and poorly funded schools, teachers have found ways to build on minority students' cultural and communal resources to help them grow academically.

These studies have also demonstrated that there are caring, culturally sensitive, and responsible teachers who reached out to parents so those parents can be involved in the learning process of their children. Pablo's achievement is situated within a similar context. In the next section, I further discuss the findings of this study and go on to make some recommendations for further research. I begin by discussing the findings related to Pablo's literacy background and prior knowledge, and his teacher's teaching practices.

Findings Related to Pablo's Early Apprenticeship in Academic Literacy and Ms. Mirlanda's Teaching Practices

According to Ms. Mirlanda, Pablo was making progress everyday in her class. Pablo's ability to read alone, negotiate and make meanings in English texts suggests that he came to her class with a strong academic literacy background. Ms. Mirlanda emphasized Pablo's academic progress in this interview excerpt:

He's getting better; I mean a lot better. He, uh, he came in pretty strong. He came in pretty strong, and he's getting stronger by the day...He's got some of his basic ski... he brought some of the basic skills that he got from previous year. So, where I tend to focus on the beginning skills of other students, Pablo is already advancing to the next level...Well, his writing is getting better; his journals are getting better, they are making more sense and more organized, they are getting longer; his details are deeper; he's got better details...His, his oral skills are getting better. He's able to speak, uh, more fluently...and with less hesitation...with less mistakes. His reading is getting a lot better. He's able to read; he's able to decipher his points, I mean, he is reading alone [inaudible]

As Ms. Mirlanda noted, Pablo did well in her class in terms of his reading comprehension skills, writing, and speaking skills. One can infer from Ms. Mirlanda's statement that Pablo was apprenticed at home into academic literacy. My field notes, my observation of Pablo in Ms. Mirlanda's class, and textual analysis of Pablo's essays confirmed her evaluation of Pablo's academic progress.

As previously noted, Ms. Mirlanda engaged Pablo in writing and reading activities that were designed to prepare him for standardized tests. To this end, she had her students write journal entries and write five-paragraph essays, the topics of which often emerged from short stories she read in class with her students. These entries and essays gave Pablo extensive writing practices during the three semesters I observed him in Ms. Mirlanda's class. As an example, one of Pablo's notebooks from which I selected the written texts was completely filled with essays, journal entries, and free writing that Pablo produced over the course of one academic year.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that, in addition to Pablo's apprenticeship in academic literacy that prepared him to take on academic tasks such as writing five-paragraph essays, the routine test-driven writing practices and other literacy activities in which Ms. Mirlanda engaged her students allowed Pablo to work on and improve his writing skills over time. As the essays analyzed earlier demonstrated, Pablo drew on the writing features and formulas provided by Ms. Mirlanda to produce texts that were institutionally valued and defined as "good essays." This, among other factors, eventually helped Pablo to be recognized by the institution as "an achiever."

However, at the same time this achiever status may have paradoxically slowed Pablo's growth, because Ms. Mirlanda felt that she did not need to pay as much attention

to him as to his peers during classroom group activities. In fact, Ms. Mirlanda often paired up Pablo with less academically advanced students. Pablo sometimes helped his classmates with classroom assignments, at times voluntarily and other times by Ms. Mirlanda's request. One might wonder whether or not and to what degree helping his classmates with these assignments help Pablo strengthen his own writing, reading, and critical thinking skills. One might also wonder whether or not the skills that he brought with him to Ms. Mirlanda's class and those he might have acquired in her class through extensive test-driven writing practices stagnated while he was in that class, as Ms. Mirlanda did not engage Pablo in any activity different from the ones with which he was helping his classmates.

Hence, a reasonable interpretation of Ms. Mirlanda's evaluation of Pablo's advanced literacy skills in comparison to his peers can be that such an evaluation may have prevented her from seeing the need to pay equal attention to Pablo's continued development. Although Pablo outperformed classmates, he was not engaged in challenging activities that could have strengthened his academic literacy skills. Because Ms. Mirlanda focused on less advanced students, Pablo's full academic potential might have been left unrealized, despite the improvement seen in his writing.

This brings up a troubling conclusion: in the monolingual school system, academic progress is so fundamentally tied to English-language ability that students are intellectually defined by the level of their fluency. Pablo might have accomplished much more in a class where he was pushed more intellectually; instead, he remained in essentially the same 'grade' as other students of his language level, despite his higher achievement and motivation.

Findings Related to Pablo's Investment in his Studies and His Mother's Educational Background

Students' investment in their studies often drives their academic growth. Specifically, students who care more about what they accomplish in school are more motivated to focus on and excel at their academic work than those who do not. This was certainly the case with Pablo, as shown in the analysis of his texts and interviews with him, his mother, and Ms. Mirlanda. Throughout the interviews, Pablo's motivation and investment in his learning was highlighted as a factor enabling him to acquire academic language, which in turn helped him tackle academic tasks. He was noted and honored for his hard work, ranking as second honor three times in the academic year 2007-2008. In addition he received achievement awards and a certificate for academic excellence, and was honored as a young Latino/a leaders by Latino/a Chamber of Commerce.

Clearly, Pablo's acquisition of academic literacy did not happen in a vacuum. As previously noted, Pablo was raised by an educated mother in a home environment that valued learning. Pablo received academic support and moral encouragement from his mother, which inspired and enabled him to do well in school. Such influence fostered Pablo's drive to succeed in school and beyond. Pablo pointed out,

“like, my mother would say “think college now” and when I hear that, I'm always thinking about that...when I hear that “think college now” makes me like think about what I'm doing now so I don't need, I don't need to be embarrassed in the future, so I can be proud of myself when I was a child. When I look back, I gonna be like oh! ...and all the things I did.”

Pablo took seriously and acted on the advice that his mother gave him to do well in school. He wanted to succeed in school because he did not want his mother to be disappointed. As the analysis of the interview conducted with Pablo's mother revealed, his mother believed in him and actively supported him with his academic work. She had

dreams and set high expectations for Pablo, and she made sure that she helped Pablo to meet these expectations. Pablo's mother often checked in on him making sure he did his homework and made herself available to Pablo whenever he needed her. In addition, she decided to take ESL courses, where she forged a strong relationship with many of Pablo's teachers. The relationship that was established between Pablo's mother and his teachers may have had a positive impact on Pablo's learning process.

