

EXPLORING BILINGUAL-BILITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN EVERYDAY PRACTICES

Exploring Bilingual-Biliteracy Development in Everyday Practices: A Case Study of a  
Young Unschooled Child in Colombia

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Master's Program in Applied Linguistics in the Teaching of English as a  
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## EXPLORING BILINGUAL-BILITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN EVERYDAY PRACTICES

### **Abstract**

This study explored the early years (3 to 4) of bilingual and biliteracy development of an unschooled child in Colombia. With the view to contribute to the increasing number of studies in bilingualism and biliteracy and fill the gap in early dual language and literacy research out of the school context in Colombia, I examined how bilingual and biliteracy skills of a child growing up bilingual unfold in her everyday practices within an unschooled environment. Since the child in this longitudinal case study is my child, as a mother and teacher-researcher, I had the opportunity to be present across several social situations and document through video, recordings, and a diary factors and events as they occurred and a detailed picture of the process. Findings may lead to parents and early childhood educators to questioning and reflect upon the conventional language and literacy practices and engage children to participate in literacy events beyond what they usually do in the classroom, as well as raise awareness in the importance of legitimizing practices of learning out of the school structure, in everyday life.

## Preface

As a bilingual person who has positive emotional attachments with the English language, and as an English teacher who disagrees with the way bilingual education is defined and addressed in Colombia, I decided to raise my child bilingual since birth and unschooled her. Since my daughter was born, my husband and I have mostly communicated with her in our second language, English. We implemented the One language -One community model, in which both parents speak the minority language at home, and the child acquires the dominant language from the community (Rezzagil, 2010).

The decision to raise my daughter bilingual was never taken under globalized monetary purposes as the ones that are generally presented worldwide. Instead, a personal and professional motive lead me to do so. The first and most relevant reason is that, although numerous people are likely to express their emotions better in their mother tongue, this is not my case; as a bilingual person, I have always felt like living in two different emotional worlds. I am a more sociable, humorous person who expresses emotions easily in her second language rather than in the first language acquired. Therefore, in order to establish a stronger affective bond with my daughter, I decided, before she was born, to interact with her through my language of emotion.

The second reason was at a professional level; I am an English teacher who disagrees with how the ministry of education has tried to enhance bilingualism in public schools, with the implementation of different national bilingualism plans that have been strongly criticized by Colombian teachers and scholars. The formers have claimed a notorious misconception of the concept of bilingualism, in which the term is address as two isolated linguistic codes ignoring the socio-cultural domains it involves (Vargas, Tejada, & Colmenares, 2008), emphasizing only to Spanish -English language as bilingualism, disregarding a variety of indigenous languages

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spoken in Colombia and mainly defined a mere source of economic empowerment and not as an opportunity to appreciate, tolerate and respect linguistic socio-cultural diversity (Quintero, 2009; de Mejia 2006, 2011).

Having clarified the reasons behind this life project that served as an engine to start this research, I proceed to present the motivation behind the study in which I mention the guiding question and the objectives of this research I conducted with my daughter growing up bilingual, in Colombia—documenting her English Spanish- bilingual-biliteracy skills development process embedded in her everyday practices.



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## Chapter 1. Introduction

This study emerges from particular issues related to bilingualism and biliteracy, which I have encountered in my experience as a mother raising a child bilingual and as an English educator in Colombia. Since my daughter was born, I have been repeatedly asked mainly two questions in different social situations and places; "*¿ Ella es Bilingüe?—is she bilingual ?*" "*¿ Como aprendió inglés su hija siendo tan pequeña? ---How did your daughter learn to speak English at a young age?*"

Similarly, when trying to answer those in a precise way, the most continuously stated replays were the following :

*"Can she read in both languages? because a bilingual is the one who perfectly masters two languages."*

*"The child is going to get confused with the two languages."*

*"The child is going to mix the two languages."*

*"The child is not going to learn Spanish"*

*"Real bilingualism" is only possible at private schools."*

*"Bilingualism is not necessary for Colombia because we all speak Spanish."*

*"You think you are "gringa"?"*

*"Speaking in English is show off."*

After experiencing those everyday conversations focusing on the same topic, I perceived that several fellow citizens firmly believe the myths and misconceptions surrounding bilingualism (Guerrero, 2008). Under the certainty that languages are bound to territories and nationalities, for some people, it was nonsense that I spoke English to my daughter in a country where the official language is Spanish. People also have the belief that only a person who is fully

competent and native "speaker-like" in two languages has the right to be called genuinely bilingual (Bloomfield, 1933). In fact, several people I have interacted with along the course of my career, speaking two languages, do not refer to themselves as bilinguals. On the contrary, they have in mind they are deficient monolingual in both English Spanish languages because they have different competencies in both of them. Unfortunately, this is an attitude that has also been assumed by a large number of bilinguals that accepted this language ideology and a limited notion of bilingualism that still prevails (Kramsch, 2014). Therefore, when I answered the first question positively, they consequently ask if she masters the two languages perfectly because they consider that only with those attributes people are allowed to refer to themselves self as bilinguals.

Likewise, during the last four years, acquaintances, extended family, and unknown people have frequently asked me the second question: "How did your daughter learn to speak English at a young age?" and although it was easier to manage than the first one, in order to avoid going into technical detail due to time and place factors, I responded with the famous phrase that says: "well, kids learn like sponges." However, these became echo questions in my head, directing me to look into the topic further.

Concerning the professional environment, teaching to young learners for several years served and encouraged me to reflect upon the traditional and questionable beliefs of bilingualism and literacy, which some parents and educators still conceived as the only way of learning. Like many other English language teachers in Colombia, I was taught the traditional views of language and literacy, disregarding the importance of the socio-cultural notions and the influence of parents and the home backgrounds on emergent literacy. However, my experience as an English teacher with young learners allowed me to note several opportunities in the way children

develop their understanding of language and literacy. I had to unlearn many outdated theoretical concepts and reflected upon this common assumption that some parents and educators still make on literacy; as a process that begins at school, in the classroom, and through teachers.

I came across various occasions in which parents and colleagues expressed their concern for their little ones when they were not able to read out loud printed texts in their first and foreign language, ignoring the connection among their role as parents, the home literacy environment, and the fact that young children can read and understand their world before starting formal, school just as previous research with monolingual children has shown that children can read and make meaning from print before they attend to school (Ferreiro y Teberosky, 1982; Goodman, 1990; Whitmore et al., 2004). Those events were clear evidence that this traditional view of literacy still prevails and that it constitutes a weak factor that hinders young learners' literacy development in and out of school contexts.

Moreover, research on bilingualism and biliteracy in the early years has been mainly carried out in North America and Europe. Diverse, multicultural background in which participants tend to belong to cross-cultural families whose primary purpose is to transmit, maintain, and support their heritage language to subsequent generations (Hornberger, 2004; Gillanders & Jiménez, 2004; Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Volk & DeAcosta, 2001; Reyes 2012; Song, 2016; Reyes *et al.*, 2016, Duran, 2018; García et al., 2017; Nuñez, 2019).

In the Colombian context, formal exploration of the interplay between bilingualism and emergent biliteracy in the home context is limited. Although Colombia is a predominantly Spanish speaking country and differs from the North American context in which economically advantageous languages are spoken, it is considered a linguistic and diverse territory (Constenla,

1991), with around 68 indigenous American languages, a variety of Afro-Colombian creole languages, and Romani language (Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia, 2010).

However, local research on bilingualism is generally focused on educational policies, claiming several problematic issues as the fact that indigenous languages are disregarded in national bilingual plans (Guerrero, 2008), and only socially respected languages such as Spanish, English, and French are included, showing how the Colombia ministry of education conceives bilingualism as a mere source of economic empowerment and set aside the linguistic socio-cultural diversity of the concept (Quintero, 2009; de Mejía, 2006).

Similarly, most of the studies on English Spanish Bilingualism and literacy in Colombia have been carried out within the school setting at the level of preschool and elementary years (Rodriguez, 2007; Onatra, 2010; Porras, 2010). However, those researches do not examine in depth the process of bilingualism and biliteracy at home before formal school.

Thus, and considering that language and literacy are a lifelong process nurtured and shaped by meaningful social experiences that generally first take place at home and without formal instruction (Vygotsky, 1978, Ferreiro y Teberosky, 1983, Goodman, 1986, Teale & Sulzby, 1986, Justice, 2006, Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998), and given the relevance of the early years' development, the home literacy environment, and parental role in early childhood language and literacy development, this study explore the early years (3 to 4) of bilingual and biliteracy development of a child ( my daughter) growing up as a simultaneous bilingual in Colombia, within an unschooled environment with the aim to contribute to the increasing number of studies in the field of bilingualism and biliteracy and to contribute to the scarce studies on early bilingualism, and biliteracy in Colombia by studying and describing how



everyday activities, home literacy practices affect a preschool-age child rise bilingual since birth in Colombia.

This research also challenges popular beliefs and misconceptions that surround bilingualism in Colombia and demonstrate that bilingualism and biliteracy are possible to achieve out of the school context, under specific circumstances, even if the minority language spoken at home is the second language of the family in a country where there is a little milieu of it. Additionally, this study also may provide new insights to those teachers who do not recognize different versions of dual language and literacy learning out of the school environment and therefore believe that children learn little about language and literacy in the home context and will learn all they need to know at school in the classroom, as well as parents that as first, educators are in charge of fostering their children's language and emergent literacy abilities through an active and caring parent-child interaction, affording a productive home literacy environment to guarantee their children positive formal literacy achievement (Wasik & Hendrickson, 2004).

The events and facts mentioned above guided me to develop the research question and objectives of this study, as well as to explore my daughter bilingual and biliteracy skills, framed under a holistic perspective of five crucial concepts; A dynamic view of bilingualism (García, 2009), socio-cultural view of literacy and biliteracy, social semiotic theory and multimodality (Kress, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2009), and unschooling as everyday learning.

### **1.1 Research Question**

How does an unschooled preschool-age child develop English Spanish bilingual, and biliteracy skills in her everyday activities?

## 1.2 Objectives

- Examine the bilingual and biliteracy learning process of an unschooled preschooler Colombian child in her everyday practices.
- Identify the main sources a Colombian family implements at home to reinforce their child's bilingualism and biliteracy learning.

## Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

The process of exploring my daughter's early biliteracy course allowed me to understand better that literacy cannot be separated from the social context factors that shape a child's bilingual and biliteracy development. Therefore, In order to appreciate the complexity of the bilingual and biliteracy development process in a young child, this research was framed under socio-cultural notions, which comprise such concepts as a Vygotskian overview of young children development, A dynamic view of bilingualism (Garcia,2009), emergent biliteracy and social semiotic theory, and multimodality (Kress, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2009), unschooling as everyday learning opportunities.

### 2.1 A Brief Overview Of The Vygotskian Perspective On Children Development

Taking as a point of departure Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory in which he postulated that children learn from social interaction as active members in their own learning and development, a glance at the principles of mediation, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and Bruner's notions of scaffolding provide an understanding of the process of early learners development.

## **2.2 Mediation**

Mediation is defined as a process of "exchange and interchange" of knowledge and socio-cultural patterns that society provides to its members. It modifies impulsive and natural behavior into a complex mental process through the use of tools like language, objects, technologies, strategies, and rituals in association with others (Minick, 1987). In Vygotsky view, children actively construct their understanding as a result of their experiences, and the social settings in which learning occurs are as significant as any specific activity in which the child gets involved. Vygotsky also states that interactions between the child and more advanced members of his social group provide him cultural tools that he apprehends as their own to represent his ideas or behaviors and become an effective member of society. Moreover, these tools enable the child to mediate his encounters with the world-to-be-learned-about and make sense of his world through participating in the cultural life of the community, giving way to learning and development as the child relation with others and with the self-mediated by cultural tools in which the child understands the world interacting with others (Vygotsky, 1981). At the core of Vygotsky's theory in support, instruction is the notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

## **2.3 The Zone of Proximal Development**

This concept explains the potential and actual development of a child. Potential development refers to those actions the child is unable to achieve unaided but would be able to accomplish with the guidance of an adult (Mossler, 2014). On the other hand, actual development denotes the activities or skills that the child is able to do by himself.

The ZPD concept is vital in the sense that based on Vygotsky's theory that learning precedes and leads the development, we parents and teachers can infer that good teaching

conduct to good learning strengthening the development process. Moreover, it is also a guide in their effort to comprehend the internal and external processes of children's development.

Withing, the ZPD Vygotsky explains how interaction in the instruction process supports development, presenting two concepts: scientific concepts that merge from instruction like studying a language at school and spontaneous concepts that evolve from everyday experiences such as using language (Vygotsky, 1986). The scientific concepts then

cannot be achieved without the everyday concepts because there is an interrelationship between the concepts that allow the children to be aware of their everyday practice his scientific concepts in practice, hence reshaping their everyday practice.

Vygotsky (1996) also provides examples of the ZPD introducing his notions of play within the context of everyday and scientific concept formation. He defined play as " a novel form of behavior in which the child is liberated from situational constraints through his activity in an imaginary situation" (p. 11), which provides a conceptual scientific space of informal relations between everyday and specific concept construction that affords a mean for a child to act more maturely than in other activities and defined play as follows:

In play the child is always behaving beyond his age, above his usual everyday behavior; in play he is, as it were, a head above himself. Play contains in a concentrated form, as in the focus of a magnifying glass, all developmental tendencies; it is as if the child tries to jump above his usual level. The relation of play to development should be compared to the relation between instruction and development... Play is a source of development and creates the zone of proximal development. (Vygotsky, 1967, p. 16)

In summary, ZPD granted a creative activity (Newman & Holzman, 1993) that allows children to enhance and rehearse skills and to support and learn from each other, child and adult,

or more competent peers., Close to Vygotsky's view of the zone of proximal development is the concept of scaffolding that involves structured interaction between an adult and a child with the objective of helping the child accomplish a specific goal, and therefore the terms are generally addressed interchangeably.

## **2.4 Scaffolding**

Bruner, as well as Vygotsky, focused on the social nature of learning, emphasizing that adults should help a child develop abilities through the process of scaffolding. He defined the term as "the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some task so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill she is in the process of acquiring" (Bruner, 1978, p. 19). He coined the term to describe young children's oral language acquisition assisted by their parents when they start learning to speak and how young children are provided with familiar instructional formats facilitating their learning. In Vygotsky's view, educators help children to co-construct knowledge within their zone of proximal development, using effective practices that support performance, such as scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976 ). Similarly, Gordon Wells's scaffolding refers to scaffolding as "a way of operationalizing Vygotsky's (1987) concept of working in the zone of proximal development" (p. 127). Although other authors referred to scaffolding as narrowed in comparison to the definition of the ZPD, because scaffolding addresses teaching performance as a unidirectional communication process and ZPD holds a bidirectional course of negotiation Lave and Wenger (1991) in Daniels (2001), scaffolding is considered a socio cultural-educational essential function to approach early childhood education (Wood & Attfield, 2005), suitable for identifying support methods not only teachers but also parents employ to develop children's understanding of specific phenomena.

