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LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNER: ONE VOICE AND PERSPECTIVE OF  
SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Literacy, Language, and Culture

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by  
Donna Lynn Confere  
August 2023

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Accepted by:  
Rachelle S. Savitz, Committee Chair  
Megan Che  
Catherine Compton-Lilly  
Susan Fullerton  
Emily Howell  
Lindsey W. Rowe

## ABSTRACT

The term Long-term English Learner (LTEL) is problematic. The terminology is used in schools and based upon the number of years that a student has been in US schools and has not met the criteria for reclassification as no longer requiring language support services, accommodations, or continued annual assessment, as required by the federal government for those with a second language learner designation. It can carry with it a connotation of a deficit for the student who remains an English learner beyond five years. This study centered around interviews and observations of a student who met the criteria for being identified as a LTEL in order to understand the impact student perceptions of the schools' view of language and culture in learning. Transactional relationships in L1 and L2 use, as well as the students' understanding of what aspects of culture to share within the school are discussed.

## DEDICATION

For Hadassah Allyson Confere, who probably heard every word of the first four chapters read aloud more than once. I wish you could be here for the fifth and final chapter.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my mother, Dortha Lee Confere, and maternal grandparents, Albert and Orpha Confere, for the motivation to do this. Striving is an act, a sound, and a purpose.

For the many teachers along the way who were my teachers as well as those who became colleagues, I appreciate your support and influence.

I appreciate the faculty and administration of Clemson University for your assistance through these years. I want to acknowledge Bobbie Siefert, of Furman University, and Kathy Wright and Latonia Copeland, of Greenville County School District, for your encouragement in the earliest days of my studies.

I also want to warmly acknowledge my students of the past twenty-four years who opened my eyes to their realities and the possibilities that exist in public education.

To my committee, thank you for allowing me to focus on these students in this important time. Dr. Savitz, thank you for refusing to allow me to give in to the negative.

Finally, Ron, Vijay, Maryanne, and Sharon, thank you for giving me a sense of family.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This study actually started before there was a dissertation topic. In 2017, I was assigned a new position as an ESOL teacher in a middle school in the southeastern United States. Most of the students for whom I was responsible were born in the United States (US) or immigrated at very young ages with family members and had been a part of their current school system as far back as kindergarten. While my caseload included more recent immigrants from Central America, most of my students were US citizens or long-term residents and few had ever traveled abroad to their families' countries of origin or could recall memories from another homeland.

This was a diverse group of English Learners (ELs), yet my introduction to them by the school faculty would have never indicated that reality. The instances in which the students were spoken of as “the Spanish kids” or “the good Mexican boys, you know, the ones who stay out of drama” were plenty. When I was told by a teacher regarding a student, “I expect more of him since he’s Indian than I do the others” and another said, “They were speaking Spanish and I made them stop,” it was clear that the imposed expectations were based upon notions of race and language that were beyond anything I could explain. On top of this, the students who had been in the ESOL program since kindergarten or first grade were large in number and their scores on the state mandated annual English proficiency test demonstrated little growth after their third or fourth year as a student in US schools. This experience and the many adjustments I made and the

lessons I learned over that first year led to the choice of focusing on students who have been designated as long-term English learners (LTELs) (Olson, 2010).

### **ELs, Testing, and Creating a Term: LTELs**

The identification of English learners (ELs) for services is required by law. The United States Supreme Court ruling of *Lau v. Nichols* required appropriate instruction for ELs, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and its amendments provided mandates and resources to support state and local governments in that endeavor (Bunch, 2011). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) responded to the gaps in learning indicated by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and provided a requirement for annual testing of ELs by assessments chosen by each state that measured their English proficiency in the language domains of listening, reading, writing, and speaking (Bunch, 2011; Van Roekel, 2008). These results are part of the state data collection (Garcia et al., 2008). In addition to these laws, students are assessed for language services if their family identifies a Language Other Than English (LOTE) as being used by the child or in the home. The cut-off criteria for qualifying for services is determined by the state government and test manufacturers. In the state where this study took place, the test used is ACCESS for ELLs and requires a cut-off score of 4.4 composite with a 4 in each of the language domains before an EL is reclassified (McManus & Murphy, 2022).

The intent of language services and programming in schools for students that are identified as ELs is to ensure these students have access to the content, become proficient in English, and are reclassified, meaning no longer requiring services or English language

assessments (García et al., 2008). Unfortunately, with the emphasis on testing and accountability measures used in states that suggest ELs should be fully proficient in English within five or seven years, those students who do not meet testing criteria or cut-off scores become a focus of concern for schools while the assessments themselves may not take into account the students' multilingualism at all. It is at this point that the term LTEL or LTML (Long Term Multilingual Learner) is used to label the student as not meeting the required English proficiency standards required on the state test.

Earlier studies distinguished between oral language proficiency as usually requiring 3-5 years to develop and academic language as 4-7 years to be acquired by students who begin to study English only after enrolling in a US school (Hakuta et al., 2000). In response to the tendency of schools to place students who demonstrated social oral language proficiency but required language support in academics, Cummins (2008) developed the concept of BICS and CALP to defend why students designated as ELs required continued support in building academic language (CALP) even after demonstrating proficiency in social and oral communication (BICS).

However well-intentioned, this perspective of BICS and CALP gave rise to a view of ELs as semilingual, having proficiency in neither their first nor second languages (Cummins, 1979). Research indicates that multilingualism provides a different trajectory for learning language that is often unaccounted for when designing curriculum (Brooks, 2017b). The linguistic repertoire of LTELs includes their home language and academic language of schooling in the US. Their multilingualism is complex and does not necessarily fit into categories of bilingualism (Khatib & Taie, 2016). Cummins'

Threshold Hypothesis categorized “proficient bilingualism” as occurring when a student has reached the minimal requirement of school testing for language use in the L1 and L2 (Cummins, 1984). However, this lens does not account for the opportunities and choices ELs make as they interact with different languages and dialects and respond, interpret, and translate in their daily lives (Li & Luo, 2017). Developing one’s L2 is not a completely direct process and the success of approaches used vary with the students, indicating the need for learner perspectives (Valdes, Poza, & Brooks, 2014).

### **Long-term English Language Learners**

The term Long-term English Learner (LTEL) is problematic. The terminology is used in schools and based upon the number of years that a student has been in US schools and has not met the criteria for reclassification as no longer requiring language support services, accommodations, or continued annual assessment, as required by the federal government for those with a second language learner designation. It can carry with it a deficit connotation for students who remain English learners beyond five years. Attempts have been made to change the term to a more assets-based perspective, such as Long-term Multilingual Learners (LTMLs) or Long-term Emergent Multilinguals (LTEMs) (Yaafouri, 2021). Although most of the literature currently uses the terminology of LTELs when discussing the students, the focus of Yaafouri and others focuses on the multiple language assets these students bring and can utilize. This assets-based approach represents the lens that is valued within the research of this dissertation. Because the resources used to establish the understanding of these students use the term

LTEs, including resources in academia and state government memos, the term LTEs is used here.

The literature describes common characteristics of LTEs including their eligibility for language support services beyond the five-to-seven-year range for proficiency in the target language (Flores et al., 2015, Hakuta, et al, 2000, Menken, et al, 2012, Olsen, 2014,). LTEs are often characterized as lacking command of the English language, which is required for academic success (Clark-Gareca, 2019; Menken, et al, 2012; Olsen, 2014). Girls are slightly less likely to be classified as LTEs than boys, but Hispanic students were more likely to be identified as LTEs, as were Native American students, indicating a student's race and native language are significant in predicting a student's status as a LTE (Shakyan & Ryan, 2018).

There are some concerns that ELs and LTEs in particular are over or under-represented as students requiring special education services because they do not meet the language demands of school (Burr, et al, 2015). Others find LTEs to be at-risk for dropping out of school because of school requirements to use English only in academic settings and deeming students that cannot as inadequate or failures (Clark-Gareca, 2019; Olsen, 2014). LTEs often transfer schools during the academic year including leaving the US during school terms (Clark-Gareca, et al, 2020; Menken et al., 2012; Sahakyan & Ryan, 2018). Transferring schools or districts and leaving the US for part of the school year may happen in order for the family to stay together as relocation occurs in order for parents to maintain employment (Calibuso & Winsler, 2020; Conger et al., 2019; Nevarez-La Torre, 2010).

LTEL is a designation of ELs based upon the length of time in the programming for English proficiency. Although it is a label, it becomes identified as a problem. LTELs are identified, not because of their multilingualism, but because of comparisons between their English proficiency and requirements of one annual exam. However, consistency in defining the amount of time required for complete language proficiency, cohesion regarding testing standards for reclassification, and comprehensive discussion of the skills of LTELs are lacking.

More recent attempts to acquire normative data for understanding the length of time for developing English proficiency have led to more questions of who is an LTEL. A study by Sahakan and Ryan (2018) for the WIDA consortium (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment) measured the percentage of students who were likely to be LTELs based upon achieving a composite score of 4.5 after six years. Of the students initially tested in 2010, 13% had not achieved a 4.5 composite on the ACCESS for ELLs test of English language proficiency. Of the fifteen states that participated in the study, some had as many as 24% of the original cohort requiring language services. Clark-Gareca et al (2019) pointed out that national data is currently unavailable on LTELs as a subgroup within the growing EL population of US schools.

The use of different assessment tools makes this classification difficult to understand. In the school year ending in 2016, New York city schools found that LTELs comprised thirteen percent of the EL population, based upon the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (Menkyn et al., 2012; NYC Department of Education, 2022). One-third of Chicago's ELs required language services beyond six



years and twenty-three percent of ELs in Colorado met the criteria for being a LTEL (Menkyn et al., 2012). Students in Illinois are assessed using WIDA and must have a 4.8 composite score or a 5.0 composite on the initial screener test (Helfer & Gill, 2017) ELs in Colorado must earn a 5.0 composite and a 5.0 in literacy on the WIDA ACCESS test. However, these statistics did not express the multilingual capabilities of these students, focusing instead on their length of time qualifying for services as English learners without discussion of their language practices in different domains and languages.

LTEs, like other ELs, are often spoken of in terms of characteristics. However, there is concern related to the consequences these students experience for this identification. For instance, classification as a LTEL may result in low expectations from teachers and presumed inadequacy for Advanced Placement (AP) classes (Okhremtchouk et al., 2018). LTEs take fewer courses that prepare them for college and may find more challenging courses to be inaccessible on their schedule as their label prevents them from taking AP courses or they must take ESOL or other academic literacy courses instead (Mavrogordato & White, 2020; Okhremtchouk et al., 2018). Research also indicates that LTEs may be perceived by their teachers as inadequate in English and are prevented from academic opportunities (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Flores & Rosa, 2016; Rosa, 2016). Unfortunately, The Seal of Biliteracy, an award that recognizes a student's achievement in L1 and L2, is closed to ELs if they do not demonstrate mastery of academic language in English according to the testing criteria of their state as well as in the testing criteria of their first language (Davin & Heineke, 2017).

In South Carolina (SC), six percent of the students are ELs, (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). In an attempt to view ELs and LTELs more holistically, SC recently began using the term multilingual learners (MLs) (Longshore, 2022) This “asset-based belief system” of the state includes the term multilingual in the name of the programming and teachers responsible for the services of those students (Longshore, 2022). Noticeably absent from South Carolina’s definitions is a designation of the term that would describe LTELs. This is consistent with findings by Sahakan and Ryan (2018) that fifteen of the states in the WIDA Consortium lack a definition of a LTEL.

### **Rationale and Problem**

As will be discussed in more depth in chapter 2, studies of LTELs indicate that there is a need for individualized instruction based upon student language proficiency (Shin, 2020) rather than simply labeling them as deficient (Thompson, 2015). LTELs often demonstrate a willingness and capacity to determine necessary language uses and interpretation in academic and home areas to make meaning for themselves and others (Brooks, 2015). Practices such as translanguaging to leverage, acknowledge, and honor the students’ L1 (Lieu & Fang, 2022; Wei, 2022), and culturally relevant pedagogy (Mark & Id-Deen, 2022; Truscott & Stenhouse, 2022) are studied in the literature as ways in which students are actively engaged within instruction and whose current language skills are viewed as assets. Through these types of approaches, students can find greater success in learning because of a focus on student academic achievement and a deeper connection between students, their teachers, and the school community (Canagarajah, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, inconsistency in applying these strategies in

schools and ensuring faculty and staff are trained in them makes their use come across as superficially sanguine (Anhault et al., 2018; Rozansky, 2010; Young, 2010).

Translanguaging is designed to allow students to use both L1 and L2 in learning and for demonstrating knowledge by honoring the home language in the students' input and output, emphasizing cognates, and utilizing texts in students' L1 and L2 as well as bilingual dictionaries, as just some of the steps to allow students to use their language repertoire (Cummins, 2019). As opposed to code-switching, in which an outsider's view is used to observe which language is being used, translanguaging recognizes the fluidity of language use as subjects access their language repertoire and seeks to understand the factors that influence individual language choices (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017).