Pablo's inner drive to succeed, combined with the strong support that he received from his mother, benefited him academically. As the analysis of the interview transcripts and the transcribed classroom events demonstrated, Pablo's academic growth was the end result of various resources made available to him. He took full advantage of these resources to do well in school so that, as he pointed it out, "I don't need to be embarrassed in the future, so I can be proud of myself when I was a child."

Implications for Practice and Further Research

There are several conclusions from Pablo's story that one can draw on to make recommendations for further research. One of these is that the institutional labeling of Pablo as an achiever could have prevented the school personnel from fully exploiting his potential as a student. Pablo may have fit the definition of an achiever by "doing school:" (1) being able to follow and apply in his essays the basic writing genre features that he learned through numerous standardized tests-based classroom writing practices; (2) finding ways to use these writing steps to outperform some of his peers on standardized tests; and (3) by making second honor three times in one single academic year. At the same time, if the institutional achievement status attributed to Pablo is not critically

analyzed, this may prevent school personnel and others from exploring and documenting how his academic growth was realized.

The institutional status of achievement alone is insufficient to help us understand to what degree Pablo drew on available resources to actually develop academically. Pablo evidently demonstrated that he was a very diligent and conscientious student, who was able to regurgitate through some of his essays basic writing features into which he was apprenticed. Pablo further drew on some of these writing features to negotiate and make meanings that were institutionally recognized and valued. He outperformed some peers and pleased Ms. Mirlanda with his accomplishments, but did he learn as much as he was capable of learning?

On a macro level, Pablo's story of achievement should be analyzed in context of the school district's "Culture of Achievement." As noted earlier, according to this culture, "everyone believes and acts in accordance with the belief that all learners can achieve. All actions with students and parents illustrate and confirm commitment to the belief that all learners can achieve. Students learn continually and are surrounded by others-teachers, administrators, and other adults-who are also learning all the time... Creating a community of learners in the Springfield Public Schools will require a dedication to continuous improvement in learning on the part of all students, staff, and parents."

One goal the school district set for all students to reach, and which could indicate whether they are making progress towards a "Culture of Achievement," was that the percentage of LEP/Bilingual students scoring 'advanced' or 'proficient' on the MCAS increase over three years (2005-2008) to the level where 50% will reach proficiency by

2008 (Springfield Public Schools--Mission and Goals <http://sps.springfield.ma.us/webContent/Culture%20Of%20Achievment.DOC>).

Drawing on Pablo's story, it can be argued that the concept "Culture of Achievement" as defined by the school district is limited in that it does not fully capture the learning growth of students, nor does it capture their range of identities and how they can work together. Pablo's progress in academic writing aligned with the school ideology, and the achiever status might have worked at Pablo's advantage in that it enabled him to create for himself a "good student" identity. However, the "achievement status" might have at the same time prevented the school personnel from fully exploring Pablo's potential and sense of creativity in writing. As an example, in an essay that Pablo wrote about his mother, he expressed his desire to buy her a house and a car; this type of creative writing might not have been fully appreciated by Pablo's teachers.

Many studies (Morrell & Ducan-Andrade, 2002; Morrell, 2004; Willett, forthcoming) have demonstrated how one's personal life, stories, desire and dreams can be drawn on to learn about academic literacy. The problem is that few teachers have received rigorous professional development, which would enable them to acquire knowledge in academic literacies and learn methods and strategies which would prepare them to draw on students' resources and what I call their "street literacy" to teach them academic literacy. Researchers (Willett, Austin, Nieto, Gebhard, and Paugh) involved in ACCELA understood how important this is for student academic growth. They, therefore, provided courses that focused on academic literacies and language to pre-service and in-service teachers while supporting them in their efforts to meet the academic needs of their ELL students and reach out to parents living in urban settings. This critical factor may

lead to student academic growth, yet the “culture of achievement” does not seem to take it into account.

Furthermore, the school district’s culture of achievement does not account socio-economic factors that have prevented many students, including some of Pablo’s peers, from achieving in school. Unlike some other immigrant students, Pablo was academically privileged with a highly educated mother who strongly supported and inspired him to strive to succeed in school; he also had an older brother who helped him with homework. Students institutionally labeled as “non-achievers” or “at-risk students” may not have access to these resources. Thus, I recommend that, to fully capture the complexity and dimension of student academic growth, policy makers, the school district personnel, and the school personnel should look more closely at and critically analyze what resources that lead to this growth. I also propose they focus on student academic growth rather than on student academic achievement, as the word ‘achievement’ in itself reveals little about the processes that lead to intellectual growth. Shifting from student academic achievement to student intellectual development might encourage teachers to engage students in activities that foster such development. However, for teachers to find effective ways to involve students in challenging and meaningful activities, they would need to learn how to draw on what matters to their students—that is, to tap into the resources that they bring to school with them.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that Pablo’s story is a kind, which, to some degree, fits into the school district “culture of achievement.” For example, one of the indicators of progress listed in the third goal set by the school district regarding the “Culture of Achievement” is, “All schools will support the academic and character

development targets and improve parental and community support of Step Up Springfield.” In addition, an indicator in the first goal listed by the district is, “LEP/Bilingual students scoring advanced or proficient on the MCAS will increase over the three years (2005-2008) to the level where 50% will reach proficiency by 2008.” (Springfield Public Schools—Mission and Goals, 2007).

Pablo meets some of these basic requirements. First, two of Pablo’s teachers involved in this study attempted to get parents involved in the education of their children. Ms. Rosa and Ms. Mirlanda both reached out to the Latino/a community by attending the same church that some of the parents attended and inviting them to their classrooms to take part into literacy events in which their children were engaged. Second, Pablo was able to work at grade level in reading, writing, and speaking skills two years after he joined the middle school from the Dominican Republic. Third, he was strongly motivated and showed a high desire to succeed in school; fourth, he was supported by his mother and teachers who recognized and valued his cultural and linguistic resources. Finally, because of his, steady and consistent improvement in his academic skills and strong recommendations from his teachers, he made second honor three times in a year and received several awards including one for academic excellence.