When relating the scaffolding term to early bilinguals, it also plays a crucial role supporting the child to produce complete and complex sentences that he might struggle to do independently. Scaffolding then not only helps the child understand and perform the language used at home and in the broader community but also enables him to work toward producing his own dual oral and written language repertoire and consequently participate more fully as members of a community (Gibbons, 2006).

Similarly, research has also shown that adults can create opportunities to develop children's language through scaffolding, facilitating opportunities to support and guide the children to explore new ideas. Hence, I found this concept valuable and accurate for this research because as well as many other parents and educators, I implemented several strategies during everyday routines, especially when playing with Emi, such as defining words, asking her questions related to the game, circling back to talk about her ideas, putting words onto her actions to help her to describe them in both of her languages. Those interactions during daily activities provided Emi with lexical information that promoted her phonemic awareness, vocabulary and helped her build conceptual knowledge and language. To further this subject, I address the concept of dynamic bilingualism, emphasizing the holistic characteristics of the terms enclosed.

## **2.5 A Dynamic Understanding Of Bilingualism**

The experience of rearing my daughter bilingual helped me to disregard the nation-state narrowed notion of bilingualism and embrace a more holistic view that enabled me to understand why a second language that is not the official one spoken in the country I was born served me as a means to connect to my daughter emotionally. In the quest for literature related to bilingualism, I found that it is generally understood as the ability to use more than one language (Baker, 2001).

However, it has been problematized from different perspectives; over the past decades, scholars have located the term into multidimensional features related to proficiency and settings where languages are acquired and used. Consequently, the definitions of bilingualism have relied on the investigators' language ideology and interests of research. Although there is no collective signification of the concept that can be generalized and applied to each context, there are two main perspectives in which the term has been generally defined; the fractional and the holistic view of Bilingualism (Reyes, 2006).

The fractional concept is defined under the nation-state language ideology; it is set upon the premise of linguistic and territorial unity. It positions monolingualism as the norm of citizenship and identity of a nation (Bonfiglio, 2010). From this view, bilingualism is depicted as the equal performance of two linguistic systems and bilinguals as two monolinguals in one, in which they are expected to master language competencies, as monolinguals do, in their two languages. This monoglossic view of balanced bilingualism has been criticized and categorized as extremist, bias and naïve (Grosjean, 1992) because its limited definition does not include all of the bilingualism forms, and it does not represent the broader population's linguistic skills. Moreover, the 'ideal' bilingual would be individuals with a perfect "native-like" command of two languages (Bloomfield, 1933) whose languages are believed to operate separately, which requires an examination of their balance language proficiency using monolingual standards.

According to Grosjean bilingual's language, competencies should not be seen as separate parts but as a unique system in which the two languages interact to increase their functionality; additionally, he claims that bilinguals do not require to be equally proficient to function in society, suggesting a holistic view of bilingualism. Accordingly, Grosjean (1992) defines bilingualism as "the regular use of two (or more) languages, and bilinguals as those people who

need and use two (or more) languages in their everyday lives" (Grosjean, 192, p. 51). He opposed the fractional view and its notion of balance bilingualism, arguing that bilinguals have a "unique language configuration" that cannot be understood as two languages that equally developed separately; moreover, he states that bilinguals are rarely equally fluent in their two languages because they use language competences according to demand in different domains and settings in which social practices take place.

Similarly, García (2009) states that monoglossic language ideologies still prevail in 21<sup>st</sup>-century education and shed light on the deficits it has for bilinguals and education in today's context. She argued that the existing additive and subtractive models of bilingualism taught at school, in which monolingualism stands out, do not respond to today's bilinguals language practices (García, 2014). Emphasizing that bilingual education in the twenty-first century is a transformative practice to educate all children because it enhances tolerance and awareness towards other cultures, she suggests a holistic understanding of bilingualism conceived from a heteroglossic language ideology that is disconnected to the nation-state discourses and made bilingualism the norm.

This holistic view recognizes bilinguals multiple language practices and voices interrelated, criticizing the traditional monoglossic perspective that treats language as separate codes and describes bilinguals as individuals with two different language systems., Garcia proposed a dynamic model of bilingualism, seen as a social practice, that positions bilinguals fluid language practices as authentic forms of communication and suggests that they are interrelated practices that do not occur in a linear manner because they are conceived as one linguistic system; moreover, Garcia & Wei (2014) refer to dynamic bilingualism as :



[...]an all-terrain vehicle(ATV) with individuals using their entire linguistic repertoire to adapt to both the ridges and craters of communication in uneven (and unequal) interactive terrains (see García, 2009a; García and Kleifgen, 2010), and to the confines of language use as controlled by societal forces, especially in schools. (p. 16)

According to García y Sylvan (2011), one of the objectives of bilingual education is to help children to find equilibrium in their own linguistic ecology (Fettes, 2003); it means that they can alternate freely from their languages and literacies. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to describe language practices from the speaker of the language, and not only from the language itself. Consequently, to make the conceptualization of dynamic bilingualism more clear, Garcia (2009) addressed the notion of translanguaging and described it as 'discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds' (p. 71).

Additionally, Garcia (2009) affirms that because bilingual families and communities have different language practices, they use translanguaging as a norm to make meaning and communicate through the different characteristics their discursive practices have. Those practices mentioned above served me to theorize the language practices my family and I have experienced since we welcomed our daughter in our home, interacting with her in English and with extended family and community in Spanish. It also helped me to better understand my daughter's process of meaning-making using her linguistic repertoire within the different language practices that took place in and out of the home context.

Furthermore, the concept of dynamic bilingualism expanded throughout translanguaging, strengthen the core of this study perceiving bilingualism as a social practice of speakers using their whole linguistic repertoire and not as the fractional view that centers on the structural function of two codes that developed separately. It also enables this research to

appreciate the shift of linguistic practices bilinguals have from a social perspective, where there are no boundaries between languages that relieve bilinguals from those imaginary concepts that adhere to language to territories and nationalities.

Once I had a clear notion of dynamic bilingualism as the one that best suits for this research, as a parent who embarks on bilingual upbringing for the first time, it was essential to explore the categorization of the type of bilingualism my daughter was exposed to, in the quest of literature, the concept of bilingual first language acquisition best described my daughter's language acquisition since the term refers to children who are exposed to the languages since birth and acquired these two before the age of 3 or 4 years (Unsworth, 2005). It is opposed to the terms of a first and second language because of research evidence that children are able to differentiate and remember language features in auditory input at a very shortage and how it makes possible for them the acquisition of bilingualism (García, 2009).

According to Bialystok et al. (2010) and Place & Hoff (2011), children who experience bilingual first language acquisition tend to score lower than their monolingual peers on measures of lexical development in the language spoken by the broader community. Similarly, Fernald (2006) compares monolingual and bilingual children's proficiencies of "distinguish between the ambient language and another language they have never been exposed to" (p. 22). The results showed monolingual children discriminate features of their language faster than bilingual ones. Results are attributed to the fact that bilingual children "hear less speech in either language than monolingual infants hear in the single language they are exposed to" (Fernald 2006, p. 24). Nevertheless, this issue does not last long since bilingual children tend to make progress easily and catch up with other children in one year or two, and this is something I could live and notice with my daughter's language development process.

Rearing my daughter bilingual since birth did not become a problem in her language development, as was claimed in earlier studies in infants. Those research indicated that bilingualism caused negative effects on children's language development and disadvantages in comparison to monolinguals (Darcy, 1953). Therefore, parents were and still are advised sometimes, as it has happened to me, to interact with their children in only one language in order to avoid confusion when hearing two languages and other problems related to language acquisition (Houwer, 1999). Bilingualism was a concept associated with social problems and mental deficit (Baker, 2001) because the notion of bilingualism was grounded within the nation-state ideology, as mention above, in which monolingualism was the norm and bilinguals were expected to have a perfect and equivalent command of two languages.

However, a vast body of research shows that children who are exposed to two languages since birth acquire the language in the same way monolinguals do (Houwer, 1999). Furthermore, research has proved that bilingualism provides positive benefits in several aspects of children's life. For example, at a cognitive level, as Mattock et al. (2010), claim that there are "cognitive advantages in bilinguals compared to monolingual children – most notably in metalinguistic awareness" (p. 231). According to this, bilingual infants are better at recognizing "abstract linguistic representations...for example, bilingual children realize that the relationship between an object and its label is purely arbitrary, and are more willing to accept a novel or unconventional name for an object than their monolingual peers" (Mattock et al., 2010, p. 231). Because bilingual children are exposed to two languages since birth, they are compelled to learn the relationship between an expression and its meaning (Ianco-Worrall, 1972) quickly, developing the ability to think abstractly faster than monolingual children, among other positive findings.

Studies have also shown that bilingual children performed a significantly higher level than monolingual children on several measures of linguistic and cognitive skills. McLaughlin (1984) stated that the child who speaks two languages has the advantage of becoming aware that there are two options of saying the same idea, and this implies analytic abilities, aligned with Vygotsky's view that sustained that being able to express the same thought in different languages allows the child to perceived his language as one particular system among many, leading the child to be aware of his linguistic acts and to become more knowledgeable linguistically and culturally having access to learn and valued diverse forms of knowledge.

Similarly, Cummins & Swain (1986), bilingualism has a positive association with intellectual skills and the capacity to analyze linguistic structures. The findings of several investigations also suggest that bilingual children are likely to be more sensitive to interpersonal feedback and more skillful at some types of communication tasks.

Thus, Early bilingualism accelerates speed and efficiency in processing a new language and promotes a critical attitude toward language and cognitive assignments. Besides, as research has shown, young children possess psychological factors like being playful and not afraid of making mistakes. They are also very skillful in acquiring the phonological systems that facilitate them learning a second language. As bilingualism and biliteracy are connected processes that complement each other developing at the same time (Gort y Bauer, 2012; Grosjean, 1982; Moll & Dworin, 1996; Reyes, 2006), the second vital concept I explore to substantiate the core of this study was emergent biliteracy, also understood from a socio-cultural perspective.

## **2.6 Socio-Cultural View of Early Literacy and Biliteracy**

Literacy is traditionally defined as the ability to read, write, and decode texts (Xu, 2003); however, research suggests that it is necessary to reflect the way that literacy practices are

socially and culturally mediated by the actors who use them to negotiate meanings (Gee, 2003; Pahl & Roswell 2012).

Vygotsky (1978) describes how socio-cultural context provides unique literacy experiences to children. His work has guided several researchers and teachers to use socio-cultural perspectives in the understanding of literacy, paying attention to the children's different literacy events experienced within families and communities. Therefore from a socio-cultural view, literacy learning is a socially mediated process bound to its context of development, forms of mediation, and participation throughout different cultural practices (Razfar & Gutiérrez, 2003).

Additionally, Vygotsky (1978) states that learning is a vital aspect of participation in a community that is not an independent activity; instead, it needs a meaningful context. As children face new situations, learning takes place, and the development of literacy occurs; this generally happens in settings such as home and community, where children first use and experience literacy as social practice because they are involved in diverse literacy events that are embedded in their everyday life activities such as watching tv, singing songs, playing with toys among others. Since birth, infants have the need to communicate with others in society; they listen, observe, play, explore their environment and the people around it. As they are immersed in the valued practices of their families, they gradually participate and communicate in several ways as they mature (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1983); that process evidenced that the concept of literacy goes beyond the ability to decode, read and write printed text.

Research on emergent literacy has been mainly focused on monolingual children (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Taylor, 1983; Goodman, 1990; Tolchinsky, 2003). Durkin (1966) explored spontaneous reading, in young children, before formal education; it was a contribution

to the field of literacy because it evidences that children began school with knowledge about texts and confronted the belief that children were non-literate before going to school (Gates, 1937).

Goodman & Goodman, (1979) research on literacy development highlighted that children experienced written language prior to formal education because literate communities surround them. Ferreiro & Teberosky (1982) also claimed that five or four-year-old children surrounded by a printed environment as in clothes, roads, signs, toys, and billboards develop knowledge of literacy, and therefore, it is unreasonable the thinking that children only have access to literacy through the teacher, in the school. In addition, research shows how children begin to familiarize with letter shapes until they discovered how print functions (Teale & Sulzby, 1986), children who were learning to write in Hebrew Spanish and Japanese began to estimate and construct hypothesis of and script systems increasing their knowledge towards conventionality (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Tolchinsky & Teberosky, 1998). Consequently, children initially acknowledged the connection between print and speech, moving over time using symbols to denote sounds and meaning.

In bilingual children, research has shown that similar to monolingual children, they improve their literacy skills when they are surrounded by a literacy-rich context (Reyes & Azuara, 2008). Language practices at home are a relevant aspect in children's language and literacy development as well as parental language ideologies. Home literacy practices represent potent forms of language and cultural capital that represent meaning and knowledge systems ... used to communicate thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and opinions' (Jones, 2007, p. 37). It means that for bilinguals, the development of language and literacy in two languages is a parallel process that shapes their attitude and experience towards their languages.

Hornberger (2003) claimed that these parallel processes of language and literacy development overlap at a bilingual-biliteracy continuum at several points. Hence, the concept of biliteracy can be perceived as a continuum in which written and spoken language skills of an individual change vigorously during life experiences relying on the social, linguistic background development, and the media of biliteracy (Hornberger, 2003).

Authors such as Gort (2006), Reyes (2006); Reyes y Azuara (2008), as well as Hornberger also support the idea that children are likely to have a more significant potential to develop biliteracy when their learning context support them to access and approach all point of the continua.

In order to establish what emergent biliteracy means, it was crucial, to sum up the existing definitions presented in some current reviews. During the last ten years, the study of biliteracy has increased, the growing up of the bilingual population and communities has lead research on biliteracy to focus on the learning and teaching experiences from different linguistic contexts (Ducuaara & Rozo 2018). Hornberger & Link (2012) defined biliteracy as a combination of bilingualism and biliteracy. It encompasses not only bilingual but also multilingual literacies; however, some other author defined the term from a traditional lense; Babino (2017) states that biliteracy takes place when individuals have literate skills in two languages simultaneously, Smith & Murillo (2013); Fránquiz et al. (2015) address the concept from language development in two languages they stated that it is a process that can occur either simultaneously or successively, similarly Rauch et al. (2012) conceived the term occurs when a person is a competent reader in both languages.

Conversely, some researchers such as Reyes ( 2012); Rubinstein-Ávila et al. (2015) conceptualized biliteracy as a process that is bound to cultural and linguistic associations that

includes listening, speaking, thinking, reading, and writing skills in two languages that learners use in different contexts in order to make meaning. Moreover, Reyes (2001) states that including children's language, literacy, and cultural repertoire in a different context is an accurate way to explore their two linguistic system abilities and development. Additionally, Reyes & Azuara (2008) explore emergent biliteracy in Mexican immigrant growing up bilingual preschool children in Arizona. They observed children in their home settings and discovered that children were learning the differences in the sound-letter between their two languages as well as the differences between writing in their two languages. The study also showed how Spanish was used by the parents to deduce English printed material in the children's surroundings.