Translanguaging approaches in the classroom allow multilingual students to engage and share their learning, construct new ideas to be shared in class and assignments, extend student language use in and outside of the classroom, and ensure all students have access to the content (Infante & Licona, 2021).

Culturally responsive teaching practices provide equity by promoting student-centered learning and academic achievement through a focus on critical thinking, social justice, and connections between students' lives and content (Neri et al., 2019). However, do students, particularly LTELs recognize when and if these strategies are imparted to them in their schooling and do they see these techniques as providing them with educational experiences that recognizes their gifts with languages which they deserve?

While these practices and pedagogies are important for LTELs, students are rarely part of the discussion. There is a need to gather student perceptions of what occurs within

their classrooms and how they are treated by peers and teachers, which is missing in literature. If we are to say that certain programs are successful or that LTELs are “deficient” then it seems appropriate to ask LTELs their perceptions of what is occurring in their classrooms.

And we already know that LTELs can articulate their current and historical experiences with classroom literacy practices (Brooks, 2015) and that information can provide context for understanding students’ bilingualism and leveraging it for educational goals (Brooks, 2017a). Seltzer (2019) demonstrated that LTELs can discuss race and language and how each can impact perceptions held of them. Student perspectives can be used to resolve some of the issues related to LTELs that were addressed above: at-risk status for dropping out of school (Clark-Gareca, 2019; Olsen, 2014) and lack of college or career preparation (Mavrogordato & White; 2020 Okhremtchouk et al., 2018). Therefore, I will explore students’ perceptions of how their schools leverage their L1 to engage them in learning and value their culture as a part of instructional activities.

The purpose of this study is to ask an LTEL to share their perspectives on schooling experiences and the influence it has on them as learners and community members. Ample research identifies the need for student input included within educational decision making and to learn from their experiences (Jenkins, 2006; Smyth, 2006). This feedback informs schools and teachers to assess and revise learning activities at school and may lead to reform movements and social action (Dolan et al., 2015; Jenkins, 2006).

A single case study of one LTEL allows a participant to share their perspectives and the influences on their points of view. It can add to the literature that seeks to understand how these students learn, utilizing all language domains, listening, reading, writing, and speaking, while leveraging those skills in their first and second languages. This approach can enlighten teachers and curriculum writers as they seek to develop programs of study to engage these students and augment their strengths. Using the lens of raciolinguistics, I analyzed three in-depth, semi-structured interviews and observed her in English language arts twice to understand how the student perceived her support in using her first language and sustaining her complex identity in her school programming. Additionally, the participant shared artifacts from her classroom, such as whole class novels or activities, as examples of ways she was asked to share about her life and culture and to connect her interview responses about her perceptions. Consequently, I identified areas in which the intersection of language and identity are influential. Additionally, I asked the participant to share artifacts from her classroom to support her perceptions. Artifacts included materials used in her classroom, such as whole class novels or activities that required students to share their interests and connect to their lives. The purpose of this study is to build upon prior similar studies and learn how LTELs perceive their schools' approaches to leveraging their first language and acknowledging their cultural identity during instruction.

### **Research Questions**

To explore student perceptions of their first language use and their cultural identity support in school, the following two research questions guide this study:

- How does one LTEL perceive their schools' awareness and support of their use of native language within instruction (i.e., in regard to being tracked based on language, assimilated on their own, required monolingualism, translanguaging, CSP, dropping out of school)?
- How does one LTEL perceive their schools' awareness and support of their cultural identity (i.e., family involvement, CSP, etc.)?

### **Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations**

This section is a discussion of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the case study conducted for this research.

#### *Assumptions*

Observing in the classroom is based upon assumptions that the experience will adequately provide opportunities to explore language use in classrooms and in relation to the domains of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Observation will attend to more than passive activities of listening by the student.

Choosing to interview the student and asking them to provide artifacts is based upon the assumption that the participant will be honest in their interviews and will be open in discussing their experiences. Interviewing students without their parents assumes that the participants will articulate observations and perceptions of their educational experiences. There is also an assumption that students will be comfortable sharing their experiences and are able to explain them in detail. Requesting artifacts presumes that the participants have access to them, will provide them, and openly discuss them.

#### *Limitations*

A potential limitation of this study was the possibility of difficulty in gaining access to a classroom for observation. I was fortunate in gaining access and observing in

the English class of seniors in the spring, just before graduation. That timing also provided challenges, as the spring is a time for wrapping up, since seniors finish their last semester earlier than underclassmen. However, I was able to observe in the class twice. Further, the participant in the study is bilingual and could have engaged in practices in her first language, Spanish, and I am not fluent. That could have resulted in my reliance on an interpreter. However, when we talked about idiomatic expressions in Spanish, I was able to comprehend the conversation that did flow between the two languages for a brief amount of time. Finally, there was the possibility the participant may not have kept artifacts to share during the second or third interviews. This participant provided two artifacts and I attempted to leverage their use to learn as much as I could. It was also possible that students or the teacher may have acted differently because I was in the room. Even after addressing my role in the classroom, I heard some students discussing who I was and why I was there. The teacher reminded them. I am not certain of any impact my presence had on the participant, but I wanted to be as observant and unobtrusive as possible and protect her identity as the subject of my research.

This case study had only one participant. This can lead to a question of the generalizability of the findings of the study; however, qualitative research is not meant to represent or generalize across populations. Instead, the intent is to share an in-depth and rich description of the specific case of the study.

The participant is a female, native born in the US and speaks Spanish and English. She identifies as multiracial and has an ancestral background of Mexican origin that includes indigenous peoples. Surveys from Pew Research Center reveal that 80% of

Hispanic people in the US identify a background of Mexican origin, nine times more Hispanic people in the US identify as multiracial in 2021 than in 2009, and 81% of Latinos in the US have citizenship, either through naturalization or by being born in the US or to parents who are US citizens (Krogstad, et al., 2022). Therefore, while qualitative research is not meant to be generalizable, it is possible to explore the potential transferability of these findings and consider insights into the participant's schooling experience that can further the theoretical discussions of translanguaging and LTELs' experiences as students (Yin, 2018).

### *Delimitations*

In designing this study, it is important to note my role as an ESOL teacher in the district in which the participants are currently students. My role as an ESOL teacher could have influenced my expectations regarding the instruction the students should have received and what is defined as "best practices" in the field. My experiences over the course of twenty-four years as a teacher have created a memory bank in which I created generalizations of teachers' attitudes and pedagogical practices that are accepted, as well. Because some of those experiences required me to be an advocate for the ELs and direct a school to follow federal and state mandates for the education of these students, I was especially careful not to lead the students in discussing their educational experiences. For that reason, there was an interview guide included as an appendix to chapter three. I also checked with some committee members during analysis and conducted member checking after each interview. It was possible that the participant in the study and their family



members may recognize me as a teacher. For this reason, checking with my committee during coding and analysis assisted to ensure that my bias does not influence findings.

## **Definitions**

The following terms are important for use in the study. The definitions that I am using for each term are included with each term.

*Long-term English Learners (LTELs)*- Long-term English learners are students who have studied English for at least five years and who demonstrate an ability to use both their first language and English in social and academic settings even if they are not reclassified as bilingual according to the standardized testing criteria of their public schools (Davin & Heineke, 2017, Flores, et al, 2015, Hakuta et al., 2000, Menken et al., 2012, Olsen, 2014).

*First language (L1)*- A first language is abbreviated L1 and is the participant's language that they first learn in their homes and from their family.

*Second language (L2)*- A second language is abbreviated as L2 and is the language that a student studies at school to participate in school and extracurricular activities. In this study, the L2 of the students is English as it is the "majority-societal language" and proficiency is required for most jobs and educational opportunities (Valdes, Poza, Brooks, 2014).

*Translanguaging*- Translanguaging is the practice of leveraging the first language of a student whose L1 is something other than English in both oral and written communication (Cummins, 2019). This approach allows the student to access English and the content by using both L1 and English in reception and production of knowledge

(Liu et al., 2020). This term is used by me as a monolingual observer who recognizes L1 and L2 use and notes it.

*Translanguaging pedagogy*- This term refers to the fluidity of language use by the individual and how language choices are made as the setting and context are included in analysis (García, et al., 2008).

*Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP)*- Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) is an approach to teaching that, while helping students learn the dominant language and the language practices, also encourages them to maintain their first language practices and value their cultural practices (Paris, 2012).

*Multilingual Learner (ML)*- A multilingual learner is the term for English Learners in South Carolina, effective from June 2022. It is used to denote an asset-based approach to understanding language development.

*Multilingual Learner Program (MLP)*-The term South Carolina uses for ESOL programming in order to utilize an asset-based approach to understanding language learning.

*Multilingual Learner Program Specialist (MLPS)*- Effective in use since June 2022, this is the term South Carolina uses for teachers who were previously designated ESOL teachers.

### **Organization of the Study**

In summary, the organization of this study is designed to provide an aggregate perspective on LTELs by LTELs themselves. Chapter one shared how the study developed from the researcher's personal experiences and observations as a teacher.

Characteristics and introductory information of ELs and LTELs were introduced. The desire to learn directly from students is the premise of this study with a brief explanation provided to connect the purpose of the study with the research questions.

Chapter two begins with background on the search criteria and process followed by a literature review on LTELs and specific factors related to LTELs in schools. The theoretical underpinnings for this study are then introduced and explained.

Chapter three shares the methodology for this study to include information related to participants and context of the study, proposed methodology and justification, and proposed data collection and analysis procedures. This chapter also explores researcher positionality.

Chapter four will consist of the study findings.

Chapter five will connect study findings to relevant research along with implications and future research needs with LTELs, teachers, curriculum writers, and others.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review focuses on recent and relevant foundational literature related to long-term English Learners (LTELs), focusing on the teaching and testing of LTELs. A review of the literature related to how being an LTEL impacts one's language acquisition and academic outcomes is explored. Much of the literature focuses on language growth or deficiency and its possible connection to academic success or failure, a natural step to explore was both how LTELs are taught (pedagogy, strategies, or methods) and how they are assessed in both language and academics, based upon the students' perspectives of these experiences.

The initial search in *Google Scholar* of LTELs limited to work since 2017 provided 325 results. Of that number, close to 100 were the result of graduate student projects. The studies focused on interviewing school and district leadership (Halloran, 2020) or focused on LTELs in areas in which diversity is often ignored, such as rural areas or Appalachia (Hill, 2019; Mould, 2020). Graduate student research looked at the role of families in academic decision-making of these students (Huang, 2017) and studies often reviewed the academic preparedness of LTELs (Corum, 2017; Ilko, 2018).

Early work on students identified as long-term English learners provided a foundation for understanding and included research from Ruiz-de-Velasco & Chu (2000) as well as work completed in California on the topic by Olsen (2010; 2014). Recently, another search was conducted for any relevant research written in the past two years.

#### **Search Criteria.**

The original literature review began with a search for *LTELS* since and included the year 2017. Those studies provided thick and detailed descriptions and many opportunities for further research. However, many of the recorded conversations and observations of teachers did not clarify the orientation of teachers or the roots for their phrasing or possible misunderstandings when discussing topics related to language acquisition, culture, or *LTELS*. For that reason, my second step was to research the topics of *educational perceptions of LTELS' bilingualism, motivation, academic language use, and resistance* with scrutiny of work from 2015 to the present. My third step in researching the literature included an analysis of research from the 1970s to the present to understand the basis for teachers' education and training.

This same approach is used when appraising the literature for an understanding of *LTELS and identity*. First, I researched *LTELS and identity*, looking at literature from 2017. Because it was necessary to gain more insight, I reviewed research from 2000 to the present related to *LTELS and identity* and *LTELS and cultural identity*.

While this may not be the standard for literature reviews, I argue that students are currently in a system that often functions in the past. Teachers are influenced by the research from their time at university and professional development opportunities vary with states, districts, and schools. If the purpose of the study is to understand students' perceptions of their schools and their schooling institution's attitudes and approaches to their education, then a review of the literature that may have influenced their teachers, principals, and the development of their school system is critical. Freire (1985) saw teachers as learners and while teachers may be in education with prejudices formed from

society, many teachers are humble and draw on what they learned in college in the 1970s through the 2000s. It is in keeping with that lens of teachers as tolerant, humble, and loving that I review the literature which may have been instrumental in the training of many of them (Freire, 1985).

Similarly, when attempting to understand students' perceptions of their education, their schools, language, and identity, it was necessary to probe the literature for what questions had been asked and what questions remained that could be understood by accessing student input. Researching the literature for current *narratives of LTELs'* experiences could only be realized for its significance when comparing it with the questions from the past, for those questions provided context for understanding how LTELs were perceived by the researchers who may not impress upon their subjects the vitality and usefulness of their observations and questions in initial works (Patton, 2017). Using the approach of Freire, Patton (2017) notes the importance of continued reflection by the researcher and that approach is being applied here across time in assessing the literature and the voice given to LTELs while acknowledging that Freire's view of the equality of students and teachers has not always guided research (Kohan, 2019). It is with this understanding that the ideals of Freire are not always enacted in research or in schools, that this literature review is conducted.