However, Pablo’s institutional achievement status must be situated in cultural and situational contexts; analyzed in this way, his example refutes some contributors to his success and tells against the “culture of achievement.” Ms. Rosa, who may have contributed to some degree to Pablo’s academic growth, would be excluded from those teachers that the school district considers prepared to contribute to the “culture of achievement.” Ms. Rosa failed the Massachusetts Test for Educators Licensure (MTEL),

which led to the termination of her teaching position at the middle school that Pablo attended. As a result, her teaching practices, her caring attitude towards her students, her tireless effort to help parents involve in the education of their children, and her strong desire and dedication to help her students succeed in school went unrecognized by the school district. The assumption is that teachers who pass the state certification standardized tests are better prepared to teach than those who do not. As a result, uncertified teachers are not fully appreciated by the district.

Based on what is stated above, I propose that policy makers and the school district reconsider the state mandatory certification rules and procedures of standardized tests. Three considerations prompt this proposal: First, these tests often do not fully capture what many uncertified but competent, dedicated, and caring teachers know. Second, these tests do not reveal the culturally and linguistically relevant classroom literacy practices in which these teachers may engage their students. Finally, these tests do not necessarily help teachers understand what part of their teaching practices they need to improve and/or modify in order to teach their students more effectively.

Therefore, instead of punishing uncertified teachers for failing standardized certification tests, I suggest that the school district allocate more resources to teachers' professional development and offer them continuing education courses through which they should receive genre-based instruction. A course that is genre-based would enable teachers to understand and establish the interconnection between language, content, texts, and contexts. In more specific terms, an understanding of genre would allow teachers to "pull together, language, and contexts, offering them a means of presenting students with explicit and systematic explanations of the ways writing (other content subjects as well,

my emphasis) works to communicate” (Hyland, 2004, p.6). In short, genre-based instruction would show teachers how to make tangible, through instructions and lesson plans, what exactly they want students to learn, while ensuring that their course objectives and content are based on the needs of their students.

Moreover, I recommend that language classes be offered to teachers so they know how to help their students incorporate linguistic features in their texts. Additionally, I propose more resources be allocated to programs designed to support urban teachers in their willingness and efforts in reaching out to students’ families and communities. Family involvement in their children’s school plays a vital role in academic growth. Pablo’s mother is a good example: her involvement in the school that Pablo attended and her relationship with Pablo’s teachers, especially Ms. Mirlanda, enabled her to understand and be informed about what was going at the school. Because of the relationship that she built over time with Ms. Mirlanda, Pablo’s mother was able to check on Pablo’s learning. Ms. Mirlanda in turn got to know Pablo’s mother and had the opportunity to ask her any question that she may have had about Pablo.

Finally, I strongly recommend that policy makers and the school district personnel ground their decisions to terminate or maintain public school teachers on these teachers’ performance, not their certification status. The school district may lose caring and dedicated teachers who simply need rigorous, consistent, and relevant professional development. The district’s goals should be designed to help these teachers figure out more efficient ways to explicitly and systematically teach their students. Indeed, not only uncertified teachers need this rigorous training and professional development; certified teachers can equally benefit from this type of training and professional development.

Specifically, teachers would learn how to develop more explicit and systematic ways to teach writing genre features, which would create strong or stronger writers. Having said this, it is worth noting that engaging students in writing skills activities may be challenging for teachers hard-pressed by the NCLB mandate to impart technical skills aimed at preparing students for standardized tests.

There is another pertinent point to emphasize here, which allows me to argue that the concept “achievement,” as defined by the school district, is problematic. This concept fails to take into account that non-mainstream parents may be unable to provide their children with the same resources that educated and/or monolingual parents can. Therefore, drawing on Pablo’s case, I propose that, to gain a fuller understanding of how certain group of students “achieve” in school, we critically explore to what degree resources such as students’ family background, parental involvement, students’ long apprenticeship in academic discourse, and investment in their learning have enabled them to do so. Equally important, I strongly suggest that we carefully investigate the root causes that have prevented “non-achiever students” from taking advantage of the resources that enabled Pablo’s academic development. In Pablo’s case, his mother’s educational background and her involvement in Pablo’s education, and Pablo’s long apprenticeship in academic literacy, contributed greatly to his academic growth. For students without access to these advantages, what can take their place?

The resources that led to Pablo’s academic growth can be best documented through rich ethnographic case studies; standardized test scores are simply too one-dimensional to assess his intellectual development. If he had been judged merely on his MCAS and Step Up Springfield scores, Pablo would not have been recognized as an

achiever by his school, for his scores did not meet the state standardized test scores benchmark. Furthermore, despite what Pablo achieved at school, perhaps he would not have been recognized as an achiever had he been in at a school with more privileged students. Given this reason and others already mentioned, I recommend that students' "institutional achiever status" be contextually situated and critically analyzed. Doing otherwise may lead, on the one hand, to romanticization of Pablo's story or, on the other, to condemnation of those who fell behind his achievement. Instead, we must critically examine the lack of resources that may have prevented his peers from doing as well as Pablo did.

Conclusion

Student academic growth is a topic of great interest to many educators, parents, teachers, researchers and policy-makers. As discussed at the outset of this study, there have been many heated debates on student academic growth, especially since the enactment of the No Child Left Behind legislation. Although these debates are helpful, a clear articulation of what resources students draw on to develop academically has often been missing. This, among other things, explains the ever-present need to investigate the social, cultural, educational, and the situational contexts in which students either can or can not advance academically. These contexts are often more complex than policy-makers and politicians realize, especially for those who have never been teachers or worked with teachers. For these people, the necessity of rich ethnographic case studies to document student growth might be unclear; many people outside the education world might more easily embrace statistical figures that simply indicate the number of students who reach a certain academic standard.