Likewise, Kenner et al. (2004) also stated that young children are aware of the differences between different letters at an early age when they are exposed to two languages. In addition, research evidence that at the age of three, bilingual children are not confused by the use of their languages Bauer (2000) and can distinguish between their two languages Kenner (2004), and this helps to demystify the belief that young children can get confused when they are exposed to two or more languages, I was told several times my daughter was not going to have clear what language to use, but she clearly showed what literature has stated, and she was able to differentiate both languages and the context to use them.

Furthermore, Reyes (2012) studies two cases of young Latino bilingual learners, and she describes a teacher who employs different techniques to support students' biliteracy development without formal bilingual education. Young children use freely diverse languages flexibly and creatively without constraints of translation or code-switching; Reyes (2012) states that children engage and developed biliteracy interacting with the community in their everyday activities such



as going to the shop; similarly, Kenner & Gregory (2003) claim that a key factor in emergent biliteracy is children's interactions with parents around literacy events embedded at home.

Similarly, Nuñez (2019) studied language literacy practices at the home of three Mexican mothers that implemented multimodal methods to foster bilingualism and biliteracy in their children; findings show how multimodal experiences through digital devices function as powerful tools for mothers to provide children chances to involve and participate in language and literacy learning in their everyday life.

Research on emergent biliteracy depicts the way literacy develops across two languages at school and at home; It highlights how children explore biliteracy without formal instruction (Reyes & Azuara, 2008); additionally, it shows that educators who have used a holistic approach to biliteracy and bilingualism take into account children's experiences, practices as resources to facilitate the development of language (Durán, 2016; Zapata & Laman, 2016).

Thus, from the above, and because I had the opportunity as a mother -researcher to observe in natural settings the way my daughter make sense of her world through everyday interactions using her two linguistic repertoires, I use the term emergent biliteracy to refer to the ongoing, dynamic development of concepts and expertise for thinking, to listen, speaking, reading, and writing in two languages (Bauer & Gort, 2012; Gort, 2006; Reyes, 2006), as a particular form of literacy that differs in the way monolingual children experience it, and as a process that includes the use of language and cultural opportunities children experienced to co-construct meaning with the people in their environment (Whitmore et al., 2004)—clarifying the significance of the term emergent as the phase in which young children do not master conventional literacy skills such as reading and writing.

While children are learning how to combine numerous resources such as drawing, dancing, and singing to read and understand their environments, the educational system and adults introduced children and taught them to use written language mostly. However, young children communicate feelings and ideas through a different number of development systems such as gestures, sounds, body language, scribbles, and drawings; in other words, they use multimodal communication, which is why I addressed and consider the concepts of social semiotic and multimodality of vital importance in the marrow of this research.

In contrast to traditional school practices that benefit prescriptive concepts of literacy, a multimodal approach to learning recognizes that not just language permits cognition and development. It "treats all modes as equally significant for meaning and communication" (Kress & Jewitt, 2003) and "open up full and productive access to the multiplicity of representational and communicational potentials" (Kress 2000, p. 159).

Throughout this research, I observed several events in which Emi choose themes and materials without any guidance from an adult, making meaning by using and combined different modes. Her curiosity and interest guided her selection of what she wanted to represent, just as stated by Vigotsky, resources at hand are apt as a sign-making and meaning-making resource in which a stick might become a horse (Vygotsky, 1978), along the same line Kress (2003) states that children are interested in understanding the nature of their worlds, making meaning by drawing on accessible resources "governed by their interest at the moment of making the sign" (Kress, 2003, p. 155). Moreover, the unschooling environment boosted Emi's curiosity and a desire to learn new things and allowed my daughter to freely explore and develop early literacy skills around natural learning and throughout different modes.

## 2.7 Theory of Social Semiotics and Multimodality

When my daughter was born, I started to collect a folder to create a portfolio with diverse types of files of the different ways she employed to communicate, as well as her work and artifacts in order to follow her growth and language development. During my meaning-making experience with my daughter, I was also able to document the multimodal actions of my husband and I that come out from our daughter's interests through modalities and texts as she experienced different ways of viewing the world. Those multimodal actions include dialogues, gestures, and images while we modeled initial practices of observation and comparison when interacting with her.

Informed by my language education background, I was aware before young children acquire conventional reading and writing, they use different modes of semiotic assets as gestures, drawings, body movements, and artifacts, among others, to communicate their feelings and ideas within their social settings. The semiotic theory emphasizes the relevance of these early experiences in learning and the importance of the modes to support early literacy development (McMunn & Matthews, 2009).

Thus, to facilitate the understanding of the process mention above, it was crucial to tackle the Social semiotic theory and multimodality because it discloses and expands new ways of reading, writing, and making meaning. Semiotics is understood as the study of signs and how actions and objects worked as signs in regard to other signs in the construction and analysis of meaning that function together and produce texts that communicate ideas. It implies all types of social meaning-making practices, comprising those that are visual and verbal (Thibault, 1991). These channels, such as verbal, visual written, musical, gestural, and auditory resources for

communication, are known as semiotic modes, and the assemblage of them are stated as multimodal (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

From this theory, Kress (1997) states that children produce signs to make meaning of their environmental resources and display what is forthcoming at the moment of producing the text (Kress & Jewitt, 2003), clarifying that a text can take different forms, such as written, spoken, painted, among others.

Within his social semiotic approach, Kress (1996) emphasizes the concept that was first named transduction, also well known as transmedia, to explain the action of shifting "semiotics material" across modes as a vital process in young children meaning-making. (Kress, 2003, p., 47). Studies on children's writing process under a social semiotic perspective have started to make emphasis on digital media such as digital storytelling, filmmakers, and sign making through video interactions and have analyzed how children integrate meanings in multimodal settings of digital composition. They also display how in this new information era, most of the young children are surrounded by digital devices such as tablets, cellphones, laptops that allow them to merge into digital forms of communication before they begin formal schoolings, and how they learn to interact with apps, software and interactive web sites usually transmediation meanings amenably across different modes and media.

Kress y van Leeuwen (2009) also addressed the concept of multimodality and described it as the arena in which meaning is made. It highlights that people use several ways of making meaning further than those of verbal and writing. Multimodality, then, allows an explanation of communication, meaning, and learning in which learning is the outcome of a semiotic meaning-making interaction in which the semiotic resources of the learner are transformed and improved.

Learning occurs in particular settings that "make available specific semiotic/conceptual resources in particular configurations" (Kress y van Leeuwen, 2009, p. 20).

In addition, Kress (2003) states:

It is no longer possible to think about literacy in isolation from a vast array of social, technological, and economic factors. Two distinct yet related factors deserve to be particularly highlighted. These are, on the one hand, the broad move from the now centuries-long dominance of writing to the new dominance of the image and, on the other hand, the move from the dominance of the medium of the book to the dominance of the medium of the screen. These two together are producing a revolution in the uses and effects of literacy and of associated means for representing and communicating at every level and every domain. (p. 1)

From a multimodal lens, the way people see and interact with texts needs to be redefined because technologies offered a wide set of multimodal opportunities for people to produce texts as the result of social actions, understanding texts as multiple modes to make meaning.

Furthermore, this multimodal view on literacy has contributed to research on emergent literacy, and it has proved that children make meaning through diverse representational modes. Lancaster (2003) examined a two-year-old toddler making a Mother's day card with her father in which the child combined speech, gaze, and gesture while making the card; the author claimed that despite the child's age, she was able to develop her own system of coding employing drawing activity and thee modes she implemented.

Research has also shown that multimodal text, such as verbal and nonverbal, produced by children, does not occur in isolation; rather, they emerge from their socio-cultural worlds (Prinsloo, 2004). Prinsloo (2004) claimed that children's play is multimodal text in which they blend actions, talk, images in their immediate communicative purposes; likewise Prinsloo,

(2004) indicates that children use symbolic resources from their communities for their own communicative aims.

Accordingly, the multimodality approach to learning has broadened literacy by recognizing the multiple modes children used to communicate beyond speaking or writing (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). In contrast to traditional schooling practices that privilege concepts of writing over modes as drawing and language over modes as art or music or play. Therefore, the concept of unschooling comes to light as an alternative that enables children to freely explore their environment that promotes curiosity and motivation to learn, away from the standardized expectations of the formal school environment.

## **2.8 Unschooling as Everyday Learning Opportunities**

Unschooling is considered a branch of homeschooling. They differ to an extent in which homeschoolers follow an established curriculum and unschoolers learn through the everyday life practices they choose according to their interest and match their capacities and learning styles (Wheatley, 2009).

Unschooling refers to a learner-centered approach to education, where individuals pursue their interests (Holt & Farenga, 2003). The term is grounded in the premise that children are naturally curious and have an innate desire to learn, pursuing their interests, learning, and making meaning on their own and in relations with others (Holt 1972).

Unschooling is an alternative family that has to educate their children using community resources, including libraries, museums, and other scenarios. As stated by Laricchia (2016)

Unschooling It's not school-at-home, a re-creation of the school environment with a low student-teacher ratio around the kitchen table. And it's not about leaving your kids to fend for themselves, far from it. It is about

creating a different kind of learning environment for your children. An environment based on the understanding that humans learn best when they are interested and engaged and when they are personally involved and motivated. (p. 10)

This form of learning, also called "natural learning," is what my husband and I have actively and consciously undertaken in our home environment, creating an atmosphere of real learning lead by Emi's interest in which she develops bilingual and biliteracy skills. However, the very beginning was not that simple. As a parent and teacher, one of the most challenging aspects for me was to solve the internal conflict of leaving behind indoctrinated concepts of traditional school education. Adding the fact that in Colombia, the structures that rule educational policies imposed critical discourses related to globalization, subjugating English language teachers "to a subaltern position to produce knowledge as if they did not have any part in the production of knowledge and the acknowledgment of pedagogy and pedagogical practices to govern and orient their actions" (Mendez, 2018 p. 11), limiting us educators to as mere language teachers, to step outside of one's expected trial to explore a different educational alternative.

I had to transcend to other ideas that constituted what learning looks like and understand it as a lifelong process accomplished by living, leading by exploring, being curious, and interacting with the community and its available resources. In the beginning, I thought I was addressing this experience appropriately, but I was habituated to a traditional education model and tended to fall on some school-like postures during the process. I started to identify my daughter's interests and explore linked areas to take advantage of that framework. Still, as I tried

to control the situation over her learning process, I noticed she would refuse to do the activities I thought she might be interested in working on and made up excuses or tantrums.

On one occasion, when Emi was three years old, she approached me with enthusiasm singing the alphabet song; I asked her if she wanted to work on some letter activities, and she said yes; I decided to print a follow the pattern sheet with the first three ABC letters, and she was supposed to trace them with paintings and her index finger. She started the first letter and asked me why that task was necessary. I told her letter knowledge helped us to understand signs, messages, books, etc., and she replied she already knew them, and although she started the activity, she didn't finish it. I felt frustrated because of the whole situation. However, I decided to reflect on that and observed how she could mediate her learning process through her everyday activities. A week later, she asked me if she can use my tablet to watch some videos; I gave her the tablet, but as she watched the videos, the tablet required the password as it had been inactive for a while; at that moment, she said I need to put the letters to unlock the device, but I was busy in the kitchen and could not help her immediately, I told her the password, but she answered she did not know all the letters to type. At that exact moment, she said she needed to practice the letters to unlock the tablet, so she didn't have to wait for me to assist her. Emi was able to recognize the importance of practicing the letters and the fact that knowing them could facilitate her use of the tablet, which motivated her to practice some letter tracing activities on paper and on digital apps. She saw a purpose and a need it was necessary to fulfill, and it encouraged her to learn according to her interests and needs.

That event helped me to reaffirm the theory that as unschoolers are free to explore their own interests, they learn to analyze situations and make choices through their personal



experiences in a real-life circumstance without imposed institutionalized restrictions and instructions, but with joyful parental guidance.

To understand that learning through living motivate and guide my children's natural desire to learn allowed me to set aside my preconceptions about education and helped me to take advantage of available resources that are usually minimized and seen as simple actions such a conversation with a playmate, watch tv, going to a store and play a game among other everyday activities that help children to develop their skills and incorporates knowledge on subjects that children choose, and they match their skills, interests, and learning styles (Wheatley, 2009).

To get to know more on the subject, I started to look for some local research related to unschooling, taking into account my context and having found several studies that take place in the U.S. I discovered that In Colombia, reviews about the subject had been carried out by the National University of Colombia, which has a research line on homeschooling. One of its best-known researchers is Erwin Fabián García López, a professor who has homeschooled his children and has developed a compilation of alternative educational experiences. Coordinating and compiling the book "Un Mundo por Aprender," which tackles issues of education without school, family education, and self-collaborative learning, he has also worked on thematics such as power relations in the school environment and the irreconcilable dichotomy between school and the playful component in the learning process.

This university is a pioneer of annual meetings dedicated to homeschooling and its advantages, where professionals, parents, and educators from all over Colombia attend. However, the unschooling education model is not recognized as legal. Still, it is not forbidden either, taking into account that the Political Constitution of Colombia states in an article that: "El Estado garantiza las libertades de enseñanza, aprendizaje, investigación y cátedra" (Const., 1991,

art.27). [The State guarantees the freedoms of teaching, learning, research, and lecturers ] ( Const., 1991, article 27), which to support homeschooling in Colombia; and allows parents to choose homeschooling as an alternative educational method for their children, despite not being seen as the way traditional schools methods are.

Although there is limited research on the local panorama, there are support networks formed by parents and educators who dedicate themselves to this type of alternative educational model, as Red Colombiana de Educacion en Familia, which provide general information on practices, advice, and considerations, and reflections related to their experiences on home education through their web pages, which were very useful for me to strength this alternative model of education.

The theoretical concepts formerly discussed are conceptualized from a socio-cultural view of language and literacy that allowed me to analyze and understand how my daughter makes meaning of her world through literacy practices embedded in social settings. Moreover, a holistic perspective and understanding of all the concepts mention abroad facilitate the analysis of this case study.

### **Chapter 3. Research design**

Prior work on bilingualism and biliteracy within the Colombian context has been mostly addressed from the school environment perspective, disregarding the fact that there can be a place for nonstandard bilingual practices. This qualitative case study sheds light on how bilingual- biliteracy skills of an unschooled preschool-age child raised bilingual since birth develops within her everyday practices. In the course of this research, I documented the child, my daughter, interactions embedded in everyday activities with her family and community for one year. This research intends to contribute to the literature that examines bilingualism and biliteracy in Colombia and the field of ELT from a non-formal setting, depicting a course of action for those who embrace bilingualism as a way of life and different views of learning apart from traditional models of education.

Thus this chapter describes the procedures used in this study. First, the questions and objectives of the study are presented. Second, the type of research, the participants, and the context are explained. Finally, instruments and ethical issues are addressed.

#### **3.1 Research question**

How does an unschooled preschool-age child develop English Spanish bilingual, and biliteracy skills in her everyday activities?

#### **3.2 Objectives**

- Examine the bilingual and biliteracy learning process of an unschooled preschooler Colombian child in her everyday practices.

- Identify the main strategies a Colombian family implement at home to reinforce their child's bilingualism and biliteracy learning.