My review of the literature begins with exploring specific factors and research related to LTELs: starting with teacher and student perceptions, how LTELs are defined across contexts, and the complexities and consequences in schools in teaching and testing because of the terminology and definitions applied to these students.

## **Long-term English Learners**

### *Perceptions in Schools*

In this section, review research related to the perceptions educators often have of bilingualism and multilingualism of students and how these perceptions impact the expectations they often have of ELs. Educators may also struggle understanding the means of expression and “resistance” that ELs express as they negotiate language and their experiences in the classroom domain.

### *Perceptions in Education of Bilingualism*

The literature indicates that a misunderstanding of bilingualism is at the core of issues regarding teacher perceptions of LTELs (Flores, 2016; Flores & Garcia, 2013; Flores, Kleyn, & Menken, 2015; Flores, Phuong, & Venegas, 2020; Flores & Schiessel, 2014). In analyzing the data accumulated in a dual language school, Flores, Phuong, and Venegas (2020) note that teachers judged students from an “...idealized version of bilingualism” that perceives bilingualism as being evident in a subject’s ability to communicate and comprehend equally in two languages. The result of this view is that even as they communicated in two languages, fluidly using vocabulary in different language domains, often taking their cues from the intended audience (p. 646) LTELs are determined to be deficient in one or both languages. Studies of LTELs note the tendency of teachers to resort to discussing these students as “languageless” because their constructs of what makes a person proficient in language do not allow for fluidity between languages or the combination of language resources (Rosa, 2016).

While many (or most) of the teachers a student encounters are monolingual, many of the teachers who are proficient in another language often are because of sequential bilingualism, a similar experience of students who are newcomers to the US who have proficiency in their L1 and then add a second language to their repertoire (Wright, 2019). However, the students who are identified as LTELs are exposed to their families' native language and different dialects of English even before entering as students in US schools (Flores & Schissel, 2014; Wright, 2019). These students are often referred to in the literature as Generation 1.5, because most or all of their education has been in US schools (Brooks, 2015).

Interviews with teachers of these students indicate that teachers do not consider the school programming to be central to some of the issues LTELs face in achieving the required assessment score for language proficiency (Dafney et al., 2018) and instead focus on their families' contributions and language use. Rosa's (2019) interview of a principal whose high school included many LTELs demonstrates the misunderstanding of bilingualism when the principal shared in an interview, "They're bilingual. That means they don't know the language. The other ones just don't want to speak it" (p. 128). Across countries, similar perspectives by teachers of students who are bilingual but whose proficiency has not been adequately quantified exists and they often resort to relying on immersion as the technique of choice for all students who are not monolingual or asserting that English immersion is an important step for equalizing language before dual language instruction (Combs, et al. 2005; Duran & Palmer, 2014; Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2011; Sipra, 2013; Vaish, 2012).



In order to understand the perceptions of teachers beyond quotations, it is helpful to review the literature and the historical basis of understanding bilingualism in teacher education. Research in the 1970s discussed bilingualism as a process and additive and subtractive approaches were debated, with additive approaches, leveraging the L1 for the purpose of gaining in the target language, became more accepted (Cummins, 1976). During this decade, bilingualism was often described as having two words for one term and the second language learning process was acquired with phonics and grammar instruction and continuous practice until automaticity in the target language occurred. (Diller, 1970; Sugunasiri, 1971; Taylor, 1970). The idea of what is often identified as, “linguistic balance” in which the student was equally capable in both languages and had received instruction that focused on developmental approaches were the desired goals. Cummins (1971) noted that the experiences and accompanying emotions of bilingual students can impact their learning. He also noted that the language learning of immigrants and refugees or what he terms as “folk bilingualism” had a negative connotation and bilingualism for the people who were born in the North American region was the more desirable goal for many. Spanish-speaking bilinguals were still referred to as having potential for commerce and foreign relations for those who learned it (Di Pietro, 1970).

At this time, teacher education focused on Piaget and the development of language focused on growth and how a person learns internally, as they build new schemas in their learning (Hopkins, 2011). However, this approach does not completely address the affective components of learning (Kessler & Quinn, 1980). Yet, for teachers, learning language in a designed process of phonics, grammar, and practice fits with the

notion of introducing new organization of structures for learning. Sociolinguistics was in the early stages, so the study of language in its contextual use, rather than focusing solely on grammar, was still in early stages (Alatis, 1970). This understanding of bilingualism limited learners who were emerging as bilingual and learning their familial and English languages in school, home, and in other places that would be impacted by dialect, emotions, and other contexts.

Research in the 1980s focused on L2 proficiency and discussed the use of code-switching to improve the lives of students. Some literature spent debated if bilingualism was a problem or a right, especially if the bilingual subjects were immigrants (Ruiz, 1984). Hakuta and Garcia (1989) noted the need for more research on affective factors and environment, as well as the role of teachers as linguistic majority who may not understand their students' identity (Dewale, 2015). Portes and Schauflier (1994) focused on students whose parents immigrated to the US who often preferred to use English. Their survey found that students in high concentration areas of their L1 tended to be proficient in the first language, even as they used English. This trend proved to be true of the Hispanic populations who learned English in school and as having properties of dialect. Wright, Taylor, and Macarthur (2000) focused their research on bilingualism of heritage language learners and connected bilingualism with the need to preserve culture.

### **Educational Perceptions and Academic Language**

Academic language tends to be the focus of many educators. This focus can range from spelling to grammar to content vocabulary. Brooks (2017) found that teachers identified a LTEL's "Spanglish" as an indication of a lack of language proficiency that

limited her English vocabulary. The teacher also worried about the student's punctuation skills. Yet, her vocabulary and related spelling indicated a depth of knowledge of English in different dialects and an ability to meet the cognitive demands of open-ended writing assignments.

However, courses for academic programs of Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) continue to focus on the BICS and CALP of language (Cummins, 2008; Wright, 2019). BICS are the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills of social language that Cummins (2008) argues are learned within the first one to two years of language learning. These language skills are often considered as requiring fewer cognitive skills. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) refers to the academic language that may take students five or more years to learn. It requires fluency that is specific to contexts.

This perspective on language as falling into BICS and CALP often promotes a perspective that LTELs simply need to acquire content area vocabulary for success (Iwai, 2007) It is often presumed that the reason for their lack of proficiency is that the gap between BICS and CALP has not been built through a transition from the social language to the academic language (Crowther et al., 2011; Guduru, 2011). In such cases, academic language becomes a task of discrete skills that, when mastered at different levels, create greater opportunities for success. Additionally, academic language refers to prioritizing the dominant language as the norm and only allowed language, Standard American English.

Rolstad's (2017) Second Language Instructional Competence (SLIC) acknowledges that children need to learn the language of school to be successful, but views language-learning as taking place across communities and that each variety can be leveraged to improve a student's learning for use in school. Rolstad's SLIC notes that students are exposed to language and dialects in different situations that have rules, grammar, and complexity. Zentella (1997) noted this experience among Puerto Rican students who attended New York City schools their entire lives and who have their home and school "...community's language history and linguistic repertoire" that freed them to effectively use Spanish and English in a variety of contexts from their neighborhood to their professions (p. 263).

### **Educational Perceptions of Resistance**

Rosa (2019) discussed the theme of teachers' views of student resistance when Mr. Thomas, a teacher in a Chicago high school addresses the class regarding the defacing of school property in symbols and terms that is referred to as tagging: Mr. Thomas says to the students:

I see it on the desks and even on students' work hanging on the walls. To me that's really disrespectful.... Now let's put that behind us and get to work. Our focus for the next few months will be on one thing: writing (p 182).

Tagging was associated by the school as an attempt to share gang-related information, but was used by many students to share culture, identity, and anti-gang messages. However, the resistance to expressing themselves in the school-sanctioned way was not understood by the school and often resulted in punishment.

Often, this resistance is mistaken for a lack of motivation, a poor attitude toward education, or a result of larger personal problems. Rosa's (2019) interview with a principal noted how the students at her school, many of whom were marginalized and LTELs, indicates that faculty understand the need for flexibility for students who are "...working, they're trying to support their family, just all the baggage at home" (p. 40). It is the role of the institutions in this resistance that is less considered by teachers. It is important to evaluate what teachers understand about student resistance and its purposes over time. Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) studied resistance against unfair practices of institutions with the intention of change and justice by students that is often mistaken as having destructive purposes. The students interviewed walked out of school with the purpose of improving their own education. During these interviews the researchers noted that students displayed both internal resistance and external resistance. While external resistance is more easily acknowledged and understood as actively pursuing change through protest and demonstration, internal resistance is also used by students as they evaluate social institutions like school and in subtle ways work to undermine its marginalization of them. It is the internal resistance that is less understood by educators.

Truancy and withdrawal from school can be an example of student resistance that is misunderstood in education. Fernandez (2002) interviewed a bilingual student who came to the US at eleven years old and was placed in a dual language setting that allowed him to grow in his first language while also learning English. When the student entered high school, he was placed in an English as a Second Language (ESL) class, which he

found to be too easy. The student went on to college where he found he was ill-prepared, having been required to take high school classes that did not provide rigor. The student made observations of his high school that influenced his belief there were teachers who had lower expectations for language and racial minority students. According to the student, those who “cut class” felt marginalized and coped by failing to attend and choosing other pursuits, such as going to work, an act of resistance to the school that does not damage the entire institution. This is a different perspective on the failure and withdrawal of LTELs that magnifies the practices of the school through a student lens and questions the role of schools in students’ decisions to ignore or withdraw from their education.

The resistance that is more easily recognized by teachers comes in the form of parents informing the school system of a need for equality in education, as happened in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system. Da Villa and de Bradley (2010) note that CPS includes language and racial minorities and in the schools in which those students are a greater part of the population, faculty tended to be less experienced or completely under-qualified for their jobs. These schools also provide fewer opportunities for parental engagement and are often overcrowded, even in the earliest grades. CPS inappropriately administered language tests to ELs and did not provide consistent language instruction that allowed for the measure of progress over time. Student resistance to this inequality over the course of their academic careers sometimes occurred in the form of withdrawal from high school.

### **Culture in the Classroom**

The perspective of LTELs as dynamic learners who may be resistant to some actions that occur in schools and who have perspectives that are constructed from their own experiences, rejections, and family histories provides an opportunity to focus on their assets as learners (Nieto, 2017). Culturally Responsive Teaching practices is an offshoot of multiculturalism that is designed to incorporate students' home practices, experiences, and languages in the classroom (Nieto, 2017). Rather than focusing on symbolic educational experiences, this approach to education sets high academic standards for all students and promotes deep learning by focusing on the assets and interests of students while developing curriculum (Gay, 2002). It promotes social justice by helping students discuss challenging topics and involves students in critical analysis of real-life situations (Hammond, 2015; Nieto, 2017).

Modern interpretations of Culturally Responsive Teaching have led to Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, which focuses on the desire for justice for those who have been marginalized in societal institutions, such as the classroom (Paris, 2021). This approach to facilitation of learning allows students to maintain their home or family culture and language while also gaining access to the education, experiences, and power that have been in the past reserved for those who belong to the dominant culture (Paris & Alim, 2017). However, while both approaches emphasize utilizing students' culture and language, since students are problem-solvers and decision-makers, its practice tends to be left to the discretion of teachers and school districts (Cavallaro & Sembiante, 2021; Nieto, 2017).

### **LTELs Definitions**

Defining Long-term English Learners became important with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001 and its replacement in 2015, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Implementation of each requires states to establish a method for assessing if a student is an EL, assess ELs' academic achievement on the same standardized tests as other students, and provide an annual test of language proficiency with specific exiting criteria (Menken, 2009). States were permitted to implement ESEA, each creating their own criteria for English language proficiency (ELP) and content standards, as well as choice of assessments for content areas and ELP (Abedi, 2004; CCSSO, 2016). The result of ESEA and its replacement, ESSA, was a focus on English as the key to academic language and thus content for all students, and many states responded without requirements for utilizing culture and language as a part of instruction or assessment (Callahan, et al, 2022).

The focus on standardized tests of ELP led to the discussion of the group of ELs who never met the exit criteria after 5-7 years of instruction and identified them as LTELs (Olsen, 2010). The characterizations of semilingualism, as at greater risk for dropping out, and lower academic achievement were attached to these students (Olsen, 2010). Meanwhile, many states began passing immigration rules allowing for mandatory requests for proof of citizenship or legal immigration, such as Arizona's Senate Bill 1070, passed in 2010 (Callahan, 2022; S. B. 1070, 2010). With the mounting focus on English as the key to academic language, the number of states already with legislation that made English the official language, laws that ultimately racialized many of these



students and their families created obstacles for achievement (Callahan, 2022; Fitzgerald, 1993).

### **Teaching Practices**

In determining how to help LTELs, the research indicates there are several program delivery models and their implementation is inconsistent within states and districts (Olsen, 2014). In areas in which there are several multilingual educators, bilingual programs have been measured as effective in developing L1 and L2 literacy (Baket et al., 2012) and dual language immersion programs have demonstrated significant growth of ELs in reading in the target language (Steele et al., 2017). In many states, the methodologies of instruction are limited because the prospective teachers are monolingual. These approaches often include: ESOL classes, sheltered instruction, co-teaching models, and Ex-CELL. These methods may be used simultaneously and have goals and techniques that overlap. None of them specifically focus on culture and identity or student perspective.