In doing this ethnographic case study my goal was to explore and document the varied range of resources conducive to Pablo's academic growth. Specifically, I sought to explore to what degree Pablo drew on available resources to develop his academic writing at a poorly funded, under-performing school. Thematic analysis of the data revealed that Pablo drew on many available resources to earn institutional status as an achiever, including his prior schooling and literacy background. Other equally important resources were the support and encouragement he received from his mother and his teachers, and his own motivation and personal investment in his studies. As the analysis of the data suggested, all of these factors positively influenced Pablo's learning process, which, in turn, led to his academic growth. Finally, as emphasized throughout the study, Pablo's academic growth must be analyzed and understood in its own context; failure to do so may lead to the over-generalization of his academic trajectory and diminution of his individual accomplishment.

APPENDIX A

PARENTS/GUARDIANS CONSENT FORM

September 10, 2006

Dear parents/guardians:

My name is Pierre W. Orelus. I am a doctoral student in the Language, Literacy, and Culture program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. In order to fulfill the requirements of my doctoral degree, I will be conducting an ethnographic case study that explores the academic growth of English Language Learners (ELLs). To document this, I will be in part conducting a classroom discourse analysis of teacher/student classroom interactions. I am thus writing this letter to formally ask you for your permission to quote and use what your child (ren) are saying in class and during interviews that I will be conducting with them outside of class for my study.

As part of this research project, I will be collecting data from the classrooms where your students are currently being taught. The classroom data method collection will consist in notetaking, videotaping, and audiotaping of classroom interactions between students and teachers. In addition, I will use sample of students' work and their scores on major standardized tests such as Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System and Step up Springfield.

I believe my research will contribute to better understanding the cultural, linguistic, and academic challenges face ELL students in the U.S. urban schools. ELL students are expected to assimilate into the mainstream classroom discourse and culture, which often clashes with their cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds. It has been argued that such clash sometimes leads to their lack of success in school.

Your authorization to allow your student(s) take part in my research is invaluable. However, you are not obligated to authorize your student(s) to participate in this research, and your students can redraw from it at anytime without prejudice. I will use information gathered during this study for research purposes. I also anticipate using data collected for this study to present scholarly papers at conferences and publish research articles in professional journals.

I would appreciate your consideration to this request.

Sincerely,

Pierre Orelus

Please sign below if you agree with the terms of this letter.

Parents/guardians _____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW WITH PABLO'S MOTHER

Researcher: hace como dos años que empecé a trabajar con tu niñ... tu hijo, Pablo. Y hoy me gustaría preguntarte un poco so...sobre de Pablo. ¿Qué puedes decirme de Pablo, como un estudiante?

[I started working with your son, Pablo, about two years ago. And today I'd like to ask you a little bit about Pablo. What can you tell me about Pablo, as a student?]

Mamá: que es muy aplicado. Hace sus trabajos. Cuando se compromete en algo lo hace. O sea, pone empeño, hace sus trabajos, estudia, pones sus horas para estudiar también.

[that he is very dedicated. He does his work. When he agrees to do something, he does it. I mean, he puts a lot of effort into it, he does his work, studies, sets up his hours to study, too.]

Researcher: ok. entonces, ¿Ayudas a Pablo con su tarea?

[ok. So, do you help Pablo with his homework?]

Mamá: algunas veces.

[sometimes]

R: algunas veces, ¿sí?

[sometimes, yes?]

M: lo ayudo, si lo ayudo. El me dice "mami, ¿me ayudas?" y lo ayudo.

[I help him, yes, I help him. He tells me "mom, can you help me?" and I help him]

R: ok. Y.. a... algunas veces, pero no es como todos los dias.

[ok. And...sometimes, but it is not everyday]

M: no todos los días porque él normalmente sabe como hacer sus clases.

[no, not everyday because he normally knows how to take care of his classes]

R: oh! entonces no necesita mucha ayuda de ti.

[oh! So, he doesn't need much help from you]

M: no

[no]

Researcher: ok, ok. Y...¿tú tienes tiempo para ayudarlo cuando tu puedes? porque hay algunas familias que no tienen tiempo, porque tienen que trabajar muy duro, tienen como dos trabajos, entonces no tienen tiempo para ayudar a sus hijos o hijas. En tu caso, no es...eso no es tu caso.

[ok, ok. And...do you have time to help him? Because there are families that don't have time because they have to work really hard; they have two jobs, therefore, they don't have time to help their sons or daughters. In your case, that is...that is not your case]

Mamá: no, yo saco tiempo para ayudarlo.

[no, I find time to help him]

R: ¿entonces tu no trabajas...tu trabajos no, no, no te prohi, prohi...prohiben? ¿si? de ayudar a Pablo?

[so, you don't work...your work doesn't, doesn't get in the way? Right? To help out Pablo?]

M: no, no me prohíbe.

[no, it doesn't get in the way]

R: y el año pasado, por ejemplo, Ms. Rosa, no éste Ms. Rosa, la otra, invitó a algunas, algunos padres de venir en en su clase como para ayudar a los ...a sus estudiantes. sus estudiantes. Entonces, por ejemplo si Ms. Rosa te invitó de venir a su clase para ayudar a Pablo y otros estudiantes ¿tú piensas que tu puedes hacerlo? ¿tú tendrás tiempo para hacerlo?

[and last year, for example, Ms Rosa, no this one, the other one, invited some parents to come help in class. So, for example, if Ms. Rosa invites you to come to her class to help Pablo and other students, do you think you'd be able to do it? Would you have the time to do it?]

M: si.

[yes]

R: ¿si? ¿te gustaría hacerlo?

[yes? Would you like to do it]

M: claro, si es parte de mi hijo.

[of course, if it is for my son]

R: ¿sí? Si, y...y ¿cómo, cómo fue Pablo antes que se mudó aquí? Porque es de La República Dominicana. ¡Soy haitiano, soy haitiano, como soy tu vecino! Y antes que se mudó aquí ¿cómo, cómo fue como un estudiante?

[yes? Yes, and...and, how, how was Pablo before moving here? Because he is from the Dominican Republic. I'm Haitian, I'm Haitian, I'm your neighbor! And before he moved here, how was he as a student?]

M: también participativo en la escuela donde estaba, también. Buen estudiante, buen comportamiento.

[very involved in his school as well. A good student, good behavior.]

R: umhuu. Y...¿cuál es tú, cuál es tú...ah, opinión de su progreso educaci, educacional?

[umhu. And...what is your, what is your, ah, opinion about his educational progress?]