### **3.3 Type of Study**

This research was carried out within an unschooled environment, with my preschool-aged daughter Emi, as the only participant. She has been exposed to both English, and Spanish languages since birth, experiencing the English language exposure at home with her parents and Spanish used with extended family and community. This research depicts my daughter's bilingual biliteracy development by exploring her everyday activities and interactions. Therefore due to the nature of this research, the case study approach, defined as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam. 1998, p. 27), is most suitable for my inquiry. In addition, as stated by Gomm et al. (2000): "case study researchers construct cases out of naturally occurring social situations" (p. 3), in place of creating the case in experimental studies, the previous mentioned is the situation of my inquiry analyzing how every day occurring interaction of my daughter, influence her bilingual and biliteracy skills.

In order to collect data, diary notes, reflections, audio and video recordings, and observations were carried out in natural settings over a year, from three to four years of age, in which Emi gradually increased the complexity of her language to communicate.

Although some limiting constraints may be argued, such as the fact that a parent-researcher conducts the study on her child's language, parental bias may occur when analyzing the data as well as the observer's paradox' (Lanza, 2008, p. 76), which states that the participant's behavior can be influenced by the observer's presence. The existing bond between mother and child, there is no need for the parent researcher to establish a relationship with the participant, and it permitted straight access to the child's environment to carry out the observations and gave

the opportunity to also have access to more natural data in different situations and times of the day such as bedtime, family special rituals, and tradition, which is very different to the researchers who get limited data in prearranged scenarios, are facts that minimized the observer paradox. Moreover, Deuchar & Quay (2000, p. 2) stated that case study is one of the most accurate research types to investigate linguistic development, mainly because although the findings cannot be employed to state new generalizations, they can suggest new areas of research that need to be examined more in-depth in a bigger scale (Hua & David, 2008, p. 99)

It is expected that findings inform, contribute, and familiarized parents, educators, and the field of Applied linguistics about the insights into the early stages of linguistic and socio-cultural child bilingualism and biliteracy development in a predominantly Spanish-speaking country.

### **3.4 Context**

This case study occurred in a married nuclear middle-class family in Bogota, Colombia, a predominant monolingual speaking country where people's interactions mainly occur in Spanish. Emi's family is formed by her father, an Engineer and the only income provider who works from home, her mother, me, an English language teacher who decided to work inside the home educating and caring for the children, her little sister, who is two years younger than her, and her maternal grandmother.

As an unschooler, Emi's house was decorated with different educational posters such as the ABC, numbers, and her crafts; apart from her bedroom, she had a space we called the fun center, a place located next to the living room with a big carpet, a box full of toys, a table, and a chair and her books. This space was accommodated for her to feel comfortable to learn while

playing with different materials and resources. She also had access to a tablet, a laptop, and Tv to learn from media and learn to manipulate digital devices.

Emi's language input and practices took place in two settings following the one language one community model (Rezzagil, 2010). At home, the predominant language used was English. Although she communicated in Spanish with her grandmother, she used English with her parents, and most available resources such as cartoons, music, and most of her books were in English. On the other hand, she had access to the Spanish language through her grandmothers and sources outside her home environment, such as getting involved in interactions with her extended family, Sunday school at church, the community, playmates, and friends.

### **3.5 Emi**

Emi is a preschool age Colombian girl; she has been exposed to both languages, English-Spanish before she was born, during pregnancy, because English is the language I feel most comfortable and natural to express emotions and to provide Emi a linguistic bond by means of the use of English motherese (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004).

Baker (2000), cited by Qismullah (2009), noted that "children are born ready to become bilinguals. They are like sponges, and they can sponge up all languages provided by their environments" (p. 305).

The role of prenatal language exposure was crucial. According to research, children get used to the mother's language in utero and are born with a preference for that language (de Boysson-Bardies, 2001). My husband and I address to Emi in English since birth, and she receives regular input in the Spanish language from extended family. I have been her caregiver since she was born and, therefore, the one who interacts with her the most in English. My husband and I speak both the minority, in this case, English and the predominant language

Spanish, one to one another. Emi experienced a bilingual environment since birth, what Baker (2001) refers to as simultaneous bilingualism; therefore, Emi's first words were in English, and then she started to produce words in Spanish when interacting with her relatives and community.

### **3.6 Parental Language Background**

Grosjean (1992) highlights the importance of documenting the language setting of the child under study as well as the language environment of the people that provide the most language input when interacting with the child. Parental language background affects language acquisition. Therefore the description of parents and child's language history is provided.

### **3.7 Mother Teacher- Researcher**

I am a Colombian English language teacher. I completed primary and middle school in Spanish language and began to study English as a foreign language at school at the age of 11, two hours a week and on my own, informally at home through media exposure such as Anglo-Saxon TV series, music, and books. I was able to understand and communicate in English at the age of 13. According to Bjelland (2009), who defined sequential bilingualism as "when the child has exposure to the first language (L1) at birth and then begins to have exposure to the second language (L2) later in childhood or adulthood, I am a sequential bilingual person.

As a Spanish speaker, I have always found it difficult to express emotions in my mother tongue; however, I realized my second language offered me the possibility to express emotions easily. Bakić & Škifić (2017) suggested that aspects such as the age of acquisition, context of acquisition language, personal history, dominant language, and language proficiency influence bilinguals to express emotions in certain languages.

I embraced this new language and became an English teacher. I completed a Bachelor of Arts in teaching English as a foreign language and started to teach English classes to children for two years and to adults for seven years at a private institute.

A year after finishing my undergraduate program, I settled down and started a family in which both languages, Spanish and English, were used. Consequently, before Emi was born, I decided to raise her bilingual with her father's consent. For me was and still is essential to communicate with her in a language I can emotionally better connect to my daughter. Emi was familiarized with the English language before she was born since I taught English classes seven hours a week at a university, and in addition, I talk to her in English during pregnancy. Once she was born, her father and I addressed her in English

When Emi was two years old, I started to study for a master's degree in applied linguistics, and she became my biggest inspiration to give a new direction to a natural process I started with my daughter and to turn it into a qualitative case study.

### **3.8 Emi's Father**

The child's father is a Colombian civil engineer who was exposed to limited English input in high school. However, he was always passionate about learning languages, took English as a foreign language course in college, and completed an English course at a private academy to develop and maintain language skills and become a good speaker of the English language. Throughout the bilingual parenting experience, he was immersed in English language exchanges as a participant in the bilingual context at home, He got involved from the very beginning, and he communicates with Emi through the English language and noticing Emi's language process evolution motivated him more to continue using the minority language at home. Moreover,



overhearing English interactions within the situational context and allowed him to learn more vocabulary and expressions.

### **3.9 Instruments**

In order to document Emi's everyday experiences inside and outside of the home context, a holistic view of the setting was taken to reflect the significance of the case study contexts in understanding Emi's bilingual biliteracy development throughout her daily social practices (Erickson, 2010). Thus this research was conducted based on naturalistic parental participant observation, field notes, audio-video recordings, photos, and drawings.

### **3.10 Participant Observation**

Schensul et al. (1999) described participant observation as "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting" (p.91). As a mother-researcher, I had the advantage of observing in detail, participated, and documented everyday diverse social situations in which Emi interacted. Moreover, participant observation enabled me to learn about my daughter's natural situation activities, observing and participating in those events. It also afforded me the setting for the development of sampling of the recorded observations (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). However, although participant observation is rewarding because it offers the chance to get exclusive insights into the research context's organization, it also challenges the researcher to analyze and report findings without affecting the rigor and objectivity of the research. (Iacono, Brown and Holtham 2009).

### **3.11 Fieldnotes**

According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2011), field notes are relevant tools that allowed the researcher to capture data during observation. Additionally, DeWalt & DeWalt (2011) described a type of field notes that comprises words, phrases, and short sentences written in a notebook and called them to jot notes. I kept a notebook with me all the time and noted in my jot notes the date and general information about the settings, the activity, or chunks of Emi's dialogues and interaction using both languages and people present in the event as a memory aid of the observations I made.

### **3.12 Audio-Video Recordings**

Over a year, several recordings were made weekly with a digital voice recorder and my cellphone, and with a length between 6 and 30 minutes. The implementation of audio-video was essential to capture verbal and non-verbal communication as well as background. As I was the one operating the digital voice recorder, it was easy to record at any time, and there was no need to set up regular sessions. Several contexts Emi involved in throughout the week were captured at different times of the day and different places in and outside her house. Activities such as family mealtime, playtime, role-playing, singing, reading books, going to the playground, Emi contributing to the house chores, among others, were recorded. Although Emi was familiarized with my cellphone as a personal object, I did not want the cellphone to become an obtrusive element; I tried to hide the cellphone during the recordings to avoid what Deuchar & Quay (2000) stated, claiming that the video camera can affect the participant's behavior considering that it is a noticeable obtrusive object.

### **3.13 Photos**

I took pictures during the observations and audio recordings to have a visual description aid of the events that help me to better described my field notes. DeWalt & DeWalt (2011) stated that effective observation consists of the ability to "see" space (p. 81), such as the physical features of the settings and the people and resources within it. I took photos of Emi performing diary activities, locations, and objects that caught her attention, such as toys, environmental print, and diverse objects she engaged with to perform an activity.

### **3.14 Drawings**

I started to collect Emi's drawings since I noticed they were a powerful tool to ground conversations about her personal experiences (Smith et al., 2005 ) Emi started to make draws more often when she was three years old, and as we draw together, we got involved in the conversation of relevance and interest for her to those, drawing activities served us to discuss questions and topics together, help each other with answering about the details of events (Dockett & Perry, 2005; Einarsdóttir, 2007).

As Emi showed the desire to draw almost every day, I provided her with colors and paper for her to draw about her everyday experiences at home and outside it. The drawing activity provided us opportunities to reflect on the conversation as well as to discuss and describe her drawings. Thus, I collected most of her drawings and noted the descriptions she provided while drawing in which to communicate her thoughts and feelings (Wright, 2010).

### **3.15 Ethical Issues**

Ethical considerations became a fundamental part of my research design, not

only because of the interpretive research epistemology but also because of the close personal relationship I hold with the participant, my daughter (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), and the context in which most of the events were notes, my household.

In accordance with British Educational Research Association [BERA] (2011) guidelines, “researchers must recognize that participants may experience distress or discomfort in the research process and must take all necessary steps to reduce the sense of intrusion and to put them at their ease” (p. 7). Therefore, from the beginning of this research, I had very clear that I did not want the data collection to cause any needless upset and distress for Emi. In order to overcome this ethical concern, I relied on my maternal and professional intuition to judge when she may be feeling uncomfortable while I recorded data.

Likewise, the BERA (2011) guidelines establish that: ‘the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants’ data is considered the norm for the conduct of research. In order to preserve the privacy of my child, I decided to use a nickname throughout the study and not reveal the data collection location’s name as well as to blur her face in photographic data in the analysis presentation. Alongside this, any sensitive information that invades the privacy of my daughter and family was discarded and not included in this thesis.

## **Chapter 4. Data analysis and findings**

This chapter presents the data that emerged from the everyday activities of a preschool-age child raised bilingual since birth, Emi, within an unschooled environment. This section presents the data analysis approach, my perspective as a researcher, the procedures to conduct data and analysis, and findings. The categories and subcategories from the data are presented, supported by excerpts from different events. Lastly, the categories of analysis are related to the theoretical framework that delineated this study and answered the research question: How does an unschooled preschool-age child develop English -Spanish bilingual biliteracy skills in her everyday activities?

### **4.1 Data Analysis Approach.**

For this research, I selected a qualitative approach that would better accommodate my choices regarding which methods to implement. I chose grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1999;) that suggests that data should inform the question, leading to theories pertinent to the study.

A grounded theory emphasis on comparative methods leads ethnographers 1) to compare data with data systematically from the beginning of the research, not after all the data is collected, 2) to compare data with emerging categories, and 3) to demonstrate relations between concepts and categories'. (Charmaz, 2014, p. 41)

Moreover, as a "grounded theory strategy: seek data, describe observed events, answer fundamental questions about what is happening, and then develop theoretical categories to understand it" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 44). Thus, this study followed a grounded theory approach to analyze the data in three broad steps as proposed by Charmaz (2014) and on the research

question and the data gathered through observations, field notes, pictures, videos, and audio recordings and drawings. The data examination was carried out in three phases that are explained in the data procedure: initial coding, focused coding, and axial coding.

#### **4.2 My Perspective as a Researcher**

For this study, as a mother researcher, I adopted an emic perspective which, according to Lett (1990), "emic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the native members of the Culture whose beliefs and behaviors are being studied" (p. 130). Accordingly, I become moderately unobtrusive to the environment in certain situations as the moments in which she was playing with her toys, interacting with friends, and drawing to gain an emic viewpoint of the bilingual and biliteracy practices occurring within Emi's everyday activities and make sense of the dynamic nature of her everyday learning (Ferne & Kantor, 2003). The activities included family rituals, routines, such as household chores, food shopping, art activities, playtime, outdoor playgrounds, and community celebrations in naturally occurring and planned instances in natural learning settings. As several events afforded Emi to learn, I focused on Emi's intrinsic motivation, how she got involved in an activity and how important it was for her to interact successfully within the environment (White, 1959). Motivation relates to the unschooling philosophy that focuses on individual interests and how they can be developed and nurtured (Levin-Gutierrez, 2015).

Consequently, because the child in the case study, Emi, is my daughter, I assumed the role of participant-observer (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Participant observation is defined as "a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life

routines and their culture" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011 p. 1). Thus observations of Emi's dual language and literacy development and linguistic environment could be carried out daily and granted me the opportunity of being present across several of her social situations, capturing novel results and changes as they emerged, providing a clear picture of Emi's bilingual and biliteracy skills development and allowed me to document and analyze the data from an insider view.

This study presents an analysis of Emi's dual language and literacy development within her everyday activities, between the three and four years of her age. Likewise, the analysis is supported by extracts from the data gathered in naturalistic interactions through observations, field notes, pictures, videos, audio recordings, and drawings.

### **4.3 Data Collection Process and Management**

Due to my role as a mother researcher and participant/observer, I was the principal instrument of data collection as stated by Creswell (1994), A qualitative researcher, as the main instrument of data collection, mediates the data through her observations, field notes, intuitions, and feelings (Creswell, 1994). I used a notebook of field notes and observations in which I wrote down what I observed while I interacted with Emi and while she socialized with the rest of the family and community. I took pictures related to my field notes, observations, and everyday events. She performs different actions such as baking, helping with the chores, playtime, and going to the supermarket, among other activities.

Likewise, I photographed Emi's drawings and crafts. I also recorded videos and mp3 audios of Emi's interactions and responses in different social settings in spontaneous situations. As I intended to capture naturally occurring interactions between Emi and us (parent) or relatives, I did not plan these recording sessions. These usually took place at home and the park

near Emi's home, and because it requires more arranging than the other means, videos were less often. Finally, I preserved Emi's drawings, crafts, and initial writings that she made throughout the different moments and took notes of her dual-language and literacy description while drawing.