Sheltered instruction focuses on the role of the teacher in promoting both language acquisition and content learning in the classroom (Daniel & Conlin, 2015; Echevarria, et al, 2008; Echevarria & Short, 2000). Many teachers experience training in this approach through the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) that focuses on lesson preparation, scaffolding, comprehensible input, and alignment to learning objectives (Echevarria & Short, 2000). Fidelity to the SIOP model has demonstrated improved English proficiency among ELs, but there are concerns that teachers may

misinterpret the model and treat it as a checklist or formula for lesson plans, rather than a way to respond to students' language needs (Daniel & Conlin, 2015).

Models of instruction and interventions specific to LTELs are less numerous. Espino Calderon and Minaya-Rowe (2011) refer to the ExC-ELL Observation Protocol (EOP) as a means for focusing on ELs and especially LTELs who have been subject to conflicting approaches to language learning. This approach focuses on utilizing professional learning communities (PLCs) of teachers to create lessons, differentiated growth plans for students and focus on academic vocabulary across domains and specific to content areas. Furthermore, EOP encourages benchmark assessments, leadership that monitors the approach for fidelity, continuous professional development and coaching of teachers, and improving the quality of resources available to students in their L1 and L2. The text that presents a summary of the ExC-ELL program is titled Preventing Long-Term ELs and promotes a well-researched approach embraced for a year by my school district as a book study. However, like SIOP, this approach focuses on what teachers and administrators do and not on student responsiveness or the complex identities of the students.

Co-teaching of ELs and often LTELs occurs when the content area teacher and ESOL teacher plan, teach, and assess students in the regular classroom (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010). Ideally, the ESOL teacher would assist in providing language accommodations and instructional differentiation (Pappamihiel, 2012). Proponents of co-teaching point to the need for a common planning for the teachers and the necessity of

guarding against creating content area classes that are composed of only ELs (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010; Pappamihiel, 2012).

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are designed for ELs to receive selective instruction of English without distractions and where their peers are other ELs (Whiting, 2017). These classes are often found as repetitive and inappropriate for LTELs at the secondary level because these students are requiring more literacy skills and academic support in the target language and not requiring training in social language (Hill et al., 2019).

A turning point in the nurture and teaching of LTELs occurs within statements regarding some state curriculum that focus on leveraging a student's culture and first language, as well as their translanguaging skills, to foster a school community that prioritizes the ELs academic growth (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2016). Utilizing the approach of translanguaging pedagogies places value upon a student's use of all language resources in acquiring content knowledge and in demonstrating learning (Cummins, 2019). The challenge with translanguaging is its lack of formula, allowing for the smearing of lines between students' use of L1 and L2 (Liu et al., 2020) which is a contrast with the SIOP and Ex-CELL models that provide a guide for instruction and are misinterpreted as teacher centered. Garcia Mateua and Palmer (2017) argue that allowing the students to blur the lines and openly access both their L1 and L2 connects them to their unique language experience and identity. The focus on translanguaging has largely focused on the multilingual learner's ability to spontaneously access language resources,

while translanguaging pedagogy focuses on teaching strategies that center the learner in using all language resources with peers (García, 2009).

### *Professional Development*

The creators and advocates for these models of delivery note the need for teacher training and development to ensure consistency in programming (Espino Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2011). The complexity of the identities of these students as a part of ethnic groups, as citizens (often of the US), and as multilingual learners is necessary for examination when considering curriculum and pedagogy (Rosa et al., 2015). However, this is not typically a topic of professional development opportunities for teachers, and lacking opportunities for discussion of the range of experiences of MLs often makes LTELs seem like the “invisible population” whose experiences with language are not included in training and development (Menken et al., 2012). Learning opportunities for teachers often focus on the use of academic language in coursework (Clarke-Gareca et al., 2020).

### **Testing**

Definitions and data regarding LTELs are often contingent on test scores. The data that assists in the policy creation related to ELs and LTELs is often the English language proficiency tests of the state and may be accompanied by criteria for the standardized tests of English Language Arts and Math (Clarke-Agreca et al., 2020). Tests of L2 proficiency are created around the idea that a student is only proficient in English if their skill matches that of a native speaker.

Analysis of the data from reading and math tests indicate that students who are not reclassified as no longer requiring ESOL services until middle or high school often experience larger gaps in test scores than those who are reclassified in elementary school or who were never classified as ELs (Cashiola & Potter, 2021, Holzman et al., 2020). Test data is used for tracking students and placing them in courses that are supposed to meet their language and content needs (Umansky, 2016), yet Shin's (2020) longitudinal study found that students' whose initial English proficiency level was high could also become LTELs in numbers described as "not negligible," bringing to question the methods of assessment or the programs to which the students are subject.

The two major assessments of English proficiency for multilingual learners (MLs) in the United States are WIDA and ELPA21 (Huang & Flores, 2018; Lee, 2018). The WIDA ACCESS for ELLs is used in more states, as ELPA21 is used in eight states. The assessments are created in response to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates for the demonstration of English proficiency by students identified as ELs upon their entrance in a US school. The ELPA21 is relatively new, but both it and WIDA have been criticized as lacking alignment across content area standards and failing to allow ELs to express language competency and cognition (Lee, 2018). Each test has a cut-off score which students must reach before reclassification.

The testing data focuses on the language practices to which a student is exposed in a school setting. However, other studies of English language proficiency among students who learn English as a foreign language have looked at the impact of cultural knowledge and language learning in less-structured, informal settings (De Wilde, et al,

2020; Rachmawaty et al., 2018). Cultural intelligence and its associated ability to adapt to situations is valued as a determinant in English language proficiency among Indonesian students (Rachmawaty et al., 2018) and informal language learning that requires engagement in English, such as gaming, assisted Belgian children in developing their language skills (De Wilde, et al, 2020). However, searches of *cultural competence* and *cultural intelligence* with *English Learners* and *LTEs* did not produce similar research.

While tests are used to measure ELP annually, studies suggest that teachers do not feel that data is comprehensible and thorough and guidance is required to better understand scores and their relation to creating curriculum and fostering collaboration among language and content-area teachers (Kim, 2020; Molle & Huang, 2021). Teachers self-report that they often do not access the guides provided for understanding scores from ELP tests, such as WIDA (Kim, 2016, 2020).

### **Student Perceptions**

This section discusses the complex feelings of marginalization that ELs may experience. It points to research on the ability of LTEs to discuss racialization and marginalization.

#### *Student Perceptions of Marginalization*

With the inconsistencies and misunderstandings (or even mislabeling) of LTEs across so many districts, Brooks (2018) called for talking to LTEs to understand their experiences in education and language. Jacobs (2008) posed a precursor to this call with a classroom approach that centered on LTEs, engaged in a standardized curriculum, given the opportunity to use the techniques of writing to share their own narratives of

educational experiences. While encouraging, classroom practices alone do not change policies for LTELs whose stories and perceptions make clear that they view themselves as English proficient but are nevertheless subject to tracking or placed in classes below their academic needs (Kim & Garcia, 2014).

From the perspective of LTELs, classroom practices can also provide a view into what accounts for the chasm in achievement. As standardized tests are used to determine academic success, the connection between practice and assessment is subject to evaluation. Brooks (2016) identified the ways in which classroom literacy practices are often teacher-centered, leading to student passiveness as the LTELs engage in notetaking (note-copying) and listening, while their assessments as students and as MLs focused on reading, writing, and speaking. Further, their discussions of what they read were clearly formed by their own background knowledge and awareness of racial and linguistic identities, demographic information that only the students themselves may provide and is often neglected as immaterial to understanding students' literacy.

Educational experiences that attempt to present as neutral literacy practices, such as reading and discussion, prevent the knowledge that LTELs have of their own linguistic and racial identities from being used as a foundation in learning (Brooks, 2016b). Thus, passive classroom literacy practices are being used unsuccessfully to attain academic achievement and students' own knowledge and observations are neglected, as well. Seltzer (2019) posed discussion to gain LTELs' demographic information to role-play as a means of discerning their background knowledge and awareness of the ways language and race are used to define them and how they themselves engage with these topics.

While this approach continues to open the conversation of LTELs' experiences and background, it is not policy and the impact it may have upon academic decisions of these students remains unknown.

### *LTELs as Students: Perspectives*

While the literature notes that students can be impacted by the label of being a LTEL (Fu, 2021), it is also noted that in school students can interact and renegotiate their identities and strengths as readers and writers when they are learning (Lopez & Masanti, 2019). Harklau's (2001) ethnographic research of language minority students who transitioned from high school to college presented students' understanding of a decline in the scaffolding in notetaking they had experienced in high school and an increased expectation of responsibility and homework from their experiences as high school seniors. LTELs have shared their experiences of microaggressions and ostracism at school as they attempt to navigate earning credits and scheduling classes (Mendoza, 2019).

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Many LTELs are functioning in schools and demonstrate the use of their home languages and English in different contexts yet remain identified as English Learners because they have not met exit criteria on standardized tests (Clark-Gareca, 2019; Menken et al., 2012, Olsen, 2014). This results in their being stigmatized at school as lacking proficiency in English and may prevent them from benefiting from advanced courses and other curricula that engages them as multilingual learners (Davin & Heineke, 2017; Mavrogordato & White, 2020; Okhremtchouk, et al, 2018). Therefore, I used



raciolinguistics as one lens to inform my study as I investigated the experiences and perspectives of Long-term English Learners (LTELs).

Raciolinguistics describes how and why race and language are often intertwined in the perception of “white listeners” who may judge the value or proficiency of the marginalized subjects who use English they determine to be in non-standard form. Raciolinguistics is also a lens for challenging the concept of “appropriateness” of language that defines complete assimilation as the goal of language-learning (Flores & Rosa, 2015). An example of this use of “appropriateness” occurs when students’ use of “academic language” in English is valued above their use of multiple languages to access content knowledge (Flores, 2020; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa, 2016).

Raciolinguistics is derived from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its premise that the foundations of United States (US) institutions are rooted in racism (Rosa & Flores, 2017). Critical Race theorists prescribe to the importance of storytelling, the method by which people share their experiences as racial minorities that provide a different perspective to the historical narrative that is held in regard as the impartial version of history (Ladson-Billings, 1999). LatCrit allows space for the shared experiences of Latinx people who feel “othered” or that they must “pass” as part of the dominant group to be successful while also offering a space for them to embrace the privileges that come with being identified as multilingual (Bernal, 2002, Gonzalez, et al, 2021; Rolon & Davidson, 2021; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Raciolinguistics also builds upon theories that emphasize language use by multilingual people based upon social and language needs (Nilep, 2006). While initial

research focused upon the separate use of two or more languages and often for the purpose of understanding the dominant language by the subject, raciolinguistics emphasizes translanguaging (Goodman & Tastanbek, 2020). Translanguaging allows for greater social and academic language use by multilingual students by valuing their language resources (Garcia & Lin, 2017; Vogel & Garcia, 2017). According to Flores (2014),

Translanguaging research should not attempt to objectively describe the language practices of language-minoritized communities but rather should attempt to analyze the ways that these language practices are marginalized by the larger society.

This perspective on translanguaging provides an opportunity for analysis of how students perceive the acceptance or rejection of their language practices. This approach, leverages translanguaging pedagogical practices that decentralize the teacher's expectations of language use and focuses on the students' use of language resources in a space that allows for blending of those resources without requiring a definition for each vocabulary term or phrasing used by the students (García, 2009).

Raciolinguistics' current contribution to research is its demonstration that assimilation alone by bilingual citizens does not provide societal acceptance (Cioè-Peña, 2021; Flores et al., 2018; Flora & Rosa, 2015; Kutlu, 2020). For students, this means that a language or language/social standard is not met, regardless of proficiency and multilingual skill, as indicated by either standardized tests or social acceptance (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa, 2016).

Raciolinguistic perspectives value translanguaging, as multilinguals negotiate more than one language, interpreting from one domain of language to another, for oneself or others, thereby empowering the individual to engage in metacognition, evaluating how one learns, comprehends, and remembers (Flores, 2019; Flores and Rosa, 2015). This normalization by multilinguals of language flow between domains counters the dominant view that language is well-defined, its uses prescribed and standardized, and its value determined in relation to English (Flores, Lewis, and Phong, 2018).

Using raciolinguistic ideologies counters prior research narratives that posit language and language education as neutral (Hernandez, 2017). Raciolinguistics also counters monoglossic approaches that emphasize L2 acquisition as the goal of education. The raciolinguistic lens opposes both subtractive and additive approaches to language because each fail to normalize multilingualism for language students and bases their proficiency upon the white receptor (Cummins, 2017; Flores & Rosa, 2015). It also counters sociolinguistics that focuses on the dialects and differences in language without acknowledging that language is racialized.