M: yo lo veo bien. Bueno, de dos años ya maneja bien el dominio del inglés y las clases de aquí también.

[I think he is doing well. Well, in two years, he has leaned English, and he is doing well in his class as well.]

Researcher: ummhuu. ¿Aprendió ingles antes que se mudó aquí?

[umhu. Did he learn English before moving here?]

Mamá: muy poquito.

[very little]

R: muy poquito, muy poquito. Y voy a regresar a la primera pregunta, tú me dijiste que a veces tu, tu ayudas a Pablo, y ¿cuántas veces te pidió para ayudarlo?

[very little, very little. And I'm going back to my first question, you told me that you help Pablo sometimes, and how many times does he ask you to give him a hand?]

M: cuando le ponen algunas tareas, y cuando le ponen algo del di...de...esto de los diccionarios, en español qué significan las palabras. Matemáticas me ha preguntado. En los trabajos también y así, ellos son...

[when they give him certain type of homework, and when they give him something about the dictionary, in Spanish, about the meaning of words. For mathematics, he has asked me for help. With some projects too, and so on...]

R: hmmm...

M: y eso...

[and so on...]

R: entonces no es como, tan difícil para ti, ah, ayudar a Pablo.

[so, it is not too difficult for you to help Pablo]

M: no, yo lo ayudo. Siempre y cuando él quiera, no es trabajo para mi.

[no, I help him. As long as he wants me to, it is not a burden for me.]

R: hmmm. Ok. si, si no te importa, ¿cuál es tú? ...¿cómo se dice? Tu... Si no te importa ¿cuál es tú nivel de educación? ¿Terminaste el colegio en tu país antes que, antes que te mudaste aquí?

[hmm. Ok, if you don't mind, what is your? How do you say that? You...if you don't mind, what is your level of education? Did you finish college in your country before moving here?]

M: profesional hace bastante años.

[professional, for many years now]

R: si? Y , y ¿qué tipo de profesión?

[yes? And what kind of profession?]

M: abogado.

[Lawyer]

R: abo...oh!

[Law...oh!]

M: si, yo soy doctora.

[yes, I have a law degree]

R: entonces tu eres una abogada en tu país antes de que tu llegaste aqui. Entonces tu, tu, tu estas muy ed, eee...educada.

[so, you are a lawyer in you country, even before you moved here. So, you, you are highly educated]

M: si, mas o menos.

[yes, more or less]

R: ¡Por supuesto! Porque si tu estudiaste ahh, si tu estudiaste la ley en tu país, eso significa que tu eres muy educada; porque algunos padres, ah, ah, algunos padres no pueden ayudar a sus ninos, desafortunadamente, porque no, porque su nivel de educacion no esta, no esta tan avanzada, pero en tu caso es diferente ¿Si?

[of course! Because if you studied, aah, if you went to law school in your country, that means that you are highly educated; because some parents, ah, ah, some parents can't help their kids, unfortunately, because their level of education is not very advanced, but your case is different, right?]

M: si

[yes]

R: si, y ¿cuál es tu, ah, sueños? Suenos ¿Sueños? para tu hijo, para Pablo

[yes and, what is your dream for your son, for Pablo]

M: verlo profesional y realizado, ese es mi mayor empeño.

[see him become a professional, that's my biggest dream]

R: ¿puedes..?

[can you?]

M: ser profesional, que sea un hombre de provecho, serio, honesto, educado, trabajador.

[that he becomes a professional, a good man, serious, honest, polite, hard-working]

R: ummhuu.

M; profesional, y la fé cristiana también.

[professional, and of the Christian faith as well]

R: ok. Ah, ¿algunas cosas que te gustarias [sic] contarme de Pablo? Algunas cosas que no, que no, que nunca puedo pensar, imaginar, por ejemplo cosas que son muy, muy ¿cómo se dice? Que son únicas a Pablo que yo no sabo [sic], que yo no sé.

[Ok. Ah, is there anything you would like to tell me about Pablo? Something that I could not think of, or imagine, for example, something that is very, very unique about Pablo that I don't know]

M: que él es muy amoroso conmigo.

[he is very affectionate with me]

R: hmmm, ok, ok...y, y, Pablo cuando regrese a la casa de su, de la escuela cómo, ah, juega con sus, sus amigos?

[hmm, ok, ok...and, when Pablo comes back home from school, does he play with his friends?]

M: si, en la casa si.

[yes, at home he does]

R: ¿afuera de la casa?

[outsider?]

M: ¡no! yo no lo deajo salir para la calle, con su familia, sus primos.

[no! I don't allow him to go out in the streets, he plays with his family, his cousins]

R: ja, ja. ok en la casa, en la casa. ...¿y tu hermano? Ayer tuve una entrevistista [sic] con el hermano de Pablo, tu otro hijo y me contó un poco de Pablo, y me dijo que...¡casi las mismas cosas que tu me dices de de Pablo! Es muy estudioso, y es muy amable, y muy cortéz; yo pienso la misma cosa de él también, porque es muy amable conmigo, y se se siente muy cómodo conmigo, porque hace como casi dos años que trabajo con él. Entonces muchas gracias por tu tiempo y tu ayuda. ¿ok?

[ha, ha, ok, at home, at home...and his brother? Yesterday, I had an interview with Pablo's brother, your other son, and he told me a little bit about Pablo, he said that...almost the same things you've told me about Pablo! That he is very studious, kind, y polite; I think the same about him too because he is very polite with me, and he feels very comfortable around me because it's been almost two years since I started working with him. Well, thank you very much for your time and your help. Ok?]

M: a la orden ¡gracias a ti...!

[you're welcome, thank you!]

R: ¡chao!

[bye!]

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW WITH PABLO

Researcher: Pablo, I have been working with you for the past 3 years, remember? when you first came here from the Dominican Republic?

Jimmy: yeap.

R: you were in Mrs. Rosa's class.

J: yeap.

R: I've seen how you have progressed over time; so, uhmm, last semester and this semester you made it to the honor roll. Can you tell me who really inspires you to work so hard to make it to the honor roll?

J: ummm...I don't really get help now because I know now better English. I do almost everything myself; my mom helps me a little, my brother...no, maybe. yeah (laughs)

R: umhu.