Once I gather all these data for one year, I began to read the notebook records to organize and digitalize them in a word file. Similarly, I organized the videos and audio recordings according to dates and social situations in folders and transcribed them. Regarding pictures, I organized all the JPG in my pc, related to events in which Emi is performing a specific activity; in a different folder, I saved all the photos of Emi's drawings and crafts. After consolidating and digitalizing notes, video, audio transcripts, and photos, I organized and grouped the data according to events.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis Procedure**

The data analysis course developed through the next three phases, as stated above: Initial coding, which refers to ', naming each word, line, or segment of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). The initial coding took place when all field notes and transcriptions were completed and reviewed. I organized the data extracts according to events such as playing, drawing, or doing household chores, among others, in a three-column table, see table 1. In the first column, I placed the instruments, giving space to the second column for the codes, and in the third one, segments of data were located. I use a color-coding strategy to facilitate the process of finding emerging categories for the analysis because "It leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data about that idea" (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 137) as shown in Fuente: (Saldaña, 2013)



Table 1. *Open Coding*

<b>Research question</b> How does An unschooled preschool-age child develop English -Spanish bilingual biliteracy skills in her everyday activities?		
<b>Objectives</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine the bilingual and biliteracy learning process of an unschooled preschooler in her everyday practices</li> <li>• Identify the diverse strategies and resources a bilingual Colombian family use to reinforce their daughter's language and biliteracy development.</li> </ul>		
<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Open coding</b>	<b>Segment</b>
Fieldnotes: Playing with dinosaurs April 7,2019	Teacher Pay attention Engineer helmet chef food pasta	Emi: <b>I am the teacher</b> , please sit down and pay attention t rex eat meat and triceratops plants ok mommy, what did I say?
V-transcript : playing with blocos and tolos Sep 16,2019		<b>I'm an Engineer</b> , like daddy look at my helmet, and now I'm building a bridge with my blocks look, mommy
Fieldnotes : playing with mommy and grandma June 8,2019		<b>I'm the chef</b> try this delicious spaghetti with meatballs, don't forget to pay lady, did you like the food? Mira mami soy un chef este es pasta
<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Open coding</b>	<b>Segment</b>
Fieldnotes: writing with chalk August 4,2019	Ais for Abi Dog Dinosaur E for Emi	Look mommy <b>A for Abi</b> see? I did it
Transcripts : drawing with daddy Oct 23,2019		<b>D is for dog and dinosaur</b> , D is my favorite letter
Fieldnotes: This is my name December 2,2019		I know this letter, it is <b>E for Emily</b>

Fuente: (Saldaña, 2013)

The codes were first named by using in vivo codes and descriptive codes. In Vivo coding, "help us preserve participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself pay attention to language while you are coding. In vivo codes serve as symbolic markers of participants' speech and meanings" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 55). Using Emi's actual words as codes helped me understand her perspectives of the world better. On the other hand, descriptive codes are generated by the researcher and are nouns that describe sections of data Saldaña (2013) suitable for answering the fundamental question such as "What is going on here?". Accordingly, I also implemented descriptive coding to register the actions and resources used by Emi in her

everyday activities. I could identify the relationship between the initial codes, which allowed me to make comparisons and find commonalities, resulting in 98 initial or open codes that were visible throughout reading the data.

Table 2. *Example of the coding process. Adapted from*

Transcript Data Sample	Example of Codes	Coding
<p><i>"Emi: I want to watch Dr binocs on youtube Me: what is that? Emi: Dr. Binocs is a blue thing; he talks about the universe and the planets, the sun is a star, and the milky way, we live on planet earth."</i></p>	<p>Dr. Binoc Youtube Blue thing Universe Planets Sun Star Milkyway Live planet earth</p>	<p>In Vivo used in the Initial coding stage</p>
<p><i>Emi watch the "brush your teeth" song several times because it caught her attention, and after that, she told her grandmother she need it to brush her teeth</i></p> <p><i>"Emi :Mami necesito lavar los dientes , están sucios porque tienen gérmenes hay que lavarlos muchas veces y up and down con paste hasta que sean shiny shell"</i></p>	<p>Translanguaje</p>	<p>Descriptive used in the initial coding stage</p>
<p><i>Emi: Let's sing Abi, down by the bay where the wáter melons grow back to my home I dare not go, for if I do my mother will say did you ever see a cat wearing a hat down by the bay Did you ever si a mouse building a house down by the bay, did you ever si a fish naranan ish down by the bay</i></p>	<p>Singing nursery rhymes with her sister</p>	<p>Gerunds used in focused codes and axial codes</p>

Fuente: (Saldaña, 2013)

Once the initial coding process was completed, the second step in the process of analyzing the data was the construction of the focused coding, which one of its main objectives is to "determine the adequacy and conceptual strength of your initial codes" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 140). In doing so, I organized into groups that were recurring and relevant to the research and the research question, and the 98 initial codes were condensed into 16 initial categories.

Hence, I assembled all the initial 16 open codes, linked the correlated events and frequency of events, combined similarities from these categories highlighting main topics always

having in mind the research question and the objectives, and I came across eight focused codes that were elaborated in gerund forms because with gerunds:

We gain a strong sense of action and sequence with gerunds. The nouns turn these actions into topics. Staying close to the data and, when possible, starting from the words and actions of your respondents preserves the fluidity of their experience and gives you new ways of looking at it. (Charmaz, 2014, p. 140)

In order to provide validity to the analysis of the data, I used Patton's (2002) notion of triangulation, in which the researcher verifies the study by "checking the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods" (p. 556). Throughout the process, I kept records of Emi's spontaneous communication exchanges and productions, transcriptions of audio and video recordings, pictures, and Emi's description of drawings. These data evidence how bilingual biliteracy skills evolved within her everyday practices and how they support Emi knowledge construction throughout interactions and make meaning through different texts.

The final phase was the axial coding process, which "aims to link categories with subcategories, and asks how they are related" (Charmaz 2014, p. 148). After regrouping the eight focused codes, I repeated the process and highlighted the commonalities and correlations among them. The clustering process of data was a challenge; however, the reorganization of categories facilitated the four axial codes' constructions, directing the final analysis of the data and findings.

#### **4.5 Findings**

In this section, a table of the axial and focused codes that arose during the analysis development is presented. I describe and explain the definition of each of the axial codes and focused codes, supported with pieces of data from the events that evidence the meaning of the

categories. The following table illustrates the axial codes, also called categories and focused codes or subcategories, from the data analysis process in relation to the research

Table 3. *Axial codes and focused codes*

<b>How does an unschooled preschool age child develop English Spanish bilingual and biliteracy skills in her everyday activities ?</b>	<b>Axial code 1: Socializing and Interacting with Family and Community</b>	Taking part in family activities
		Joining in community life
	<b>Axial code 2: Raising Awareness as dual language and literacy user</b>	Developing Print awareness
		Phonological awareness
		Alphabet knowledge
		Using translanguaging naturally
	<b>Axial code 3: Connecting life experiences through multimodality</b>	Transmediating across kinesthetic and digital modes using both languages
		Producing and performing texts while playing
	<b>Axial code 4: Parents strategies to foster dual language and literacy</b>	

#### **4.5.1 Axial code 1: Socializing and Interacting with Family and Community.**

This category relates to the array of events I observed, in which Emi engaged in regularly occurring activities, the interactions, and the way she socialized with others as an active participant in the daily course of family and community life. I focused on the various types of activities Emi was involved in and how she got involved in those events that served to maximize her understanding of different aspects. As stated in Vygotsky's view., children basically develop their linguistic and cognitive abilities through interactions with adults or more competent peers, the way in which language is actually used by adults in a specific activity influences the child's development of a higher mental process.

Moreover, I found this category consistent with the idea presented by Nelson (1985), who states that "language learning takes place within the framework of social interaction" (p. 109), and Meltzoff & Moore (1977), who similarly affirm that children's language development relies on the social environment participating and being exposed to language in social interaction since they are born.

From this category emerge two subcategories or focused codes:

**Focused code 1: Taking part in family activities.** This subcategory gives an account of the moments in which Emi was interested contributed to some routine activities that served as the groundwork for dual language literacy. It also depicts the instances in which she acquired language, values, cultural rituals, routines, and norms while interacting with parents and other members of the family (Laible et al., 2015) as well as master some abilities (Rogoff et al.,

1993) such as communication skills and language development through the process of participation.

Data showed how Emi developed the ability to form relationships and participate in routines such as setting the table, washing the dishes, meal preparation, and family rituals such as praying before eating, bedtime prayers, birthday and holidays celebrations, through the process of shaping and paying attention how family coordinates household tasks, sharing and reproducing her learning (Rogoff et al., 1993; Corsaro, 2011). As stated by Lansdown (2005), data displayed a process of evolving capacities of the child, in which the family has the responsibility to lead children to observe, recognize and reinforce their capacities to grant the child increase responsibilities as she showed a mature performance of those capacities. The former aligns with Vygotsky's concepts of learning, in which adults mediate tasks and their meanings to young children through scaffolding and guided participation in activities of their families and communities.

The next selection of data evidence how Emi's motivation to contributing to washing the dishes granted her the opportunity for language learning process by initiating exchanges and interactions on a topic, assisted by parental mediation and linguistic scaffolding where I demonstrated to her a step by step process, implementing resources such as giving verbal explanations introducing new words, and using supportive strategies to correct her, replacing some words she produced, when necessary, and praising her effort, leading her progressively toward more accurate vocabulary and grammar in her speech. This data also showed that Emi had been previously observing and paying attention to how her grandmother coordinated the washing up in a previous event and how it gave her an idea of performing the activity. The data

also showed Emi's sense of accomplishment of having done a good performance of the activity and contributing to the house chores, with the desire to replicate the activity once again.

***Transcription: Washing up August 9, 2019-3.5 years***

*Emi: "What you doing, mommy?"*

*Me: "I'm going to wash the dishes."*

*Emi: "I want to wash the dishes, too; I'll bring my bench."*

*Me: "your stool?"*

*Emi: "yes, my stool, ready."*

*Me: "ok, let's remove the leftover first, ok? ( I showed her how to do it by doing the action")*

*Emi: "ok, let me try."*

*Me: "Careful with the dishes; we don't want to break them, do we?"*

*Emi: "no, ready, can I wash them now?"*

*Me: "ok, look, we take the sponge and scrub the dishes like this, then we rinse the dish with water and put it in the dish rack like this."*

*EMI: "oh, mommy, I know how to do it."*

*Me: "oh, really, how do you know?"*

*Emi: "because I saw granny."*

*Me: " you saw granny washing the dishes? When? "*

*Emi: " yes, tomorrow."*

*Me: "yesterday? "*

*Emi: "yes, yesterday."*

*Me: "did you helped her do the washing up too? "*

*Emi: "No, I just saw her because my legs were tired."*

*Me: "your legs were tired? "*

*Emi: "yes, because I ran faster."*

*Me: "ok, that's it, thanks for helping. You have done a great job."*

*Emi: "yes, look clean and shiny like shiny shells. This is so fun. Can I wash them again, mommy?"*

*Me: "they are already clean. Tomorrow you can wash them again. Thanks for helping"*

*Emi: "you're welcome. "*

In addition, this subcategory also incorporates how participation allowed Emi to develop agency and autonomy in decision-making (Mullin, 2007). Since participation took place when she expressed personal interest and made choices that impacted her and her family's everyday life boosting shared learning, those actions granted her experiences of enthusiasm and contribution (Wanless et al., 2011). As it could be inferred in the previous piece of data, that implies Emi decision to observe her grandmother washing the dishes in a previous event and participate with me in the same house chore on a different occasion.

Thus, when Emi's personal interest and situational interest were associated with everyday routines, optimal performances and outcomes of actions, as well as communication and language development, were notorious in relation to the routines in which she showed little or no interest (Raab et al., 2013).

The next excerpt also exemplifies the above-mentioned. It shows how Emi engaged in and learn from a family ritual, such as a birthday celebration, a cultural family practice in which all the family members have a duty to do. The settings of the event granted the child to express



her agency and autonomy to replicate a favorite domestic activity, in which she also shared her knowledge with her little sister and her grandparents using her two linguistic repertoires by means of translanguaging. Likewise, the significance of this opportunity does not also nurture Emi's relationship with her little sister; it also allowed her to display power and control regarding her role as the older sister, replicating maternal expression she had received such in the case where she told her little sister that she needs to follow instructions.

**Field notes Emi's little sister's birthday: the Guacamole October 9, 2019-3.7, years**

*Emi was paying attention to me when I was talking with her father and grandparents about the tasks everyone should do in order to celebrate Emi's little sister's party; she asked me about her tasks and the things she should do. I asked what she would like to do to help, and she suggested I let her do the Guacamole because it was fun to smash the avocados. Emi has done the Guacamole before, so I think it is a good idea to let her do so.*

*I gave Emi the avocados, and she told me that I could go to do something else because she was able to do it by herself. Next, She called her little sister to show her how to prepare the Guacamole and started to give her instructions. She said: look Abi, pay attention, I'll teach you, we need to smash this avocado inside the bowl and add salt, you see? Look at me; you are gonna love it.*

*Her little sister tried to grab the avocados, but Emi didn't let her; she told her she was too little and that she first needed to follow instructions, that is something I had told her before.*

*Emi finished smashing the avocados and tried them; she said it was delicious. She also gave her sister some guacamole and then told her grandparents what she had done; she was very pleased.*

*She told the event to her grandparents in Spanish but used some words in English, she used her hands to retell the events exemplifying the smashed action and asked me for the word smashed in Spanish, and I told her the word; she was also happy because she said she had taught her sister how to prepare the Guacamole.*

**Focused code 2: Joining in community life:** This subcategory refers to the moments Emi acquired a great deal of language, social knowledge, and communicative skills through peer and adult interactions (Clements & Fiorentino 2004). This outcome developed in activities that opened up possibilities for different kinds of naturally occurring learning, such as family outings, going to outdoor playgrounds going to Sunday school, and going to church. Additionally, this category also exemplifies how Emi showed the ability to employ strategies to use and differentiate a specific language, associating languages with other speakers (Volterra & Taeschner 1978), playing and repeating phrases according to the social situations (Ronjat, 1913; Bergman, 1976) and how these interactions in the outside world, in which Spanish was the predominant speaking language, contributed to maximizing her bilingual and biliteracy skills.

The next excerpt illustrates how by interacting with kids at the playground, Emi learned the name and the dynamic of a new well-known -game called la lleva, which was unknown to her. The use of repetition of chunks from what Emi heard to achieve her goal and create a shared understanding between herself and the child with whom the interaction took place (Mandell, 1986). Likewise, This peer interaction at the playground allowed Emi to express and experiment with different features of social interaction, such as social skills, how to treat her peers, language

differentiation, and problem-solving abilities by means of sharing, controlling, and verbalizing her emotions within a group (Marjanen et al. 2013 ) using the situational requested language. Additionally, this interaction granted Emi the opportunity to learn and teach new Spanish and English words from and to one of the children who got involved with her when he realized she spoke English. This event also displayed how the fact of speaking English has served Emi as a hook to engage in conversations of increased length and complexity

peer interaction skills over time, which fostered her peer interaction skills and diverse vocabulary learning from peers or playmates.