As a result of using raciolinguistic ideologies as a lens, I will be using the term “white gaze” when discussing the ways that LTELs are evaluated in their use of English for accessing content, when their strategies utilize more than one language for both input and output in all language modalities (Flores et al., 2018; Licata, 2021). The “white gaze” is the evaluative component that allows the white listener or reader to compare the students’ productions in language to the dominant norms that are created by the

institution, rather than valuing the student's multilingual experiences that led to the production (Stewart & Gachago, 2020). Flores & Rosa (2015) describe the white gaze as:

a listening subject who hears and interprets the linguistic practices of language-minoritized populations as deviant based on their racial positioning in society as opposed to any objective characteristics of their language use (p. 151).

This perspective will allow me to analyze students' perceptions of security in a setting, acceptance of culture, and validation of the use of L1 and L2.

Because of the lens of raciolinguistics, I will also be using the term "appropriateness" to discuss the ways in which students may perceive the acceptance or rejection of their culture or language. Many experiences of LTELs may focus on the power and influence of English to which all other language speakers must acquiesce (Briceño, et al, 2018; Flores, 2020). Approaches that are not centered around English acquisition may be deemed as inappropriate and the experiences and strategies of multilinguals for learning may be silenced or hidden.

As a result of using raciolinguistic as a lens, I will also consider the intersectionality of experiences of LTELs (Bello, 2016). LTELs have a range of experiences related to their status as immigrant or native-born, race, gender, and dialect. This can impact how they are perceived by the dominant institution and their own experiences navigating two languages in a country in which they may not always be perceived as belonging.

My intent is to use the lens of raciolinguistics to disrupt the narrative that the language of one LTEL is deficient in both their L1 and L2 (Aria, 201; Fu, 2021; Olsen,

2014, Shin, 2020). Further, I want to use the theory to demonstrate how the setting and context in which language is used is not neutral and can impact students' perceptions of how they can leverage their multilingualism to access content and build relationships (Arias, 2018; Flores et al., 2018).

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY, AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I will discuss the research design, methodology, as well as data collection and analytical strategies that I used to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 and examined further in Chapter 2. Previous chapters have noted the characteristics associated with LTELs and the presumptions and assumptions put upon them within the school structures and by teaching practices they encounter. Central to this research are LTELs' voices and perceptions of their educational experiences as they share stories that verify observations. Youth voices, including those of LTELs, are empirical evidence for understanding LTELs in research that include student interviews and observations as means to understand student perceptions of curricula as well as their perspectives on race (Brooks, 2016a; Brooks, 2016b; Seltzer, 2019).

The ability of LTELs to express frustration with assignments, classroom procedures, as well as racial inequity provides the opportunity to discuss further cultural and linguistic implications for their learning. However, such a discussion must occur around the framework of students' self-awareness of language use and their knowledge of the school's perception of the usefulness or even value of the first language. The students' articulation of the different means by which the school communicates the merit of their L1 is an area for further exploration and has led to the creation of the first research question. The second research question results from exploration of a student's understanding of their culture's worth as demonstrated in instruction and networking with families by the schools. Therefore, my research questions are as follows:

- How does one LTEL perceive their schools' awareness and support of their use of native language within instruction (i.e., in regard to being tracked based on language, assimilated on their own, required monolingualism, translanguaging, CSP, dropping out of school)?
- How does one LTEL perceive their schools' awareness and support of their cultural identity (i.e., family involvement, CSP, etc.)?

The framework of Raciolinguistics provides the opportunity to explore how language can privilege some students and not others while using an assets-based lens to understand how different language repertoires are accessed by multilingual individuals (Flores, 2016). For that reason, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews of one LTEL, and participant provided artifacts were collected to answer these questions.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Before I discuss the methodology used for this case study, I acknowledge my background as white, female, monolingual teacher of US birth. I studied Spanish as a second language as an adult in Quito, Ecuador for four summers and I teach English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in a US public school. However, I am not bilingual and my engagement in Spanish with my students and their families is limited. When observing the participant and listening to her language use, I often note when she is using Spanish, her L1, and English, her L2. Yet, I am aware that from her own memory she has engaged in both languages for seemingly the same period and does not recognize these languages as being acquired at different points in her life. The use of terms such as L1 and L2 are what I used to note what I observe and hear as I work to understand the participant's experiences in school related to language and culture.

I have been a teacher for twenty-four years and have been responsible for ensuring compliance of federal and state guidelines for implementation of accommodations and language instruction. I recognize that my background influenced this project.

### **Methodological Approach**

This study uses a single case study approach. Case study research allows for the study of a person or phenomena with the purpose of understanding how this case functions in a particular context (Stake, 2010).

#### *Rationale for case study*

Analyzing the perspectives of one LTEL as the case for study within the context of their school learning experiences is an example of Yin's (2018) description of a case study approach as one in which "...the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 15). Further, this approach leverages the triangulation of multiple data sources that acquire evidence in multiple forms, ensuring construct validity. As data sources are analyzed and coded, internal validity is ensured when patterns are identified.

The opportunity to use interview data allows increased depth of understanding as the broader data provided by the observations is addressed by the participant as they discuss the meaning they have made from the classroom experiences and the artifacts the students share. Similarly, the observations in school provide context for more in-depth discussions during the interview. The fluidity of the semi-structured interviews provides opportunities for insights from the participants (Yin, 2018).



The case study research method allowed for increased depth of understanding of the participant's experiences and an open dialogue during the interview process as the researcher and participant discussed the rituals of school, thus providing a shared context that the observer used to form questions and the subject used when explaining answers. This design also allowed for the bilingual participant to share the experiences while constructing new knowledge when reflecting on those experiences. Because the research questions for this study inquire about the student's perceptions of the schools' valuing of the students' language and culture, a single case study design provides the opportunity for observation by the researcher and explanation by the participant. The researcher collected these data to build a broader insight into the communication rifts and successes that occurred (Boblin et al., 2013).

The proposed research questions relate to the themes of language and culture, and a single case study design allowed for the participant, who is identified as an LTEL in the American South, to be studied within the context of their own language and cultural experiences in public schools. To understand the student, the context in which they learn English, attend school, choose to remain in school and reflect on their educational experiences is less than a peripheral influence, it is central to understanding them and makes classroom observations essential. There is a necessity to engage in a cyclical process of observation and interview to obtain rich and descriptive data. More is described below.

### **Participant Selection**

This single case study had one participant. To identify the participant, I was given a potential participant list of recommendations of an insider to the school district who supervised ESOL instruction of LTELs. The school district was given specific criteria to provide a list of student names for possible research participation (see below for criteria).

### *Recruitment*

All potential candidates who were at least 18 were provided with a written explanation about the interviews and observations, and the purpose of research. This document explained the purpose of the research and the time required by the subjects. The social benefits of the research were included in the explanation while emphasizing that participation was voluntary.

Once a list of names was provided, I met with all students who qualified for the study to provide information on the purpose of the study from an IRB approved script which I read aloud. I offered to answer any questions they had, but no one expressed any. Of the six students who met the criteria, one declined to be included. Once I knew which students were interested, I uploaded those names into Excel which randomly selected one name from the list.

Criteria for potential participants is listed as follows:

- Must be a current US school student and have at least five consecutive years in US schools,
- Must be a current EL and have been designated an EL for more than five years (the criteria in research literature and the state in which the study was conducted for being considered an LTEL),

- Must be at least 18 years of age at the time of the study.
- Must be a native Spanish speaker with English as their second language.

### *Selection*

Students who were identified as LTELs by their school, were still receiving ESOL program services after 5 years, and had an assigned ESOL teacher as their caseload supervisor were invited to participate in this study. While the selected participant was classified as an EL, her language abilities permitted her to discuss education, learning, race, and language in English. Yet, she was an example of a bilingual learner who used her L1 (in this case Spanish) for both social purposes and to explain academics to newcomer peers. The student received a letter explaining the purposes of the study and its benefits, and she agreed to participate.

While the case study participant shared her experience of being an LTEL, the school provided a context for the experiences and provided multiple variables that impacted her perspectives on those events. The participant was an eighteen-year-old female who was born in the southeastern United States. Her parents were both from Mexico and came to the US separately during the early 2000s with their siblings. They met while working in the Southeastern US, married, and had three children. The pseudonym for the participant is Nayeli, a name of the indigenous, Zapotec people in the southern part of Mexico, largely found in the state of Oaxaca. The participant's father had ancestors from the region, leading me to choose the name. The name, *Nayeli*, is interpreted to mean *open* and is the first name of two prominent former female footballers

from Mexico, Nayeli Rangel of the 2015 FIFA cup team, and Nayeli Diaz of the Mexican women's national team.

### **Setting**

This study occurred over a five-week period. The case study took place in an area whose school district supports over 17,000 students and experiences an increase in EL enrollment by 200 students annually. The state in which the school district is located has an immigrant population that makes up five percent of the total population. The immigrant population includes Mexicans that make up 24%, and Hondurans, who are 5% of the state's immigrant population. The goal of this state is for ELs to achieve proficiency in English within five years of enrollment. The 2022 report card for the district indicates that 86.8% of ELs made progress toward their language goals which exceeds the state achievement in that area (SC Report Cards, 2022).

The school system provides an ESL program model for each elementary, middle, and high school that uses English medium approaches to instruction and may pull some students from a class for language services while providing accommodations for students and professional development for teachers to ensure language development in the regular classroom (Wright, 2019). Other approaches that are used but not required by the state or school system are SIOP and co-teaching models. The use of these approaches varies with each school from intense training and use to no utilization or faculty knowledge of each approach. English is the official language of the state in which this study occurs (SC 1988).

The two classroom observations discussed in further detail in this chapter occurred in an English class of twelfth graders in the spring of their senior year as the participant and her peers were anticipating graduation. While the site was chosen for the opportunities it would provide to observe the participant's language use with her teacher and peers, it also proved to be an appropriate site as the participant reflected in interviews on her experiences in school by referencing past experiences with reading, writing, and figurative language use. The participant had been in US schools since kindergarten and was consistent in her attendance in US public schools. This allowed her to discuss schooling experiences.

### **Data Collection**

Case study research requires multiple data sources in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participant and her experiences. Therefore, there is a necessity to collect additional data from students to support the interpretation of data, contextualize interview data, and triangulate findings (Yin, 2018). These other data sources will strengthen the findings of this study (see Table 1).

#### *Data Sources*

Data sources for this study include three student interviews, two classroom observations, and student-selected artifacts from school. After the case was selected and informed consent received, data were collected by observation, interviews, and collection of artifacts from the participant.

#### *Observations*

Observational data noting the language and cultural environments in which the students exist is important for appreciating their perceptions of those themes. The single case study design makes clear the role of the researcher to identify the phenomena being observed and to unobtrusively notice and discern significance. The early observations exemplify what Glesne (2016) describes as those of the “awkward newcomer” to the environment (p. 69). Observations were pre-arranged to allow for a better understanding of the participants’ use of language and cultural practices in a school setting as a follow-up to information shared during the interviews.

School observations are significant points of inquiry. Both observations occurred with the permission of the schools’ administrators and the classroom teachers. In selecting the classes in which to observe the participant, it was important to choose classes that extended across the semester and were not limited to a nine-week or trimester. The class selected needed to provide the opportunity for students to engage in literacy practices of writing and speaking in whole group, small group, partner, and individual settings. For example, an auto mechanics class requires several days of observing and listening, then students are grouped to carry out an assignment that takes two days. This classroom may not reliably provide an opportunity to observe language practices. However, the context of this study, an English class that focused on literature discussion, writing essays, sharing ideas, and both cooperative and independent work, provided more opportunities to observe literacy practices during each observation.

The district administrator provided me with a handbook with course descriptions that included activities and expectations of each class. The school-level administrator

provided a copy of each teacher's syllabus that indicates the kind of activities each class requires. The handbook and syllabi were useful in choosing a class in which to observe the participant. After reading a script approved by IRB to the teacher ahead of the observation, I also read a script to the class indicating my presence as an observer. Parents of students in the class received a notice of my presence in the class with its purpose.

**Data Collection through Observation.** A semi-structured guide for field notes assisted in observations. During each of the ninety-minute observations at school, I wrote field notes and drew a floor plan of the classroom. The floor plan provided a reference for understanding subjects' contacts and spaces in which L1 and L2 are used individually and with and among others. The field notes begin as descriptive, noting the relationships between the student and her English-speaking and non-English speaking classmates and the teacher. The notetaking became more analytic as I explored "...identifying patterns and themes" in the attempt at building knowledge of the participant, her culture, and then her perspectives on school (Glesne, 2016, p. 77). During the two school observations, I took field notes on a laptop. I drew the classroom layout and annotated where I was or moved during the observation, as well as where the participant was located and with whom she used her L1 or L2 during the class. I wrote analytic memos after each observation to keep my own thoughts and processes clear and to identify any connections I was making between the observations and interviews. These analytic memos also helped to determine questions.