J: and we...I do it because, I want to make my mom happy...

R: you want to do what?

J: make my mom happy and...

R: oh, you want to make your mom happy.

J: and to get better grades so when I go to other schools, they will accept me because I get good grades not because...you know.

R: umhu.

J: so, I just do my thing...

R: oh! you just do your thing?

J: yeah!

R: so, why do you wanna make your mom happy? Tell me.

J: yeah, I don't wanna make her mad.

R: aha, aha.

J: but, I like when she's happy, so she gives... she gives me things because I get good grades, so that's good for me...

R: aha, aha.

J: so, like that.

R: so, if you do not get good grades, she's unhappy? you make her mad? Is that what you're saying?

J: not maaad, but she would like, like uumm...not talk to me for a little while; she, you know. No, but she is...she isn't like...nothing, nothing like that. But she, she does that sometimes if I get an "f" which I won't because I don't, but...yeah.

R: aha, aha. Ok, tell me what really drives you, what really makes you wanna work so hard to... to do well in school.

J: ummm...to get a good job in the future, you know...

R: in the future...

J: yeah, to get a good job.

R: ummhu.

J: like, my mother would say...my teachers, my math teacher here would say "think college now".

R: umhu.

J: and when I hear that, I'm always thinking about that.

R: what, what do they say? Think college?

J: think college now.

R: think college now, ok.

J: so, when I hear that "think college now" makes me like think about what I'm doing now so I don't need... I don't need to be embarrassed in the future.

R: ok, so you're trying hard so you won't be embarrassed in the future.

J: so I can be proud of myself when I was a child.

R: oh! ok. oh, I see, you want to be proud of yourself when you were child, so looking back.

J: yeah, when I look back, I gonna be like “oh [inaudible] ...and all the things I did”.

R: ok, ok, tell me how your mom influences you? influences your education?

J: she always tells me like, ah, “did you do your homework?” she always knows if I’m lying or not. She’s like “go do your homework!”

R: aha.

J: I always do, you know, she always tells me if she doesn’t think so she says “bring me the book bag” ...she, everything, she checks if I did it, you know, like that. But...

R: so, she always check if you did your homework.

J: yeah.

R: ok.

J: but she doesn’t do it lot now because she knows that I get good grades so...

R: umhu. So now, tell me a little bit about the honor roll...you just made it to the honor roll...

J: yeah.

R: ummm, again, because last semester you made it to the honor roll. How do you feel about that?

J: ummm, good, good, good. I, my teacher always say “you can even throw away honors, but you can’t throw away the assets that you got because that’s the only thing you don’t know...”

R: umhu.

J: ...because those things you already pass it, so you already know. You can get like “A” in a test, and you can like grab it and throw it in the trash, and get an “F” and make a study of what I did wrong.

APPENDIX D

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Student's Name:

Today's date:

My name is Pierre W. Orelus. I am a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. I am currently doing an ethnographic case study that focuses on the academic growth of English language learners (ELLs). This questionnaire is intended to help me understand what and who has contributed to your academic growth. I would appreciate your taking some time to respond to the questions below. However, you have the right to refuse to do so without prejudice. If you choose to answer these questions, please do so as truthfully as you possibly can. This questionnaire will be strictly confidential; no information given will be shared to anyone else.

1. What role do your family and community play in your academic growth? In other words, please would you explain in detail how your mother, siblings (brothers, sisters) relatives (uncles, aunts, cousins etc) and your community (neighbors, friends of your family, people at your church) might have contributed to your academic growth?
2. How do you feel your teachers have contributed to your academic growth?
3. What resources (support from your family, your community, your teachers and your school) were made available to you? How did you use these resources to grow academically?
4. According to your mother, you did not speak much English before you came to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic. How did you manage to grow academically within a short period of time (two years) despite the linguistic and cultural challenges you faced in school?
5. Do you think your academic background from the Dominican Republic might have helped you succeed academically here?

Thanks for your help and your time.

APPENDIX E

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Teacher's Name:

Today's date:

My name is Pierre W. Orelus. I am a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. I am currently conducting an ethnographic case that focuses on the academic growth of English language learners (ELLs). This questionnaire is aimed to help me find out to what degree your teaching practices may have contributed to Pablo's academic growth. I would appreciate your taking some time to respond to the questions below. However, you have the right to refuse to do so without prejudice. If you choose to answer these questions, please do so as truthfully as you possibly can. This questionnaire will be strictly confidential; no information given will be shared to anyone else.

1. What classroom activities in which you engage Pablo might have contributed to his academic growth?
2. Are there any other things you have done for him, or said to him, which you think might have motivated him to work hard and succeed in school?
3. How often do you communicate with his parents? And how do you do so?
4. Do his parents know how he is doing in your class? In other words, what do you do to make sure his parents are involved in his education?

Thanks for your help and your time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ACCELA Program on www at <http://www.umass.edu/accela/Program.html>. Accessed 09.05. 2005, 2006.
- Anyon, J. Social Class and School Knowledge. Curriculum Inquiry Vol. 11, No. 1: 3-42. (1981).
- Apple, M.W. Conservative Agendas and Progressive Possibilities: Understanding the Wider Politics of Curriculum and Teaching. Education and Urban Society, 23(3), 279-291, (1991).
- _____. Cultural Politics and Education. New York: Teachers College Press, 1996.
- _____. The State and the Politics of Knowledge. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Auerbach, E.R. Which Way for Family Literacy: Intervention or Empowerment?. In "L. Morrow (Ed.), Family literacy: Connections in School and Community" (pp.11-28). Newark, NJ: IRA 1995.
- Bakhtin, M.M. The Dialogic Imagination. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.
- Bernstein, B. Class, Codes and Control. Vol 3: Towards a Theory of Educational Transmission, 2d ed. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.
- _____. Class, Codes and Control Vol 4: The Structuring Of Pedagogic Discourse. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990.
- Bloom, A. The Closing of the American Mind. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987.
- Bloome et al. Discourse Analysis And The Study Of Classroom Language And Literacy Events: A Microethnographic Perspectives. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005.
- Bloome, D. & Willett, J. Toward a Micropolitics of Classroom Interaction. In "Calkins, L., Montgomery, K., & Santman, D. (1998). A Teacher's Guide to Standardized Reading Tests: Knowledge is Power". Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996.
- Bloome, D. Reading as a Social Process in a Middle School Classroom. In "Bloome (Ed.), Literacy and Schooling" (pp.123-199). Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1993.
- Bogdan, R.C. & Bilken, S.K. Qualitative Research for Education. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Beacon, 1992.
- Bourdieu, P. The Logic of Practice (R. Nice, Trans). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990.