***Field notes At the playground: Juguemos a la lleva November 5, 2019-3.8 years***

*Emi got to the playground and showed her cat boy toy to a couple of three and four-year-old kids that were playing together; one of the kids showed her paw patrol toy, and without using too many words, they exchanged toys. Suddenly one of the kids told Emi to play a game called la lleva juguemos a la lleva, tu la llevas said the kid---(let's play tag, it is your turn ). I saw Emi's reaction, it was the first time she heard about the game la lleva, but she had played with her father a chase and tag game before. When she saw the kids running away from her, I assumed she got the main idea of the game. One of the kids constantly said: "no puedes atraparme soy muy rapido" ( you can't catch me, I am very fast ). When it was Emi's time to run before being caught, she started to constantly repeat the phrase she heard from the boy "no puedes atraparme soy muy rapido" ( you can't catch me, I am very fast ). When they got tired, they took their toys again and started to play with them, Emi took her cat boy toy, but one of the kids wanted that toy. It was a moment of tension Emi grabbed her toy, and the other kid offered her his paw patrol toy to see if they could exchange them once again, but Emi told him she didn't want to play*

*with his toy. In English, the kid looked confused while the older kid asked her in Spanish if she was from another country: Eres de Estados Unidos? Why do you know to speak English? Porque sabes hablar en inglés? .The older kid was very interested and told Emi he was learning English at school, and he started to tell her the colors and animal names in English; Emi only smiled at the boy. The kid started to ask her about the meanings of words, such as how do you say rodadero in English? Como se dice rodadero en Inglés? Emi answered slider, but then she wanted to run again, and in an attempt to invite the kids to the previous game, she said: no puedes atraparme, one of the kid asked if she wanted to play la lleva again, they would play, but only if she lends her cat boy, Emi agreed on that, and they played la lleva once again.*

In the following piece of data, Emi wanted to have her own menu and order her food at a restaurant; after having observed and listened to me modeling the interaction with the waiter in a language that is not spoken at home, she decided to ask me how to do it and once again she showed personal and situational interest (Renninger et al., 1992) and used repetition of actions while taking part in the activities within a community activity ordering her meal interacting with the waiter in Spanish, learning how to interact at a restaurant employing some common expression people used at a restaurant and learning new words in Spanish

***Transcription: at the restaurant: ordering in the menu June 21, 2019-3.3 years***

*Emi: " mommy, I want the carte too."*

*Me: " sure, here you go."*

*Emi: "I don't see the fries and the coke; this is so boring. I don't like it here."*

*Dad: "look here, says papa a la Francesa, it means fries; let's order fries for you."*

*Emi: "francesas what is that ? "*

*Me: "french fries, honey."*

*Emi: "can I say that when the man comes."*

*Me: "to the waiter, do you want to order your fries ? "*

*Emi: " yeah, daddy order his; I'll order mine.Yes, mommy ?"*

*Me: " Ok, when he comes, you can order your fries."*

*Emi: " In spanih momy francesas papas "*

*Me: " yes papitas a la francesa "*

*The waiter came to the table, and Emi was shy to ordered her fries*

*Me: "ok Emi, pay attention : yo quiero una una carne oreada con papas a la francesa porfavor"*

*Emi: " yo quiero unas papitas francesas porfavor "*

*The waiter asked her if she was going to order anything to drink*

*Emi: " yo, quiero coke."*

*Me: "say I'll have a Coca-Cola, please? "*

*Emi: "yo una coca cola porfavor"*

This next extract shows Emi's interaction with a classmate at Sunday school at church, in which the environment of an art activity facilitates children's socialization. While Emi explored and manipulated art material, she began to talk to a classmate, telling him some characteristics of some materials, such as glitter and cotton, in Spanish but saying the name of it in English using translanguaging as a strategy to make herself understood. The situation also became a teaching strategy for Emi, and her peer, in which the child corrected her and told her what, according to him was the real name of the materials, in this case, defining glitter as "escarcha" and cotton as "algodón" in Spanish and when he told Emi she was wrong, she explained to him that those

words were English. Emi and her classmate mutually moved between the two views and came to a shared understanding (Stremmel & Fu, 1993), trying out different ways of saying things and arguing what the correct way to say something was. Moreover, Emi and her peer enjoyed interacting and observing each other in the process of making an art activity in which they negotiate, model, and taught each other's actions toward a specific goal, fostering mutual language cognitive growth (Mandell, 1986). Hence more, this excerpt also exemplifies Emi repetition and imitation, and use of Spanish phrases produced by peers, experimenting with the reproductions available in the environment (Lantolf & Thorne 2006) that contribute to her language growth and repertoire.

***Field notes: At Sunday school: art experience March 8, 2020-4 years***

*In the classroom, there was a table containing art materials such as papers, cotton, paintbrushes, glue, markers, paint, foamy shapes, and glitter. The kids had to recreate a picture of David's character from the bible as a shepherd; they had to go to the table and select the material they wanted to use to decorate their work. Emi approached the table as the other kids and was very excited to see all kinds of material, especially glitter, her favorite material. She showed it to Geronimo and said: "Mira glitter es muy hermoso y Brillante," Geronimo answered, saying: "eso se llama escarcha no "glira" como dijiste." Emi replied: "glitter esta en Inglés ¿ves?" then Emi put her fingers in the paintings and started to spread them with her fingers all over the paper; Geronimo suggested Emi use the paintbrushes, so she doesn't get her hands dirty, but Emi told him is more fun with the fingers, then Geronimo used his fingers to. Emi observed Geronimos placing the cotton on the sheep draw on the paper. Emi said: "Voy a usar este cotton, es muy suavecita como ovejita," Geronimo told her cotton was a funny word, and they started to laugh for*

*a few minutes, then He told her to spread the cotton, and she did as he told her, then he told her that it was algodón and no cotton, Emi laughed and told me that cotton was a funny word for her friend. When they finished their work, Geronimo said to Emi: "Mira el mio quedo genial." Emi repeats the phrase el mio quedo genial ves?. When the class was over, Emi showed her work to her grandma and said: "Mira el mio quedo genial."*

#### **4.5.2 Axial code 2: Raising awareness as a dual language and literacy user.**

This category refers to the instances in which Emi discovered, recognized, and identified some of her literacy skills and her abilities in reading and understanding her world in two languages within social settings where literacy was around and part of her everyday life—making meanings by relying on available resources ruled by her curiosity at the moment of making the sign (Kress, 2003). This axial code comprises four subcategories: developing print awareness, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and using translanguaging to make herself clear

**Focused code 1: developing print awareness:** This subcategory refers to the occasions in which Emi demonstrated natural curiosity about the print in her environment, understanding of it, identifying familiar symbols and words that frequently occur in her surroundings (Westwood, 2004), as well as displayed knowledge that print carries meaning (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2001), shaping, and examining the meanings of noticeable print (Goodman, 1986), and pretending to read them in both English and Spanish language.

This subcategory also encompasses how multiple experiences with her environmental print within her community helped her as a tool to read words and her world (Freire, 1970) and to develop a set of skills such as being able to make distinctions between visual presentations of words and graphic displays made up of nonwords, letters and words; associating phonemes with

letters, pictures with letters, holding a book correctly and understanding that text are read from left to right and top to bottom (Durkin, 1993; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)

In the following piece of data, Emi centers her attention on perceptual features of the sign she sees at the elevator. She detailed specific attributes of the illustration such as the shape and color of objects and actions occurring in it which she identifies the figure of a dog defecating inside a red circle with a red diagonal line as shown in Fig 1, using the colors to assist and identify the print (Goodman, 1986). Additionally, these appreciations served her as a strategy to construct meaning through her transaction with the visual and printed sign directed by context and the practices of the community (Goodman, 1996; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978), associating the content of the image with the letters next to it and linking all these components to an action that is against the rules in her environment.

***Fieldnotes: at the elevator on May 15, 2019, 3,2 years***

*Emi saw a new sign of "forbidden to let dogs poop here" on the elevator of her building; she looked and pointed at it, and said: "Look, mommy, it says dogs can't pee on the lift, they have to go out because the lift is to go up and down." I asked where it says that, and she said that on those black letters next to the image; I also asked her how did she know that the sign meant what she was saying; and she explained to me that the red line inside the red circle means no, and she told me that she had seen a similar sign at the playground, but that it was different because the dog on that sign she saw was not pooping, so she said: "dogs can't play with kids at the playground." And then, she asked me with discontent why dogs were not allowed to play with kids at the playground.*





*Figure 1.* The forbidden to let dogs poop here Emi saw at the elevator

The next excerpt also exemplifies Emi's print recognitions associating a previous event that was significant for her and the colors of the logo of the place she refers to; data showed how the orange color of the logo was determinant for her to associate and identify the name of the place, understanding the role of print in carrying meaning (Goodman, 1986).

***Field notes: in a taxi on January 10, 2020***

*Emi her, grandmother and I were in a taxi, suddenly Emi said very excitedly to her grandma: "Mira Mami es Panamericana." Her grandma asked her: "¿Y Tu Como sabes? " Emi replied: "Mira los Libros y la baner naranja ahí dice panamericana , mama y yo compramos juguetes and materials en este lugar para trabajar en casa , y hay muchos libros y marcadores ,it's awesome " .*

The next fragment of data shows how the context of an everyday event in the kitchen motivates Emi to engage and learn about print through a meaningful mother and child dynamic mediated exchange while cooking (Justice & Ezell, 1999) that merged from a cereal box.

Emi's excitement and explanation of what she found written in the box of cereal shows that she was able to identify the information within a word; when I asked her to show me where the word was, she first points with her fingers letter C and produced the phonic sound, a process in which she associated sound, letter and looked at the image of the corn display in the box, to support word recognition

In interaction with her Spanish-speaking grandmother, Emi translated the word corn to maiz and told her grandmother she should learn the letters in English; this specific part of the interaction shows that Emi is aware that the word corn is written in English and let her grandma know that although the printed word does not say maiz as such, it means maiz in Spanish. The situation motivates Emi to look for an alternative to write the word in Spanish, requesting her mother's help. In the quest for assistance with her mother, data shows how parental scaffolding with knowledge about print and encouragement fosters print awareness evolution while the child, as an active learner, makes connections to construct meaning and understand forms and functions of print (Bus, 2001). The former is appreciated when I asked her to write a word in Spanish she is already familiar with, the word mamá, and I asked her to divide the word and used the first part of the word ma and consequently spell the following letter to help her to write the word in Spanish.

The whole event contributed to extend and develop Emi's interests in print in both her languages, resulting in a fruitful transmission of literacy knowledge from mother to daughter, evidencing that print-rich spaces at home provided opportunities to interact with print and learn its features.

**Fieldnotes: here says corn, May 23, 2020, 4,1 year**

*Emi and I were cooking some arepas in the kitchen; suddenly, she said: "!Look, mommy; here says corn," she showed me her cereal box. I got really excited about her discovery and asked her: "can you show me where it says that ?" she pointed with her fingers at the first letter of the word corn . "Here look /k/ /k/ see the letter /k/ /k/ for cat, and this is /ou/ and here is the corn you see" I told her how clever she was and asked her if she knew what the next word says, she replied: "no but it's ok, see it? This big yellow corn, corn is healthy and yummy. Can I have some cereal? but no milk, mommy, please, milk is not good for my belly."*

*I suggested she share with her grandma what she had told me, and she went to the living room where grandma was and said: "Mira Mami esta box dice maíz,aquí ves?"*

*"en donde dice maíz?" "Aca ¿ves? ¿Ves el mais? Said Emi, pointing first at the word and then to the picture, "Pero ahí dice cor," said her grandma, then Emi told her she should learn the letters in English. "Pero eso está en Inglés, yo no sé inglés," responded her grandmother. Then Emi asked me to write the word corn in Spanish for granny, so she could learn to read. She looked for a piece of paper and a pencil. She gave them to me. I told her that she could help me to write the word "maíz" down because I was cooking. My hands were full of dough; she told me she didn't know how to do it, so I asked her if she remembers the word mamá; she answered yes, I asked to write it down, and she did it. I told her we just needed the first part of that word: ma and requested her to erase the second syllable of the word "ma" when she did so; she asked me if it says maiz. I asked her: "what do you think?" she says no," say Maiz, go ahead" I asked her, she said the word, then I asked her what letter she thought possible go next, but she got upset and*

*said: "mom you are not helping me stop!" "what comes next ?" she asked me; she was referring to the letters, so I spelled the letter I, and then the letter Z, and she wrote it next to the chunk "ma." She showed it to her grandma and, using sticky tape, pasted the piece of paper on the box of cereal so her grandma could read the word.*



*Figure 2. Corn-Maiz*

In the following excerpts, Emi holds the book a "kiss good night" properly in her hands, and while she performs a pretend reading, telling a story based on the pictures she saw in the book, she focused on actions occurring in the images such as what the characters of the story do, using images to a greater extent to construct meaning. She begins at the front of the book, pointing with her fingers from the top to the bottom of the page; making a distinction between images and letters as she continued telling the story; she turns the pages from left to right and ends at the back of the book. This data evidence how the event of pretend reading a storybook provides Emi's opportunity to extend her awareness of concepts associated with print forms, functions, and characteristics that she showed she is able to perform.

***Video image sequence : V\_20191029\_110928\_N0: reading a Kiss good night October 29, 2019***

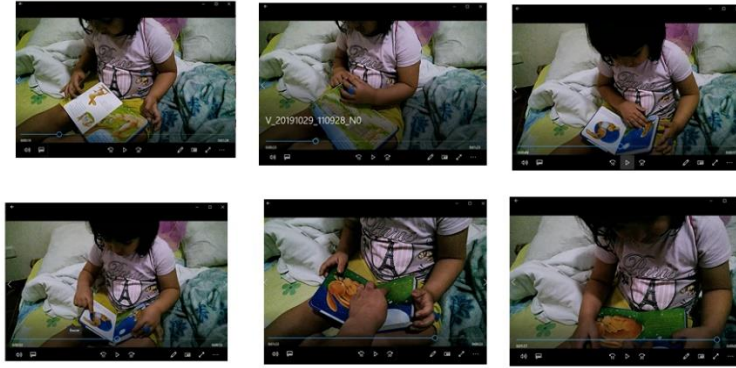


Figure 3. Reading a kiss goodnight

**Video transcript: V\_20191029\_110928\_N0: reading a Kiss good night October 29, 2019**

*Emi: "And the horse says hello bunny, and the bunny looked at the moon  
Wait, and the bunny say hello horse, and the bunny say Hello owl. He say, twinkle  
twinkle little star, How I wonder what you are. The bunny look to the moon. The bunny  
was tired."*

*Me: "what happened to the little bunny?"*

*Emi: "they are sleeping."*

*Me: "Sleeping with?"*

*Emi: "Mommy"*

*Me: "what happened to the little hare?"*

*Emi: "no, it is a bunny; they are sleeping."*

*Me: "Sleeping with?"*

*Emi: "mommy."*

*Me: "mommy, very good. What is this? I point at the moon in the picture."*

*Emi: "the moon."*

*Me: "what about this? What is this (I point at the grass?)."*

*Emi: "letters."*

*Me: "letters? There you go, good they are letters (I was expecting she answer flowers or grass). But these?"*

*Emi: "They are flowers."*

*Me: "And this?"*

*Emi: "It is a biny bug."*

*Me: "It's a ladybug."*

**Focused code 2:Phonological awareness:** This subcategory encompasses the moments in which Emi was able to recognize, generate and invent some rhyming words (Weinberger, 1998) by means of nursery rhymes, language exposure, and language games, and implicit instruction as an enjoyable and effective way to introduce the concept of rhyme and other features of phonological awareness to her. It also comprises events in which Emi associated similar sounds in each language and identified the language used in her context and books during different interactions, in which she recognized and communicated relating people or language situations, developing her bilingual and biliteracy skills detecting and manipulating the sound structure of the language (Whitehurst & Lonigan's, 2003)

In the following excerpt, Emi invites her little sister to sing along a nursery rhyme she previously listened to and saw in a video, there is a line of the song that mentions the word fish, and she produces a sound that ends in /ish/ trying to follow the rhyming course of the song when I asked her what she said she suggested me to ignore the situation and that keep having fun with her while she sings. Consequently, she introduces a line that is not included in the song, in which she mentions a character of a tv cartoon she likes, called Llama Llama, and she rhymes the word lama with pajamas. Data showed how emi had fun while learning a nursery rhyme; she likes it.