### *Interviews*

Learning about students' perceptions required three semi-structured interviews. All interviews were conducted over an online video and audio source that permits the use of audio-visual recording. Each interview was transcribed within one day after being conducted and immediately uploaded into NVivo for analysis. The researcher listened to each recording, reviewed the transcripts for accuracy, and shared a copy with the participant for review to ensure accuracy. The interview protocol was developed and designed to ensure that interview questions align to the research questions and lend themselves to conversations related to my inquiry (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

Each interview was designed to understand the participant's feelings, opinions, perceptions, and experiences with the use of Spanish in school and cultural experiences at school. The interviews were guided by previously written questions based on the research questions and relevant literature. However, the previously written questions were meant as a guide and were modified depending on students' responses and the need for more explanation or information. Brooks (2015) noted that LTELs require an understanding of both their literacy practices and how they perceive the instruction they are receiving at school. Mendoza (2019) noted that LTELs describe the services that they receive in schools and that knowledge of these supports impact their continued participation in school.

**Data Collection through Interviews.** The first interview with the participant was held before any classroom observation. (See Appendix A). The first interview allowed for the gathering of background information about the student and questions specific to my



research questions. This interview was followed by an observation to provide a window on what was discussed.

The second and third interviews each occurred after a classroom observation. The second and third interviews allowed questions to follow-up on what was observed, ask new questions based on need and discovery, and for the student to share and think through artifacts as evidence to document their perspectives and thoughts mentioned or are discussed. The structure of the second and third interviews focused on the participant's choice of artifacts and with whom they share those artifacts as well as a discussion of the class in which I observed them. The purpose of those questions was to further delve into the power dynamics of discourse in the school setting (Kress, 1990). For the second interview, Nayeli shared a letter she received from the school district that included her WIDA ACCESS for ELLs score from 2022 and her accommodations for the 2022-23 school year. When we met for the third interview, she shared questions she used to help her group plan for their podcast assignment in English class (See figure one). The second and third interviews also allowed the student to discuss classroom practices and to have a think aloud about how they see specific activities and language use in the classroom as well as to share any artifact that helps them to discuss their experiences with schooling.

In each interview, my goal was to probe further how the participant perceives her school's awareness of her language and culture. These interviews included questions about conversations in the classroom about culture and decisions on language use. During the interview, Nayeli also brought up topics she wished to discuss, based upon those

conversations, and those topics were included in the transcripts, as well. Each interview was transcribed within a day of occurring and was coded using open coding by the fourth day after the interview.

### *Artifacts*

The artifacts provided by Nayeli were used for the purpose of triangulation, to ensure that multiple sources of information validated my findings. The letter from the school assisted in developing the finding that Nayeli discusses her resistance to the school's validation of her use of English with those who share a similar experience. She presented the letter as an opportunity to discuss her frustration with the annual testing of English to which she must submit each year. The second artifact of questions that she used to guide her group creating a podcast for an assignment provided her with an opportunity to discuss how she uses her language expertise in both English and Spanish to assist her peers who have less experience using English. These artifacts will be discussed more below.

This triangulation also increased the depth of my understanding of Nayeli's perspectives. Participant created visual data (Glesne, 2016) was also presented by the interviewee as an opportunity to inform as the participant reflects or recalls experiences. Visual data included schoolwork, essays, school communications, or student created projects. Those often come as the participant shared work from school and personal creations that reflect language and cultural experiences. Just as material culture is "...given meaning by people in that context" and informs archaeologists, those documents, photographs, and products from school that a participant shares during the

interview have meaning in the context that is ascertained during the conversation (Glesne, 2016, p. 81). Likewise, artifacts were created by the researcher in the form of photographs and diagrams to allow analysis of the setting in which the participants engage in language and cultural practices. In order to understand how practices are sanctioned in different areas, it was often necessary to note the layout and design of a setting.

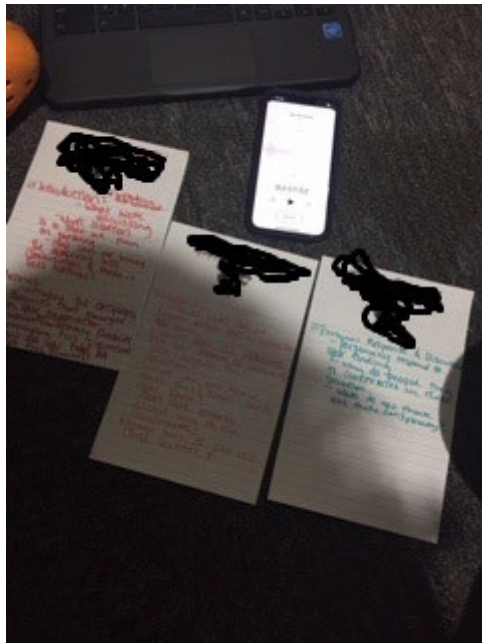
**Data Collection through Artifacts.** After the first interview, I asked Nayeli if she could bring something that helped to further discuss her experiences with sharing and choosing not to share her language or cultural experiences at school. While I sensed her initial hesitation for the second interview, she brought a copy of her letter from the ESOL department explaining that she had not been reclassified as no longer requiring services from the ESOL department. Included with the document was her Individualized Language Acquisition Plan (ILAP) that contained her accommodations for the school year. There were no boxes checked on her accommodations. The letter and ILAP were in English and second copies in Spanish.

For the third interview, Nayeli brought examples of her organization of questions related to an assignment from class. She used the questions to assist the other members of her four-person group (two who were studying English as a second language and the other studying Spanish after living in a South American country for two years due to parents' work) in organizing the podcast for the research assignment of the class. The questions were in English and organized with a target question and details to add to make it more personal. Included were questions such as: "What can you already know about

this topic?” “Why do some people believe this conspiracy theory?” “What is your personal response to this mystery?” All of these questions were written as subheadings under: What is possible to know about this topic? Nayeli used different color markers to help differentiate between the major questions in order to help her peers.

**Figure 1**

*Example of Participant Helping Other MLs.*



*Note.* Participant’s questions and subtopics shared with her group for a podcast they created on a conspiracy theory.

In the case of both artifacts, I noted the language used and talked to the participant about the perceived purpose and intent of each artifact. With the letter and ILAP, the participant discussed ACCESS testing and how it is perceived by the students. She discussed her own attitudes toward testing. The second artifact was created by the student on a tablet the school provides students with at the start of the semester and thus required

that I erase the school's name and emblem. The student discussed her role in helping her group complete the project.

**Table 1**

***Data Sources: Purpose, Use, & Analysis***

Data Source	Purpose	Time Period	Usefulness
Student semi-structured interview	Initial questions are designed to gather background information from the participant.  Questions are designed to gather student perspective on schools' awareness and support of their native language <i>and</i> cultural identity within instruction (RQ 1 & 2).	Week 1 of study - interview 1	To target the focus of the study and learn students' initial perspectives on language, culture, and school.
Classroom Observation	Observe participants' use of L1 & English and the spaces, people, and context in which they use each language	Week 2 of study	To provide data to confirm, deny, or modify initial interpretations provided by the student based on what is observed in the classroom.

<p>Interview #2 and Student Provided Artifacts:  School work  Products from Literature from school Think aloud interview in which student discusses classroom processes and shares artifacts of school or learning.</p>	<p>Allow students to demonstrate their perspectives of school experiences</p>	<p>Week 4 of study at time of the second interview</p>	<p>To provide insight into school and cultural features of the participants' lives Allows the student to discuss specific activities in the classroom, such as writing, worksheets, and other activities. Observations can also be discussed at this time. Finally, students use a Think Aloud to explain, explore, and talk about evidence they bring to document and share examples related to their perspectives.</p>
<p>Classroom Observations</p>	<p>Observe participants' use of L1 &amp; English and the spaces, people, and context in which they use each language</p>	<p>Week 4 of the study Observation #2</p>	<p>To provide data to confirm, deny, or modify initial interpretations provided by the student based on what is observed in the classroom.</p>

<p>Interview #3. Think aloud interview in which student discusses classroom processes and shares artifacts of school or learning.</p>	<p>Student discusses the class observed and any artifacts from class or schooling.</p>	<p>Week 5 of study Interview #3</p>	<p>Allows the student to discuss specific activities in the classroom, such as writing, worksheets, and other activities.</p>
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### **Data Analysis**

Analysis of each interview or observation began with open coding to allow for description and to examine the parts of the interview and field notes and then axial coding methods to allow for identifying relationships (Saldana, 2021). Open coding allowed for the analysis of the participant’s words and perspective limiting my own suppositions or presumptions. I then used axial coding methods to identify relationships between the codes.

#### *Open Coding*

Open coding focused on Nayeli’s language processes and schooling experiences and those displayed during the classroom observation. Coding began after each interview or observation and continued ongoing throughout data collection. Of the open codes, fourteen were related to cultural events or perspectives and the remainder related to language events, practices, or language use. The coding of the field notes and the interviews was completed line-by-line immediately after each data collection event (Saldana, 2021). In some cases, interviews were transcribed within a day and the coding

took place four days later. Open codes in the first round included words like ‘language use,’ ‘comparing languages,’ ‘helping’ and ‘feeling appreciated.’ After open coding three interviews and two observations, sixty-two codes emerged.

### *Axial Coding*

Axial coding allows for saturation of data and provides an opportunity to create visual pieces or “diagrams of the phenomena at work” to illustrate how data from observations and interviews of the case are connected (Saldana, 2021, p. 312). During axial coding, subcategories were merged, and phenomena were identified that may be explored as research continues. During this time, coding was “...provisional and open for revision...in the light of new data” as the observations and interviews continued and analytic memos were written as data were coded (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021).

For example, during axial coding, I recognized several codes, (e.g., ‘gatekeeping,’ ‘protecting,’ ‘translating,’ or ‘clarifying’) that belonged together as they referenced observations of Nayeli using language knowledge in ‘helping’ others. This allowed me to create a category of ‘helping’ that included sixteen subcategories that were all ways Nayeli leveraged language as a way of ‘helping’ teachers, newcomers to the US, parents, and native English speakers studying Spanish.

The axial coding process allowed me to recognize the amount of attention the participant paid to her ‘feelings’ of being bilingual and her role as a person who helps others. Under the category of ‘feeling’ I identified seven subcategories that related to ‘feeling:’ ‘appreciated,’ ‘confused,’ ‘empowered,’ ‘grateful,’ ‘helped,’ ‘isolated,’ and ‘targeted.’ Admittedly, during this time, I was curious about the nature of the



relationships Nayeli described with her teachers (since she seemed to be focused on helping her teachers and receiving their approval) and the leadership role she seemed to have with her English and Spanish learning peers. I reviewed the data to identify tangible rewards for her language skills and could not identify any in the interviews or the field notes from observations. Based on these codes, I identified categories that helped to address the first research question related to the participant's awareness of the school's support of her native language use. It could be described as providing her 'feelings' that range from the positive, such as 'appreciated' to the negative, such as 'isolated.'

Both research questions, including the second about the student's perspective on the school's support or value of her cultural identity required that I attend to how Nayeli qualified her experiences. When discussing reading, the student qualified her choices and interests based upon 'identity' 'connections,' 'prior knowledge,' and 'diversity.' She continued to qualify her choices in writing and participating in extracurricular events. I identified a category of 'sharing' related to the openness with which she shared 'symbolism' from the cultural events and linguistic opportunities, 'diversity' recognitions, and 'connections' that she felt were appropriate to share. Nayeli would discuss symbols of culture, such as flags and dances and discuss the diversity of the participants of those events.

While I originally identified a code for 'sharing' culture, as I coded, I recognized Nayeli's references to culture were sometimes performative and were 'scripted.' When 'scripted,' Nayeli could perform and share symbols of her culture, such as dances and flags. However, I noted that there were other times in which culture and language were

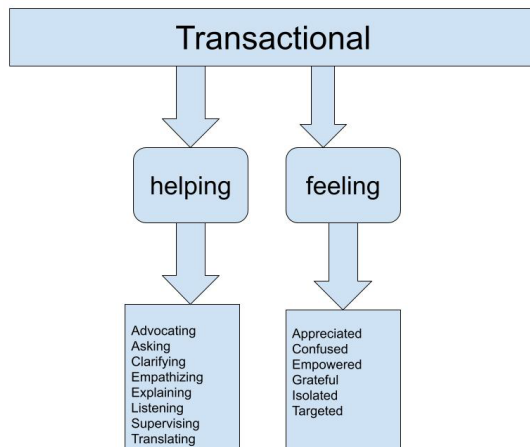
discussed separately or together that she related to stories from her peers who had immigrated, her parents' immigration stories, and her choices about reading at school. She would firmly state that these topics were discussed with family or friends who also spoke Spanish. These were not opportunities for sharing but were instead cultural and historical stories to which she limited the access of outsiders. In the category I identified as 'reticent' to share, I noted the following codes: 'immigration stories,' 'language comparison,' and 'reading at school.'

### *Selective Coding*

Selective coding occurred as codes were refined, and categories were created that encapsulated the codes. For instance, all terms related to using one's language skills to help others were combined into one representative theme. However, as I looked at the codes for how the participant was 'helping' others and how she was 'feeling' about these relationships, I recognized that both helping and feeling codes involved a transactional relationship. Therefore, I clustered the categories 'helping' and 'feeling' and the related codes to the broader theme of *transactions*. See figure 1 below.