- Bowles, S. and Gintis, H. Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life. New York: Basic Books, 1976.
- Cazden, C. Classroom Discourse: The Language of Teaching and Learning. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1988.
- Celia Zentella, A. Growing Up Bilingual: Puerto Rican Children in New York. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999.
- Chouliaraki, L and Fairclough, N. Discourse in Late Modernity. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.
- Christie, F. Learning The Literacies of Primary and Secondary Schooling. In "F. Christie & R. Misson (Eds), Literacy and Schooling" (pp.47-73). London: Routledge, 1998.
- _____. Classroom Discourse Analysis: A Functional Perspective. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Cochran-Smith, M. Uncertain Allies: Understanding The Boundaries of Race and Teaching. Harvard Educational Review, 65 (4), 541-570, (1995).
- Collier, V. Promoting Academic Success for ESL Students: Understanding Second Language Acquisition at School. Elizabeth, NJ: New Jersey Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages-Bilingual Educators, 1995.
- Cope, B., and Kalantzis, M. The Powers of Literacy: A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing. Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 1993.
- Crime Statistics and Data Resources. Available at www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm, (2006).
- Cummins, J. Empowering Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention. Harvard Educational Review, 56, 18-36, (1986).
- _____. Empowering Minority Students. Sacramento, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education, 1988.
- _____. Language, Power, and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire. Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2000.
- Cummins, J., Brown, K., & Sayers, D. Literacy, Technology, and Diversity. Pearson: Boston, MA, 2007.

- Darder, A. Buscando America: The Contribution of Critical Latino Educators to the Academic Development and Empowerment of Latino Students in the U.S. In "C. Sleeter & P. McLaren (Eds.), Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy And The Politics of Difference". New York: State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. Involving Latino Families in Schools: Raising Student Achievement through Home-School Partnerships. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Corwin Press, 2004.
- Delpit, L. The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children. Harvard Educational Review, 1988.
- _____. Education in a Multicultural Society: Our Future's Greatest Challenge. Journal of Negro Education, 61, 237-249, (1992).
- Denzin, N. The Research Act. Englewood Cliffs: NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984.
- Dewey, John. Democracy and Education. New York: Free Press, 1916.
- Diaz Soto, L. Language, Culture, and Power: Bilingual Families and the Struggle for Quality Education. New York: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Dyson, A.H. Social Worlds of Children Learning to Write in an Urban Primary School. New York; teachers College Press, 1993.
- Eggs, S. An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics. Continuum Publishers. New York, New York, 2003.
- Fairclough, N. Critical Discourse Analysis; The Critical Study of Language. London and New York; Longman, 1995.
- _____. Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis For Social Research. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Flores-Gonzalez, N. The Structuring of Extracurricular Opportunities and Latino Student Retention. Journal of Poverty 4, nos. 1 and 2: 80-108, (2000).
- Freeman, Y. S., & Freeman, D.S. Closing the Achievement Gap: How to Reach Limited-Formal-Scholing and Long-Term English Learners. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.
- Freire, P. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Seabury Press, 1970.
- Freire, P. & Macedo, D. Literacy: Reading the World and the World. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1987.

- Gandara, P. Over the Ivy Walls: The Educational Mobility of Low-Income Chicanos. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Gebhard, M. Debates in SLA: Redefining SLA as an Institutional Phenomenon. TESOL Quarterly, 33, 544-557, (1999).
- Gebhard, M., Harman, R., & Seger, W. Reclaiming Recess in Urban Schools: The Potential of Systemic Functional Linguistics for Ells and Their Teachers. Language Arts, 84(5), 419-430, (2007).
- Gee, J. P. Critical Literacy as Critical Discourse Analysis. In "Critical Perspectives on Literacy: Possibilities and Practices" (pp.2-16). 46th Annual Convention of the International Reading Association, 2001.
- Geertz, C. The interpretation of Cultures. New York: Random House, 1973.
- Giroux, H. Literacy and the Pedagogy of Voice and Political Empowerment. Educational Theory 38 (Winter): 61-75, (1988).
- Gutierrez, K. A Comparison of Instructional Contexts in Writing: Process Classrooms With Latino Children. Education & Urban Society, 24, 244-252, (1995).
- Halliday, M.A.K. An introduction to Functional Grammar. 2nd Edition, London: Edward Arnold, 1994.
- Halliday, M.A.K. & Hasan, R. Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective (2nd Ed). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Harre, R. & Langenhove, L. Positioning Theory. Blackwell Publishers. Malden, Massachusetts, 1999.
- Hasan, R. Ways of Saying: Ways of Meaning. London: Cassell, 1996.
- Heath, S.B. Ways with Words: Language, Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Henderson, A.T. Parents are a School's Best Friends. Phi Delta Kappan. October, 148-153, (1988).
- Heubert, J.P. High-Stakes Testing Opportunities and Risks for Students of Color, English-Language Learners, And Students With Disabilities. New York: National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum, 2000.
- Heubert, J.P. & Hauser, R. (Eds.). High-Stakes: Testing for Tracking, Promotion, and Graduation. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1999.