She showed an understanding that to rhyme words, they need to share a typical ending and that she was able to isolate the onset from the rhyme and compare the endings of the words (Phillips et al., 2008). this process also includes that she had some prior understanding of the sound structure of words and the ability to manipulate these sounds.

***Transcription: getting ready for bedtime: singing down by the bay May 16, 2019-3.2 years***

*Emi: " Let's sing Abi, down by the bay where the wáter melons grow back to my home I dare not go, for if I do my mother will say did you ever see a cat wearing a hat down by the bay, Did you ever see a mouse building a house down by the bay, did you ever si a fish wearing an ish down by the bay."*

*Me: "what was that again ? "*

*Emi: " never mind, mommy sing, sing along, did you ever si a lama wearing my .....pajamas down by the bay. "*

*Me: "well done, Emi, you learned the song."*

*Emi: "yes, it's my favorite. I love it; can we watch the video before bed, mommy, so Abi can see it?"*

*Me: Emi: " tomorrow, we'll watch it again."*

The next excerpt evidence Emi knowledge and understanding of the letter name and letter-sound relationship (Defior & Tudela, 1994). She is also aware that those words form individual sounds and that letters map into sounds and vice versa (Geudens, 2006). The event is a pretend game in which she is the teacher, and her little sister is her student; Emi wants to replicate what she has learned about letters. Additionally, data showed that she is also able to connect letter sound in Spanish when she mentions " / a/ es por aca " y "B es por banano" after

her grandmas tells her that manzana starts with the letter M in Spanish " pero Manzana es con m."

*Transcript: playing with her sister, I am the teacher Mars 2, 2020-3.10 years*

*"Emi: "I am the teacher Abi, sit down, look A is for /a/ , /a/ Apple and ant , say Apple  
Abi, B is for ball, /b/ /b,/ /d/ is for dog and dinosaur , oh I forgot C is for cat /k/ /k/, is for  
cat/ k//,k/ cat, /e/ is for elephant, f is for fish , G is for gorilla ,/ h/ is for hat,/ i/ is for  
Igloo and /dʒ/ is for jug oh no Abi wait don't go, mama Abi don't want to learn"*

*Grandma: "¿Que pasa Emi? "*

*Emi: "Abi se fue y no quiere aprender"*

*Grandma : " a ver enseñame"*

*Emi : " / a/ is for Apple"*

*Grandma : " pero enseñam en Español"*

*Emi: " mmm /a/ es de manzana"*

*Grabdma: " pero manzana es con m"*

*Emi : " / a/ es por aca "*

*Grandma : " /a/ de araña"*

*Emi: " si muy bien mami."*

*Grandma: " Ahora la B."*

*Emi: "si ,a ver, B es por Banano si banano "*

*Grandma: "Que bien y la C."*

The following excerpt exemplifies an explicit phonological awareness assistance moment that emerges from Emi's interest in the family word after watching a video that motivated her to extend her learning. It depicts how the child's interest serves as an opportunity for mother and



daughter to interact and learn while playing a language flashcard game. Additionally, data evidence that for Emi, beginning sound notion was a bit complex to grasp without explicit assistance (Gillon, 2004), and how explicit support and exposure to phonological awareness was necessary after asking her to mention the first sound shown in the object, and she mentioned the letter name instead of the beginning sound, a proper intervention was effective in raising the levels of letter-sound awareness and beginning sound awareness in the child and reinforced the child's literacy learning.

***Fieldnotes: playing and learning April 7, 2019, with flashcards***

*I saved some videos about phonics on my youtube list reproduction for Emi. She chose one of those that caught her attention related to "the an Family word," and after watched it, She has asked me to play the video several times and also has looked for related objects in the house, such as a pan and can; she looked for a pan in the kitchen and showed it to me. She did the same with a can of corn she saw in the kitchen. I decided to print some flashcards of the "an family word": pan, fan, van, ran, can, to practice, and reinforced what she learned from the video. We had fun while saying the sounds, dragging them out /a a a a // n n n n/, blending them, and reading the word; I also asked her to name the pictures, say the beginning sounds. Then I gave her the pictures and asked her to sort them according to the beginning sound [ Fig 5]. After giving directions, Emi first named the objects of the pictures; when I asked her the beginning sound, she mentioned the first letter name of the object and not the sound, I showed her the flashcard depicting a pan, and she said: it starts with P, I told her she was right but also remind her that P has characteristic sound /p/ and so I produced the sound for her, she repeated the sound /p/ and I asked to produce another word with that sound, she said: "mmm with*

*/p/ /p/ I know pond." When I showed her the second flashcard displaying a fan, she also mentions the letter name F instead of the sound. I did precisely the same I did with word pan; with the third flashcard, she took some time, I asked her to remember the video she liked about the family, and she asked me: is it /k/ /k/ mommy? I told her she was right, and she said yes; it is /k/ /k/ sound, but it is also C mommy, and she showed me the c letter.*



*Figure 4. "the an family game."*

**Focused code 3: Alphabet Knowledge:** This subcategory accounts for the moments where Emi showed an understanding of distinctive features of alphabet letters (Lomax & McGee, 1987), such as names, shapes, and sounds. This subcategory also accounts for a variety of activities such as listening, watching videos, singing the alphabet song, pointing out the letters on posters, matching letters from the alphabet with objects, storybook readings, alphabet apps, and her interest in learning the letters in her own name, the names of her family members, and favorite animals, and how these, became a source of motivation to learn and recognize the letters in words of her environmental print being able to differentiate if they are written in upper or lower case, increasing her emergent literacy skills (Halle et al., 2003)

The following data showed how digital media exposure provided an opportunity to learn and practice the alphabet while playing and exploring (Drotner & Livingston, 2008). Emi was entwined within the interaction language and digital media (Pahl & Roswell, 2006; Weigel et al., 2009) and acquire information about literacy through her interest in literacy and technology. Emi engaged with an app game on the tablet tracing some letters with her fingers and associated uppercase letters as mothers and lower case as baby letters. The event granted the possibilities for me to explain the way letters are called; upper and lower case. She expressed her preferences with the uppercase letter, claiming that lower case letters were boring; according to Invernizzi et al. (2004), preschool children are generally more interested and able to name upper-case than lowercase letters. Moreover, she was able to recognize the first letter of her name when typing the letters she reviewed in the app when she was playing, showing a higher motivation to learn the letters in her name (Arrow, 2007). Former research has suggested that children's own names are determinant in the acquisition of literacy (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982), influencing the child's productions of other words.

***Field notes: Trace the letter App playing with the tablet February 8, 2020***

*I download educative apps on my tablet and let Emi explore the apps; she started to explore a letter trace app and had fun while learning; she had to trace all the alphabet letter in both upper and lower case, and she got very excited because when she traces the letter correctly, she received a sticker. Emi didn't finish all the 26 letters. She just went from letter A to F; she said: "look, mommy, this is mommy D, and this is baby d, but I don't like baby letters just mommy letters D is for dinosaurs. I love dinosaurs." at that moment I also explained to her that mommy letter as she called them were called upper case letters, and baby letters were called lower case letters, she said lower case looked*

*boring. I gave her the tablet and asked her to type both letters in a word document, and she seemed pleased to do it; she first typed D in upper case and then in lower case; after that, she also typed some letter she practiced in the app, and when she was typing letter E she said: " look! This is E for Emi, and this is M, and it is in my name too. My name is beautiful."*

The next piece of data depicts an example of how Emi is aware that she can spell and recognize the letters on environmental print (Worden & Boettcher, 1990) outside her house, how it motivated her to spell the letters, even though she did not know what the word she was spelling said, as stated by Bums & Richgels (1989) "word reading appears to be a very separate ability from word writing or spelling" (p. 13) since children who are able to spell words cannot always read them, she spells the letters correctly, and she perceived herself as a reader because she was able to spell the letters. Emi's curiosity about letters, positive and fun interactions with her mother and a sense of accomplishment lead her to gain literacy skills (Justice et al., 2009). Likewise, during the event, there is maternal scaffolding and evidence that digital media, as a youtube ABC channel, contributed to her ABC learning. Moreover, she associates the shape of the heart with the feeling of love.

***Field notes: at the mall: I know what it says, January 28, 2020***

*"We are at the mall, and Emi saw a colorful sign that said "I love Colombia," [Fig 6]; the sign caught Emi's attention, and she said: "I know what it says here," and she started to spell the letter C, O, L, O, M, B, I, A, I congratulated her and asked her where she learned the letter, and she said she knew the ABC form the YouTube video and started to sing the ABC song: "And what does it say ?" I asked her. She said: "I don't know, mommy. it's a big word." I told her she was right; it was a long word, and I told her the*

*long word says Colombia. And she could easily infer the heart means to love, so she said, oh it says, "I love Colombia." "See, mommy, I know how to read" She was excited because she could spell the letters and read the sign*



*Figure 5. "I love Colombia."*

In this excerpt, Emi evidence, she is familiar and able to distinguish features and name of alphabet letters, written language awareness, and letter-sound correspondence (Justice & Ezell, 2001), elaborating the letters of her name in playdough material and spelling it in both her languages, according to Justice et al. (2006) children mastered letters from their first name first, additionally previous research has suggested that children's own names are of vital importance in the acquisition of literacy (Bloodgood, 1999; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). This event also evidences how she uses different resources to elaborate her name while having fun and learning at the same time with playdough, sharing what she knows with her mother and grandmother, and strengthening her biliteracy skills.

***Fieldnotes: Playing with playdough: this is my name. July 2019 3.4 years***

*Emi was in the living room playing with playdough; I was cleaning the house, so I was not paying attention to what she was doing, but she generally made a heart and starts shapes with play dough, food shapes, or animal shapes, so I was amazed when she called*

*me and asked me to close my eyes because she had a surprise for me. It was her name in playdough. She had typed and written the short form of her name before, but not her complete name, so it was a nice big surprise; Emi was proud of her playdough letters, and she said to her grandma and to me: "see? this is the letters of my beautiful name, mira Mami este es mi nombre y estas son mis letras " and then she spelled the letters of her name for me in English and for her grandma in Spanish.*



*Figure 6. This is my name*

**Focused code 4: Using translanguaging naturally:** According to Otheguy et al. (2015), "Translanguaging is the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages" (p. 281). This category refers to the moment in which Emi employed translanguaging in her different social setting, using her bilingual abilities as a resource and strategy that encourages her to fluidly switch between her two languages dynamically to effectively negotiate to make meaning and affirm her identity as a bilingual speaker (Sayer, 2013).

The next three excerpts exemplified how Emi acts as a language broker, as she is continuously negotiating meaning in two of her languages. Language brokering is defined as "interpreting and translating between culturally and linguistically different people mediating interactions in a variety of situations" (Tse, 1996, p. 226).

Moreover, the excerpts exemplify how Emi used translanguaging as a strategy that allowed her to use both languages in her communicative interactions as part of her dynamic bilingualism in different situations (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011).

***Transcript: Una fiesta con cake August 2, 2019-3.5 years***

*Emi is talking on the phone with her grandmother*

*Emi: "Mami vamos a tener un fiesta con cake, balloons, sweets ves?"*

*Grandma: "wow y ¿que es todo eso?"*

*Emi: "mira asi con velas y presentes"*

*Me: "tell her with pastel and bombas."*

*Emi : "con pastel y bombas entiendes?"*

*Grandma: " oh que bien , me guardas pastel"*

*Emi: "Esta bien, mommy, we have to save some cake for granny."*

***Fieldnotes: un chameleon August 17, 2019-3.5 years***

*Emi finished her mixed up the chameleon craft and went to show it to her grandma*

*Emi: "Mira Mami esto es un chameleon tiene muchos distintos animales y come flies asi with his tongue"*

*Grandma : "ohh esta muy lindo que es?"*

*Emi: "un chameleon, ya te lo dije. mommy tell granny in Spanish"*

*Video transcript V\_20191027 un pumpkin October 29, 2019, 3.7 years*

*Emi is at home painting a pumpkin, and her grandma is in the rocking chair in front of her*

*Grandma: "¿que estas haciendo?"*

*Emi: "un blue pumpkin"*

*Grandma: "no entiendo , ¿que estas haciendo?"*

*Emi: "míralo"*

*Grandma: "no entiendo , ¿que estas haciendo?"*

*Emi: "painted este"*

*Grandma: " y como se llama ese?"*

*Emi: "un pumpkin"*

*Grandma: " ¿Calabaza?"*

*Emi: "Si"*

*Grandma":ah Y que color esta pintando?*

*Emi: "blue y red y pink ahh este ( she is mixing all the colors she has on the table )"*

*Grandma: "no entiendo, ¿ que color? ( grandma does not know Emi mixed all the colors with a brush to paint the pumpkin )"*

*Emi: "este ( she points all the colors) one, two, three, four five"*

*Grandma: "no entiendo y ¿como se llama el color?"*

*Emi: "colores"*

*Grandma : "no entiendo ¿que color es?"*

*Emi: "white, green, and blue ( emi shows the paintings to grandma)"*

*Grandma: Si pero ¿que color es ese? ( she refers to the one Emi used in the pumpkin)"*



*Emi: "es un colores, este es pintura,este es yellow por aca y blue por aca come and see*

*Grandma: "Pero dime ¿como se llama el color?"*

*Emi: "Is yellow*

*Grandma: "¿Amarillo?"*

*Emi: " Si amarillo*

*Grandma: "¿Ah y el otro?"*

*Emi: "Azul*

*Grandma: "¿Y ese? (She points at the white color )*

*Emi: "Y white blanco ves*

*Grandma: "¿Y ese? ( she points at the colors green and red)*

*Emi: "Green verde y Red rojo*

**Axial code 3: Connecting life experiences through multimodality:** This category refers to Emi's ability to re-represent and express the same ideas in different modes such as talking, drawing, dancing, singing, and playing, shifting and combining multimodal systems to make meaning and communicate her ideas, feelings, and thoughts (Kress et al., 2008), in both languages English and Spanish in her everyday activities. This category encompasses two focused codes :

**Focused code 1: Transmediating across kinesthetic and digital modes using both languages:** Children not only learn and generate knowledge through written language, but it is also claimed that young children learn and communicate through multiple modes, which afford a particular way of making meaning (Kress et al., 2008). Taking into account the new era of information in which children are surrounded by several digital devices and information, their interest also includes a multimodal set of images, animations, sounds, and other systems

interrelated in meaning-making. The shift among modes is defined as transmediation, and it is described as the translation of content from one sign system into another and as a vital process of knowledge construction in young children's meaning-making (Siegel, 2006). Thus, this subcategory accounts for events I observed, such as Emi playing a digital game on the tablet, and as she started talking about the game stages, describing characters, and recalling previous events, she connected to the game, transmediating from digital modes to non-digital modes and kinesthetic modes and vice versa, as a different way of expression and understanding and how this process reinforced her language and literacy skills.