### **Figure 2**

*How do LTELs perceive their schools' native language use within instruction?*

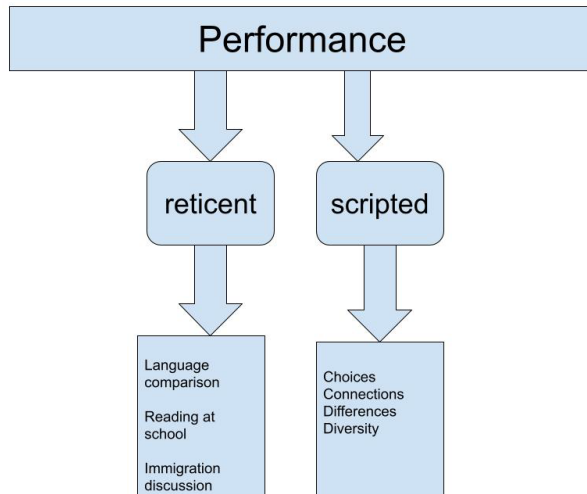


*Note.* Codes connected to categories and the theme of transactional relationships.

Similarly, I noted that interview comments regarding culture and language were either for a broader audience and shared in a ‘scripted’ form or were shared only with people with whom Nayeli shared the experience. Thus, Nayeli demonstrated ‘reticence’ in telling others about specific aspects of her culture that were not as widely understood or as safe. In both of those categories there was a specific way of sharing and discussing the culture that had many elements of performance, whether in dance in public or in sharing parents’ stories or Spanish idiomatic expressions while sharing jokes. The overarching theme that helped me to identify the participant’s perception of the school’s lens of her culture was one of *performance*, some shared with the public and ‘scripted’ that could be shared with the school community of teachers, students, and administrators. However, the more personal experiences of her culture were shared with her family and other Hispanic students and were largely spoken of in Spanish. Nayeli and her peers were ‘reticent’ to share with outsiders. See figure below.

**Figure 3**

*How do LTELs perceive their schools' awareness and support of their cultural identity within instruction?*



*Note.* Connection of the codes identified with categories and themes.

Selective coding helped me understand how LTELs perceive their schools' awareness and support of their use of native language within instruction and how LTELs perceive their schools' awareness and support of their cultural identity within instruction (i.e., family involvement, CSP, etc.) Selective coding helped me synthesize the findings in the research. (See figure 4.)

In conclusion, data across all interviews and observations was compiled and compared to identify common patterns, leading to the creation of a unifying category that helps to answer the research questions (Saldana, 2021). This approach allowed for both validation and refinement of analysis (Yin, 2018). By coding these data in this way, I felt encouraged to reread each transcript and section of field notes and identify themes that help to explain the content of the codes. (See the codebook for definitions, Appendix D.)

**Figure 4**

*Codes, Categories, and Themes*

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Fappreciated	<i>Feeling</i>	<b><i>Transaction</i></b>
Fconfused		
Fempowered		
Fgrateful		
Fhelped		
Fisolated		
Ftargeted		
Hadvocating	<i>helping</i>	
Hasking		
Hclarifying		
hempathizing		
Hexplaining		
Hhumor		
Hlistening		
Horganizing		
Hprotecting		
hresponding to targeting		
Hsupervising		
hswitching languages		
Htranslating		
Hunderstanding		
hwelcoming in L1		

language comparison	<i>reticence</i>	<b>Performance</b>
reading at school		
Immigration		
Choices	<i>scripted</i>	
connections		
differences		
diversity		

*Note.* Demonstration of how the terms from the codebook were connected into categories and themes.

### **IRB Information**

Informed consent by parents and assent by students where applicable or required by Clemson IRB office were obtained for each participant by sharing a letter that explains the purpose of the study, its voluntary status, an explanation of any risks and possible benefits of the study, as well as the duration and steps in the study. The students received an assent form that contained the same information.

In order to maintain confidentiality, records are kept secure in password protected files. Names have been changed to maintain anonymity. Any hand-written logs were typed and kept in a password protected file. The hard copy is locked in a fireproof safe box. Data will be kept for five years after the publication of the study.

### **Timeline for Study**

Proposal Defense–December 2022

Submit IRB – December 2022

IRB Approval March 2023

Recruit Participants – March 2023

Conduct Interviews – April 2023

Gather Student Artifacts – April 2023

Observations – April and May 2023

Analysis – May 2023

Writing – May through June 2023

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

As discussed in chapters two and three, LTELs can be subjected to a deficit lens in school settings and their designation as MLs may result in missed educational opportunities. At the same time, their voices on how they perceive the school's approach to their language and culture provides data to be mined (Mendoza, 2019). The ability of these students to discuss literacy practices, as well as race and ethnicity can be leveraged to better understand how they interpret their schooling experiences (Brooks, 2015; Brooks 2017a; Seltzer 2019; Smyth, 2006). Their voices can expand the conversation from a deficit perspective that presumes a poor fit for college and career readiness and, instead, researchers can focus on whether their skills have been adequately utilized and honed by the school system for future goals (Clark-Gareca, 2019, Mavrogordato & White, 2020; Okhremtchouk et al., 2018).

In order to explore student perceptions of how the schools did or did not utilize their language skills and cultural experiences, the following two research questions guided this study:

- How does one LTEL perceive their schools' awareness and support of their use of native language within instruction (i.e., in regard to being tracked based on language, assimilated on their own, required monolingualism, translanguaging, CSP, dropping out of school)?
- How does one LTEL perceive their schools' awareness and support of their cultural identity (i.e., family involvement, CSP, etc.)?

The participant in this study has been given the pseudonym Nayeli, a name that comes from the Zapotec people of the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. Its meaning in



the indigenous language is “open.” Nayeli is the middle child of Mexican immigrants with an older brother who has graduated high school and is working and a younger brother in elementary school. Nayeli identifies as Hispanic and acknowledges that in some circumstances she is identified as white and presumed to only use English, while her father is presumed in some circumstances to be of African American descent. Nayeli and her brothers were all born in the southern United States and have never visited Mexico or any country outside of the US. College-bound, Nayeli and her family have been far from transient, living just forty miles from the city of her birth. She and her older brother changed school districts only once, when Nayeli was in sixth grade. Nayeli is college bound, pursuing a nursing degree, beginning her first two years in a community college before she transfers to earn her B.A. as a registered nurse (R.N.) Her ultimate goal is to become a pediatrician.

The observations and interviews were contextualized using the theoretical framework of raciolinguistics, which is influenced by LatCrit and Critical Race Theory. Building upon this research, language and cultural practices can be viewed as generating validity through the approval of their audience, members of the dominant group, referred to as the *white gaze* (Flores & Rosa, 2015). The role this *white gaze* has in influencing students’ choices in language use suggests positioning and power and leverage that can impact when a student uses L1 or L2. Within the context of a classroom, the teacher from the dominant language group may not necessarily be aware of their influence in language choices of students, but their sway can have an impact, even when they feel they are using positive reinforcement.

Raciolinguistics often notes that the spaces that a bilingual student inhabits are often not neutral and can place students under scrutiny and the judgment of others (Davín & Heineke, 2017, Mavrogordato & White, 2020, Okhremtchouk, et al, 2018). For this reason, students are circumspect in how they share language and cultural practices and with whom because they are aware of the racialization of their own language by the dominant group. Therefore, these students may choose to share aspects with the dominant group in a way that may seem performative, while performing in genuineness with members of their group. At other times, they may not share their culture at all in an attempt to fit in with the dominant group.

Coding data allowed me to identify the transactional nature of relationships Nayeli had with teachers and peers, as she was engaged in practices of helping that provided her with feelings regarding the feedback she received for her assistance. During coding, I identified the performances in which Nayeli engaged when sharing her culture with those who shared her language and background that were often ad-libbed and occurred in Spanish and performances that were for outsiders of her language group and were often scripted and symbolical. By observing the classroom and interviewing the participant, three perspectives regarding language and culture of LTELs emerged:

1. L1 or L2 use is viewed as transactional by Nayeli and occurred between her and two groups: Nayeli and her teachers or Nayeli and native English speakers wishing to learn Spanish. The currency in these transactions was related to emotions of feeling appreciated, approved, and Nayeli was seen as capable of a supervisory role.

2. It is understood that some language and cultural practices are shared with people who are outside of Nayeli's language group when they are requested, symbolic, and ubiquitous. They may be shared in scripted ways.
3. Some language and cultural practices were shared only with people within Nayeli's language group and have the same knowledge and experiences. These practices are usually discussed in Spanish and were spontaneous or ad-libbed.

In discussing these three perspectives, it is important to note some important provisions. Regarding transactions when using her L1 or L2, Nayeli interpreted for the teacher, newcomers to the US, and native English speakers. This behavior was observed in the classroom. However, when she discussed the reciprocation for these behaviors, she discussed what she received from teachers and native English speakers for her help in the form of appreciation or access or prestige provided to her. She did not discuss any reciprocation from the emergent bilinguals who had less experience in English and in US schools. In the classroom, I observed Nayeli helping all three groups for two class periods a total of twenty-three times, yet in the interviews, she discussed helping newcomers from the perspective of how it helps the teachers and how the teachers want her to help the newcomers. However, when Nayeli helped the students who were learning Spanish in school, it was at the request of those students.

Nayeli did not explicitly state "rules" for sharing one's language and culture with those who shared her language and experiences and with the dominant group who usually did not. However, her practices for determining what to share and with whom about language and culture were largely consistent and these patterns became clear across the

interviews and observations. She used vocabulary for describing her audiences as either “Hispanics,” “people who speak Spanish,” or “immigrants here.” With people in those groups, she shared language and cultural experiences that were personal and common to the group and not a part of the narrative of her classes. The dominant groups she referred to as “teachers,” “principals,” or “students studying Spanish.” With these groups she shared safe topics regarding language and culture that could be easily recognized by outsiders, avoided controversy, and matched the instruction of her school.

### **Transactional Use of Language**

To illustrate the participant’s understanding of the transactional nature of her ability to help in two languages, I begin this section by referring to a section of an interview in which we were discussing her parents’ opportunities to visit her schools. In this first interview, I had asked about her parents’ visits to schools and what she recalled about those visits when her school hosted family nights. In her recollection:

I was in a group. It was fifth grade. Teacher put us in a group of five or four. I remember this one boy, I had to translate and he would always want to copy me but I wouldn’t let him, (I told him) “You have to learn what the teacher is telling you....” We had the parent-teacher conference, and I remember the teacher telling my dad, “Oh, he always bothers Nayeli because she doesn’t wanna give him the answers, but she’s doing what’s right and I appreciate her for helping him and translating.”

I asked Nayeli if she felt appreciated by the teacher and she replied that she did and explained that she understood the teacher appreciated her because, "...the teacher towards the end of the school year gave me a present because there were two students and I was going back and forth." Three things stood out from this story: The participant was in elementary school, the validation came from the teacher who bragged about Nayeli to her father and shared a token of appreciation, and Nayeli found herself in a supervisory role as she prevented the student from copying her and reinforced him in doing what the Nayeli recalls as the teacher's view of "the right thing." When I asked Nayeli to discuss why the teacher was so appreciative, she explained it, saying "I can only think about me translating" as a means for the teacher to be able to complete her task of teaching this student.

When it came to her bilingualism, it was clear that Nayeli believed two things about language:

1. Nayeli wanted her skills in two languages to help people.
2. There is a range of language positionings for people who are multilingual that range from those who are new to the US to those who were born here and have learned two languages in what feels simultaneous.

In her first interview, Nayeli described meeting newcomers and her experiences in translating, saying "I want to help them." However, she also understood that language experiences are different, even among her group that she identifies as "the Hispanics" and that people develop language, even using *Spanglish*, which she describes: "We call it

Spanglish where we use Spanish and English in the same sentence and that is more common now and also at school with our friends, we do that.”

During classroom observations, I was not sure I would be able to identify the helpful behavior that Nayeli described from her elementary experiences, since the students are older in a senior English class. I recalled from our first interview that Nayeli described herself as “... more of a shy person, I don’t talk first. If they talk to me first, or if I can help, it’s more I guess, they make me feel more comforting” when explaining how she has helped students who are learning English and are new to the US. I was not sure if a high school teacher would direct Nayeli to interpret or if Nayeli would take the initiative herself.

In the classroom, I observed Nayeli explaining humor, clarifying the teacher’s directions, supervising students who needed direction, organizing notetaking and a presentation which she shared with ELL students, advocating for a student who was indecisive about a project, protecting a student from feeling humiliated, and supervising her group to keep them on task. Most of this was conducted in Spanish.

In the classroom, Nayeli surrounded herself with friends that she made as they enrolled in high school. She describes the students on either side of her as coming to the US within the past two years and when they have classes together, they prefer to sit together. When a joke is made in the class by the instructor about the use of a cane as a wedding gift, Nayeli laughs along with the class. She explains this humor and the story someone tells about the little boy who refuses to tell his mother that he loves her to

students around her. In both instances, someone was using humor to make a point and Nayeli helped her friends on either side of her understand what was said and the point being made.