- Hidalgo, N., Bright, J.J., Siu, S., Swap, S., & Epstein, J. Research on Families, Schools, and Communities: A Multicultural Perspective. In "J. Bank (Ed.), Handbook of Research on Multi-Cultural Education" (pp. 499-529). New York: Macmillan, 1995.
- Hirsch Jr, E.D. Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know. New York: Vintage, 1987.
- Hyland, Ken Genre and Second Language Writing. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2004.
- Irvine, J.J. Black Students and School Failure: Policies, Practices, And Prescriptions. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.
- Knapp, P., & Watkins, M. Genre, Text, Grammar: Technologies for Teaching and Assessing Writing. Australia: UNSW Press, 2005.
- Koretz, D., Linn, R.L., Dunbar, S.B., & Shepard, L. The Effects of High Stakes Testing on Achievement: Preliminary Findings About Generalization Across Tests. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 1991.
- Kozol, J. Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools. New York: Harper Perennial, 1991.
- Kupertz, M., (Ed). ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 1997.
- Ladson-Billings, G. Toward A Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. American Educational Research Journal, 32 (3), 465-491, 1995.
- LeCompte, M., & Goetze, J. Problems of Reliability and Validity in Ethnographic Research. Review of Educational Research, 52(1), 31-60, (1982).
- LeCourt, D. Identity Matters: Schooling the Student Body in Academic Discourse. New York: SUNY, 2004.
- Linn, R.L. Rethinking the No Child Left Behind Act Accountability System. Retrieved April 23, 2005, from www.cep-dc.org/pubs/Forum28July2004, 2004.
- Lipman, P. Chicago School Policy at Ground Level: Implications for Equity and Agency in the New Urban Economy. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American anthropology association, San Francisco, CA, November 2000.

- . Bush's Education Plan, Globalization, and the Politics Of Race. Cultural logic, 4, 1. Retrieved November 16, 2001 from <http://eserver.org/clogic/41/41.html>, 2001.
- . High Stakes Education: Inequality, Globalization, and Urban School Reform. Routledge: New York, 2004.
- Losey, K. Mexican American Students and Classroom Interaction: An Overview and Critique. Review of Educational Research, 65(3), 283-318, 1995.
- Malinowski, B., [1923]. The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages. Supplement I, by C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards. In "C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards (eds).The Meaning of Meaning" 294-334. Eighth Edition. New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1946.
- Moll, L. Some Key Issues in Teaching Latino Students. Language Arts, 65 (5), 465-472, 1988.
- Morrell, E., & Duncan-Andrade, J. Toward a Critical Classroom Discourse: Promoting Academic Literacy through Engaging Hip-hop Culture with Urban Youth. English Journal, 91, 6, 88-94, 2002.
- . What Youth Do Learn in School: Using Hip Hop as a Bridge to Canonical Poetry. In "J. Mahiri (Ed.), What They Don't Learn in School: Literacy in the Lives of Urban Youth". New York: Peter Lang, 247-268, (2004).
- Myers, J.W. Involving Parents in Middle Level Education. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association, 1985.
- National Center for Education Statistics. The Condition of Education. Available at nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2000/section1/indicator06.asp, 2000.
- Neil, M., Guisbond, L., & Schaeffer, B., with Madden, J., & Legeros, L. Failing Our Children: How "No Child Left Behind" Undermines Quality and Equity in Education. Cambridge, MA: Fairtest: The National Center for Fair & Open Testing, 2004.
- Nieto, S. Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education. New York: Longman, 2004.
- Noddings, N. The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education. New York: Teachers College Press, 1992.
- Olsen, L., & Mullen, N.A. Embracing Diversity: Teachers' Voices from California Classrooms. San Francisco: California Tomorrow Immigrant Students Project, 1990.

- Paratore, J. Parent and Children Sharing Literacy. In "D. Lancey (Ed.), *Children's Emergent Literacy: From Research To Practice*" (pp. 193-217). Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994.
- _____. Building on Family Literacies: Examining The Past and the Future. In "de Bruin-Parecki & B. Krol-Sinclair (Eds.), *Family Literacy from Theory to Practice*" (pp.8-27). Newark, DE, International Reading Association, 2003.
- Pease-Alvarez, L., Scheter, S. R. Learning, Teaching, and Community. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers, 2005.
- Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R.G. Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001.
- Ramanathan, V. The English-Vernacular Divide-Postcolonial Language Politics and Practice. Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2005.
- Republican, The. Local News paper, Springfield, MA, A7 Vol # 4, February 6, 2007.
- Rich, D. Teachers and Parents: An Adult-to Adult Approach. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association Professional Library, 1987.
- Rodriguez-Brown, F. Family Literacy in English Language Learning Communities: Issues Related to Program Development, Implementation and Practice. In "A. de Bruin-Parecki & B. Kroll-Sinclair (Eds.), *Family Literacy from Theory to Practice*" (pp.126-136). Newark, DE: IRA, 2003.
- Rogers, R. A Critical Discourse Analysis of Family Literacy Practices: Power In and Out Print. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002.
- Schleppegrell, J.M. The Language of Schooling: A Functional Linguistics Perspective. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004.
- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. Narrative, Literacy and Face in Interethnic Communication. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1981.
- Sleeter, C.E. Un-Standardizing Curriculum: Multicultural Teaching in the Standardized-Based Classroom. Routledge: New York, 2005.
- Sleeter, C.E., & Grant, C.A. An Analysis of Multicultural Education in The United States. In "Harvard Educational Review. Noddings, N. (1992). *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*". New York: Teachers College Press, 1987.
- Spradley, J.P. Participant Observation. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980.

- Stake, R.E. The Art of Case Study Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995.
- Thompson, G. Introducing Functional Grammar. London: Arnold, 1996.
- Vygotsky, L. Mind in Society. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Willet, J., Rosenberger, C. Critical Dialogue: Transforming the Discourses of Educational Reform. Learning, Teaching and Community. 191-213, (2005).
- Willett, J., Solsken, J., & Wilson-Keenan, J.A. The (Im)Possibilities of Constructing Multicultural Language Practices in Research and Pedagogy. Linguistics and Education, 10 (2), 165-218, (1998).
- Young, L. & Fitzgerald, B. The Power Of Language: How Discourse Influences Society. London: Equinox, 2006.
- Zamel, V., & Spack, R. Negotiating Academic Literacies: Teaching and Learning Across Languages and Cultures. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1998.
- Zentella, A.C. Growing Up Bilingual: Puerto Rican Children in New York. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997.
- Zou, Y & Trueba, T.E. Ethnic Identity and Power: Cultural Contexts of Political Action in School and Society. State University of New York Press. Mahwah: New Jersey, 1998.

7453-29