In the next excerpt, Emi is performing a monologue while playing; she called herself "Peso," which is a pop-culture character of the cartoon Octonauts, her favorite cartoon of the moment. She transmedia storylines of an episode of the cartoon she saw on Youtube and created a narrative in her play; Emi showed understanding from one sign system and moving from a digital model to another sign system to create meaning (Suhor, 1984).

***Transcript Audio recording January 28, 2020***

*Emi: "I am peso; let's cure this whale. What seems to be the problem? Oh, I know you came for a check-up. Let me take a look at your thin I am a medic, and taking care of people is what I do."*

The following piece of data is a description and photo of a whale Emi draw and paint. The whale painting is also related to the Octonauts cartoon she liked. While she was painting the whale, she started to tell me some features about the whale she learned from the cartoons. Additionally, she recalled the story of Jonas from the bible she learned at Sunday school at church. This is another example of how transmediation occurs from one mode to another and

how it served Emi to extend what she learned from diverse sources and modes expressed through artifacts and both her languages.



*Figure 7. Drawing a Whale*

*Drawing description February 8, 2020*

*Fieldnotes February 8, 2020*

*"Emi: Look Mami, this is a whale, whales are the biggest animals, they moan, to talk to each other and breath air, this whale is like the one who ate Jonas because he didn't obey God. .Mira Mami la Ballena que comio Jonas si ¿ves ?"*

In the following sample of data, Emi transmediated between digital sign systems as it is a youtube video of the song baby shark to dance and singing; through kinetic responses, Emi blends both the sub-conscious and conscious of constructing meaning (Deans & Wright, 2018) and as stated by Bloom (1993) movement discourses allows her to learn "about relationships between objects by observing the effects of movement and actions done by themselves and other persons" (p. 50). As shown in the pictures and the excerpt, Emi expresses a shark's jaws movement such as opening a shouting the jaws, with her arms and hands and controlled low and high levels of repeated opening and closing arm movements according to the song's speed, demonstrating an "internal coherence" (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 196). Moreover, she recalls previous

information from the video to recreate what she thinks sharks may act like as she moves through space, and through performing arts, she builds knowledge and concepts, expressing their thoughts through body actions, making marks, and sounds (Deans & Wright, 2018)

***Dancing and singing baby shark song November 19, 2019***



*Figure 8. Dancing Baby Shark*

**Fieldnotes November 19, 2019**

*Emi asked me to dance with her the baby shark song, a song she has listened to and seen on youtube several times before because it is a catchy song she and her sister enjoy dancing and singing. I played the song in a speaker sound unit. When the song started, she energetically started to sing and dance from low to high speed, opening and closing her arms, reproducing the movements she saw in the video of the song on a youtube channel, teaching her little sister how to do it. She enjoyed it very much and asked me to repeat the song for a second time.*

**Focused code 2: Producing and performing texts while playing:** This subcategory encompasses the moments in which Emi used her body, toys, and drawings to take part in cultural practices throughout playing (Ghiso, 2011; Wohlwend, 2008) and the events in which play granted her the opportunity to explore her world through several modes, to develop social interactions skills with peers, and to get involved with embedded reading, writing, listening,

speaking into play (Lifter et al., 2011) producing and performing text in both languages while having fun.

The next excerpt depicts an event in which Emi is playing with her grandmother. Emi pretended to be an optician, and her grandma the patient. Throughout this play event, the child behaves above her age and above their daily activities and showed interest in medicine and knowledge of real-life events or linked to real-life experiences (e.g., doctor check-up) using a play discourse ruled by socio-cultural contexts (Garvey, 1990).

During Play, Emi used and designed materials to dramatize the optician role, as is the case of the paper she mentions, which contains letters. This form of social play allowed Emi to use her imagination, cognitive skill, and communication in which she practices literacy embedded skills and the notion of material culture (Corsaro & Eder 1990). This situation also exemplifies how through the play, her grandma corrected her and let her see she had confused the direction of the letter B; Emi was aware, and she asked for directions to correct her mistake, expanding her thinking and enhancing her desire to learn.

*Audio Transcript Jugando con la Abuela – Playing with grandma March 16, 2020*

*Emi: "A ver mami siéntate, soy la doctora de los ojos"*

*Grandma: "bueno a revisa mis ojos"*

*Emi: "veamos, tus ojos necesitan estas drops porque se ven rojos"*

*Granma : "¿ están bien mis ojos? "*

*Emi: "vamos a ver , ahora mira esta papel aca, estas letras que hice , pero debes cubrir un ojo con la mano . Muy bien ¿que es" esto?"*

*Grandma : "la letra B creo , pero esa letra esta al contrario doctora"*

*Emi: "oh voy arreglarla, como es mami , dime . "*

Similarly, in the next piece of data, Emi also dramatized the role of a doctor with her sister; during the event, the writing was evident. Emi engaged in writing practices making signs in the medical prescription, showing recording her involvement in the activity, and provided some recommendations she recalled from previous events and produced sentences replicating what I have told her when she was feeling sick. This event also served Emi to strengthen her relationship with her sister while having fun and expressing a sense of care for her.

***Fieldnotes: I am the doctor February 17-3.11 years***

*Emi is playing roles with her sister in their bedroom; she is the doctor, and her sister is the patient; she tells her sister what I have told her when she has been ill, Emi holds a pencil and a notebook and draws a pill, then she made some scribbles and pretended to write a medical prescription for her sister.*

*"Emi: oh no, you have a fever, you need acetaminophen, ok? Obey coz I'm the doctor open your mouth, here is a bandage for your forehead, and let me check your heart. Oh no, take a nap, have chicken broth. Here is what you need to buy later."*

#### **4.5.3 Axial code 4: Parental strategies to foster dual language and literacy**

Parental involvement in their child's learning increased their motivation to extend their knowledge and plays a significant role in successful education and language (Wanat, 2010). This category encompasses a set of practices, beliefs, and resources my husband and I implemented before, during, and after this research, in order to assist Emi's education, as well as her bilingual and biliteracy development, but that came to light and were more visible after analyzing all the data collected. Some of these practices include integrating Emi in meaningful, purposeful family

activities, parental scaffolding, parental -child interaction while performing any activity during the day, detecting Emi's interest and resources such as digital devices, books, toys, and community resources in order to promote language exposure and literacy experiences in Emi's everyday practices as well as a strong determination to use the minority language in and out the home context.

In the following excerpt, it can be seen, parental -child interaction occurring in the minority language, that is, English, at the supermarket, and how the activity of going shopping serves as a learning scenario in which I taught Emi social skills, such as respect for other people's making the line to pay for the groceries at the supermarket and to pay first, the food we want to consume. Through this interaction, Emi learned to take turns and that objects have a monetary value. Language use, interaction, and participation in a regular event provide meaningful knowledge for Emi to developed bilingual biliteracy skills and social interactions.

***Fieldnotes September 24,2019-3.6 years***

*we went to the supermarket; Emi wanted to eat a chocolate egg*

*and did not want to wait in the line and went to the cashier*

*Emi: "Look, I have my chocolate eggie. Can I eat it now? "*

*Me: " no: we have to pay for it first."*

*Emi: "ok, let's go and pay (she went to the cashier, and there were people in the line ) "*

*Me: "we have to wait in the line; those people are first, see? we need to respect the line."*

*Emi: " but why, I want to eat my eggie."*

*Me: " it will take no time, be patient, let's wait our turn."*

*Emi: "ok, let's wait in the boring line."*

The next excerpt encompasses a set of strategies and resources I implemented with Emi while drawing together. The data shows how Emi was interested in drawing the characters of a story she had read before and reinforced with a movie. Within those events, resources are also relevant. They imply the use of a book, a tv, a streaming platform such as Netflix, a laptop in which Emi searched for images related to the book and the movie, and a printer which all of which facilitate the process of learning and teaching. Moreover, data also exemplifies how, as a parent, I took advantage of the child's interest as a point of departure to engage her in a series of language and literacy practices that maximize her learning. Additionally, mother-child interaction about the story and drawing together strengthens the relationship between mother and daughter while Emi transmediated across modes.

***Fieldnotes: drawing together the charlotte's web May 8, 2020-4.3 years***

*Emi asked me to draw with her; she wanted to draw charlotte's web because we read the story days ago, we also watch the movie on Netflix, and she was fascinated with the movie.*

*Emi: Come, mommy, let's draw something nice, like a pig in the movie we watch, remember the pig and the spider and the duck and the stinky rat, yeah, let's draw a farm mommy, but I don't want the piggy to be sad on my draw, ok?*

*Emi also asked me to look at images on google, so it was easier for her to draw the animals. I turn on the laptop, and she looked for images on google. She also asked me to print them; while drawing, Emi started to talk about the movie and asked some questions about it. She mentions the spider was very clever; I asked her why, and she said because*



*the spider knew how to write and read words on the web. She also mentions the rat how disgusting it was for her and also mentions the piggy and how sweet it was.*

In summary, this chapter outlined the research perspectives and the procedures implemented to analyze the data. This chapter also explained how the findings of this research were organized in four primary categories: *Socializing and Interacting with Family and Community, Raising awareness as a dual language and literacy user, Connecting life experiences through multimodality, Parental strategies to foster dual language and literacy,* that depicted and described the moments in which Emi showed understanding and development of her dual language and literacy skills within her everyday practices, permitting the answer to the research question and reached the objectives. The following chapter presents the conclusions and implications for the field of bilingualism and biliteracy teaching and learning process at early ages.

## Chapter 5. Conclusions and implications

In this chapter, I address the interpretations concerning the findings and analysis presented in the previous section, which allowed me to answer the research question leading this study: *How does an unschooled preschool-age child develop English Spanish bilingual and biliteracy skills in her everyday activities?* Moreover, I relate to the objectives to present the possible contributions and implications this study has for standard and nonstandard dual language and literacy educational settings.

This qualitative case study portrayed a child's bilingual biliteracy skills development process within her everyday practices from a socio-cultural perspective. In this study, Emi, my daughter, was exposed to English and Spanish languages from birth, however for the purpose of this research, the chosen period to analyze language and literacy development was between the child's three and four years of age. The one language - one community approach was implemented, in which the English language was the minority language, but Emi's most frequent exposure, and Spanish, the broader community, spoken language.

This study aimed to examine the bilingual and biliteracy learning process of an unschooled preschooler Colombian child, my daughter, in her everyday practices and to identify the main strategies a Colombian family implement at home to reinforce their child's bilingualism and biliteracy learning. To accomplish these objectives, I carefully observed and documented the child's daily activities details that took place in bilingual unschooling created environment and her community.

The data gathered came from field notes, audio-video recordings, photos, and drawings descriptions. These instruments recorded relevant insights of Emi's learning process through

actions that are likely to be seen as ordinary and non-educational such as watching tv, dancing, or going out for a walk, among other regular activities with most of the individual's routines. The analysis of the data collected shed light on four major moments in which bilingualism and biliteracy had an impact on Emily's everyday experiences.

1) Interacting with family and community, 2) Raising Awareness as a dual language and literacy user, 3) Connecting life experiences through multimodality, 4) Parents strategies to foster dual language and literacy.

Findings on the first main category suggest that participation in family traditions and routines and community was essential to enhance Emi's social interaction because it provided positive learning experiences giving her a sense of joy and belonging, granting her an opportunity to express her interest and mediate her own dual language and literacy learning process. Likewise, the process of shaping, sharing, and reproducing learning (Rogoff et al, 1993), when participating, reinforced her abilities and motivated her to continue learning according to her own interest.

Findings on the second main categories depicted how Emi called herself a reader and a writer, how she identified herself as a bilingual child capable of reading in both languages identifying characteristics of early literacy components such as print awareness, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and how she freely used her whole linguistic repertoire without restrictions, according to the social settings in which she interacts by means of translanguaging. Moreover, findings also displayed how home and community resources, as well as interactions, and interests, substantiated the necessary tools for her to read and understand her bilingual world.

Findings on the third main category showed how Emi shifted meanings across multiple modes without mastering formal writing abilities, and how this process called transmediation

allowed her to express her ideas, feelings, and thought through both of her languages and different literacy text, making sense of her world through various sign-making systems (Kress, 1997).

This category also depicts the importance and advantages of play, how it contributes to foster Emi's creativity, problem-solving, and imagination, dramatizing roles and having fun, socializing with or without peers, utilizing resources, and producing text, incorporating literacy into their play while playing.

Finally, findings on the fourth main category showed a set of practices and resources such as books, digital devices, and didactic materials, among others, Emi's parents employed with the aim of support and accompanied Emi's bilingual and biliteracy skills development through a socio-cultural context in which language and literacy were learned in the child everyday activities and scenarios. Parental involvement in Emi's education reflected her positive attitudes toward bilingualism as well as parent-child language interaction and identification of the child's main interest are interrelated factors that are determinant aspects of a child's progress in language and literacy.

It is essential that parents, particularly mothers, view their role as important (Votruba-Drzal, 2003). We, mothers, have a vital role in providing learning opportunities and guiding children towards engaging activities, creating a foundation for our children's later success (Votruba-Drzal, 2003). Therefore it is necessary to be aware of our children's developmental needs and interest to organized the home environment to boost development, as it occurs when a mother exchanges a significant amount of interactions promoting early literacy skills in

the child. Additionally, this research demonstrates an alternative way in which education meaningfully links a child and her education to the real world, taking education into real-life

experiences in the lived-in world. This study also corroborates that unschooling is a viable option for a child to learn and develop dual language and literacy skills driven by her interest and motivation in learning.

In conclusion, this research is an invitation for parents and young dual language educators to reflect and question the conventional language and literacy practices in a context such as the Colombian one, in which it is believed that bilingualism and biliteracy can be merely achieved in standard educational institutions. Although this research was carried out in a home context, it contributes to the English language teaching field depicting an optional alternative way a young child mediates her own bilingual biliteracy development out of the school context without formal instruction in a classroom and under an imposed curriculum. Additionally, this research highlights the value and significance of everyday practices a young child is emerged in and how they, along with the environment provided at home and community, granted a vast number of tools that facilitate a child's understanding and aid her to make progress in learning with parental mediation. Moreover, this research wants to shed light on alternative educational practices such as unschooling and a new understanding of learning for those who believed that learning only takes place at school by means of a teacher and a classroom.

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