The use of Google Classroom provided a calendar of due dates in the class reading of a novel, *1984*, a podcast assignment that is a research project, and WebQuest assignment. With each announcement, Nayeli spoke with the students on either side of her, pointing to links on the screen, responding in Spanish with *Esta bien, si, or no*. To help her peers who were from countries in which dates are written in a different order, Nayeli wrote dates that were in the order of month and day to day and month, so that her friends could understand the due dates.

Nayeli worked on the podcast project with three peers. This was a result of her own interest in a conspiracy regarding an artificial lake in the southeastern United States that was built in place of a town that had been the site of a thriving African American community until its destruction by racist mobs that caused the residents to leave. The site contains a lot of debris that has led to claims of the site being haunted as people who are submerged there claim to feel pulled under or encouraged to let go in the water. When I asked what their topic was, the group looked to Nayeli to explain, since she found the topic on Tik Tok and had read a news article about its beginning as a project of the Army Corps of Engineers.

To better understand what I had observed in class, I asked Nayeli about how she helped students whose first language was also Spanish on the early stages of the project:

Donna: I see your group turn to you. What are some things you are asked when working on this project?

Nayeli: It's mostly to explain again what the teacher said.

Donna: Are there other things they ask you?

Nayeli: Sometimes, they ask me the English word for something.

Donna: That's what I was seeing when you were writing the research notes?

Nayeli: Yeah, and trying to give a summary of what an article said.

Donna: Putting it in their own words.

Nayeli: Yeah, and trying to think of the English way of saying something in a simple way.

Donna: Are you clarifying directions in the class when you point at the laptop screen?

Nayeli: Yeah, if they think something is too fast or we click on a bunch of stuff.

Donna: So you are translating how to find the links?

Nayeli: Yeah. Sometimes there are a lot of places to go for an assignment.

Donna: So you leverage your Spanish and English to help them?

Nayeli: Yeah, I know the vocabulary in each, so I help.

While this conversation solidified my observation that Nayeli was helping other students who were learning English in the class, a practice she has described doing since elementary school, it did not demonstrate any transactional value received from the teacher.

However, I continued to observe Nayeli, as the student groups worked on their conspiracy theory podcast, I noticed when one of her group members was considering researching her own topic, the teacher came to Nayeli to find out if they were still a group of four or three. Nayeli, speaking for the group, explained that the group had decided to stay together and remain with the chosen topic. This included speaking for the student



who was considering changing to a solo topic. This exchange reinforced the idea that Nayeli was helping her peers as a means of helping her teacher and this positioned her as a leader of that group. As I examined the exchange in my field notes, I noticed that Nayeli spoke for the group, asked for assistance from the teacher in using an electronic library available statewide, and asked for guidance in receiving an excused absence for a job-shadowing event, all in the same audience with the teacher.

Nayeli acknowledged that other students in her group that she identified as “new” to the US were nervous about using English, especially hearing themselves use English in a recording. Nayeli had made many of the group decisions, including the organization of the presentation, that each of the participants in the group project entered recording room independently, and the materials each person needed. Nayeli created questions for each participant to answer about their topic and gave them index cards to write what they were going to say.

At the next observation, I noticed that as the students worked on the podcast, they turned to Nayeli for what sounded like approval of their work. I heard, *necesitas hacer* and then explanations that sounded like a request to explain more or add more sentences. I overheard some guidance in Spanish that I translated as telling the participant to pretend that they were someone who had been in the lake but did not know the stories about it “but you were swimming there and you felt something pulling you in.” I heard reassurances in Spanish of “no one will hear you,” “you can go in alone,” and “It is all written there.” Nayeli listened and replied to her classmates in Spanish as they worked.

Nayeli's supervisory role was on display, and we discussed this during an interview:

Donna: And tell me about the questions, why did you decide to write them out like this?

Nayeli: So (the other member of the group) could see the questions.

As I continued asking about her strategies in the classroom, Nayeli explained how members of her group are "nervous."

Donna: Your notes and plans of what to say. You write the questions and plan it, but you are not going to write it out word for word?

Nayeli: Well, it's written out more for them because they are nervous about what to say. But, for me, I just know from the research how I will answer the question.

Donna: You can speak from it without reading it.

Nayeli: Yeah and it is really even organized that much because they don't like speaking at all, but they have to say something for the grade. So, I plan it out so they can get their part done in recording when it is time.

However, Nayeli's transactional use of language was not limited to exchanges with the teacher for approval or appreciation, Nayeli also used her bilingualism in exchange with students who were native English speakers studying Spanish. Nayeli described this experience in a health fields-related class: "In my class, I sit with three other people and they're taking a Spanish class, and I help them, or I listen to them give each other advice or they ask me. I listen to them and let them figure it out first, and then I help them." Her methods were like those described from elementary school, letting a student work on their own, take questions, and advise as necessary.

This relationship began when Nayeli did not know anyone in the class. “Everyone had their friend group. I was the one alone.” Over time, the students’ questions and required assistance in Spanish helped Nayeli build a relationship with people she did not know. It began with her listening quietly and being invited into the conversation in which the students began to request her expertise.

In this classroom, I saw these same practices with a fourth member of her podcast group, a native English speaker from the US who lived in South America. Nayeli told me of this student, saying, “And I have a friend in English class, she went to Bolivia for 3 years and learned Spanish and she asked me to talk to her in Spanish, so I talk to her in class in Spanish, so she won’t forget it.” As noted before, Nayeli understood that she was being helpful. Her L1 received approval and was permitted to be used to enhance the language practices of this native English speaker.

In analyzing the transactions between Nayeli and this native English speaker who wanted to continue to practice her Spanish, it was clear that Nayeli helped her but also expected more of her when it came to contributing to the group. With the students whose first language is Spanish, Nayeli discussed helping them by making the work more manageable and ensuring that they do enough work to “get the grade.” Nayeli expected more from the native English speaker that she was helping.

While working on the podcast assignment, Nayeli was rather focused in class and did not look up or around once the research began. Her focus was not interrupted by the teacher’s conversations with groups, a cell phone falling to the floor, or a call into the

room through the intercom system. However, she demonstrated frustration with people who did not work by looking around and finally at the person who disturbed her. She became frustrated by off-task behavior of the native English speaking group member and quit using Spanish with her. She had looked over at the student who was two desks down several times and finally redirected her in English, “One of the first ones I found online, and it is right there. I just wanted the first part and I have now done the whole thing.” I noted in the field notes, “While her engagement with those around her had been in Spanish, it seemed that she was redirecting someone in her group (who was) off task with explaining in English what she had done.”

I saw this use of English as the behavior for redirection one other time with the same student. It seemed that when the student’s behavior was deemed off-task by Nayeli, this was communicated by refraining from using Spanish and explaining what she had been doing in English. Just as the student had sanctioned Nayeli’s L1 and asked to practice it in order not to forget it, Nayeli stopped this practice to leverage more work from the student. When I asked Nayeli about these decisions, she explained that her choices are not as clear as her behavior suggests. She explained her process for using language while she is also researching in this way, “I really don’t know. It just happens. It’s just like. I don’t even know what I’m going to say. It just comes out. Maybe I’m looking at an English question? Or I am reading from an article in English when I am working? I don’t know.” When I asked further questions about her relationship with a student off-task, she replied, “Yeah. I know this podcast is in English.”

Nayeli had not determined if her language selection with the native English speaker was a direct attempt to change her behavior, but Nayeli's goal was the successful completion of the assigned podcast, and she expected the student to complete her part in the assignment. The significance of the research in English and the final product in English seemed to guide her decisions in influencing other people to get on-track.

#### *Avoiding Negative Interactions*

In examining the data for possible counterevidence of the finding of the transactional relationship of the participant with her teachers and native English-speaking peers, I looked for potential uses of L1 or L2 by the participant that were neutral or in which there was nothing gained by the exchange. I looked for examples of L1 use that occurred with the sanction of the schooling institution or English-speaking peers. However, when I looked for these occurrences, they were reported by the participant to occur at her work.

At school, the participant described some students who would say to her and her friends, "Some kids say, y'all always talk Spanish, it's an English class, and I'm like okay." I probed further, asking how she felt about that, and she replied, "I take it as kidding because they are always learning and asking me, how do you say this in Spanish."

Whether this is an instance of actual targeting or "kidding," Nayeli managed to present it as an opportunity for leverage, since she instructed in Spanish when students asked. However, during the observations, in the class in which she described this occurring, I did not see students outside of her podcast group asking her to translate

anything for them. Interactions in the class were largely between the podcast groups and the teacher and each group.

Nayeli was not naive regarding targeting individuals based upon language use. She described a work situation, saying, "...at work, there's this one guy, me and my friend..., we always talk Spanish, and he says, This is a workplace, you should talk English. That's when I feel more targeted because, it's like, my language, I can talk and use it whenever." While Nayeli recognized this as targeting, she did not challenge the work colleague, explaining her reasoning as,

I feel like mostly because it's work, and I don't want to get into trouble for something and cause problems. Also, he is an older guy. I feel like I should respect also what he thinks. The world is also changing; they kind of feel a certain way. I also feel it's not right for me to say it. I need to think of his feelings too.

While Nayeli described a situation in which she felt targeted in a dynamic in which she and her work colleague were equals, she referred to his age and the professionalism of a work environment as a reason not to challenge what he said. At the same time, while she did not specifically challenge him or complain about him, she continued to use her L1 with her other colleagues. However, while at work, Nayeli leveraged her bilingualism and interpreted for customers who visited the store where she was responsible for supervising sales associates and maintaining inventory. She admitted she did not get paid for her interpretation services. This stalemate between her and her colleague may have existed because while it may bother him that she used her L1, it is an asset for their employer. She recognized this leverage, as well.

Nayeli demonstrated a desire to avoid negative transactions when discussing her choice of international language studies in high school. She described in our first interview how she was originally pulled out for an ESOL class in middle school and the school personnel soon realized she had been in US schools since kindergarten and was better served in a related arts class. The school placed in her a middle school Spanish class that she found easy.

I had presumed that in high school she studied Spanish for her credit. Instead, she chose to study French for four semesters. She described French as a language that would be “cool” to study and she found it “fancy.” She identified connections between French and Spanish, especially in terms of cognates. She compared French to Spanish, saying, “...and Mexicans, they are like Hispanics, and we don’t talk that fancy as French people do.” I wanted to further understand why she chose a third language and never formally studied Spanish outside of her middle school related arts. Her use of the word “fancy” could have indicated a feeling of one language being superior to the other or she may have felt confident in her ability to use Spanish in all language domains and did not wish to study it further.

The conversation continued and near the end of one interview, she explained the experience of one of her Spanish speaking friends in a Spanish class at the high school:

One of my friends here took Spanish and I don’t remember what teacher it was, but they got her in trouble and sent her to ISS because it was two words that we use, and she wanted to put that in the blank and the teacher said no. She was like, why, it’s the same word. So, she was getting mad that she wasn’t using the Spain word. I think it was for high heels. I think the Spain word and she was using the Mexican word. It’s like cars they say *coche* we say *carro*. It’s different from each one.

In using the pronoun “we,” Nayeli was specifically identifying with the student who was in trouble for wanting to replace a Castilian term with vocabulary from a Mexican dialect of Spanish. While she has negotiated her bilingualism at times in order to become a leader or get a greater audience with a teacher, she identified with the Hispanic students who represented a variety of dialects by referring to *we* and the teachers of institutional Castilian Spanish as *they*.

However, while identifying with the student who felt representation of other Spanish dialects should have been a part of instruction and assessment, there was no indication that Nayeli became involved. Instead, she chose to study a language that was new to her and whose dialects would be unknown. Her discussion of French was a strict comparison to Spanish and even to English. Her experiences with French would not lead her to compare its dialects.

#### *Arrangements in L1 and L2*

Nayeli’s use of her L1 appeared validated by the teacher as a means for helping newcomers who were in the early stages of learning English. It was also validated by native English-speaking peers who wanted Nayeli’s help or the opportunity to practice speaking Spanish with her. While Nayeli was aware of the ways in which a person could be targeted for using L1, she dismissed any evidence of it as kidding and explained that her L1 received recognition when other students asked for her help in interpreting. She seemed to have successfully avoided confrontations regarding the use of L1 or its varying dialects by leveraging the use of her L1 with those from the dominant group or setting her attention on studying a language other than Spanish. In the school setting, Nayeli focused



on the requirements of school and graduation while helping others get their needs met in terms of language use for teaching and learning. The schooling environment was not one she spoke of as negative and described it in positive terms when discussing her language use and cultural presentations.

### **Depth of Meaning**

The two final findings of this study were as follows:

- It is understood that some language and cultural practices are shared with people who are outside of the participant's language group when they are requested, symbolic, and ubiquitous, so that they may be shared in a way that is scripted and will not cause controversy.
- Some language and cultural practices are shared only with people who are in the participant's language group and have the same knowledge and experiences.

These practices are usually discussed in the L1 of the participant and spontaneous or ad-libbed.

These two findings were a result of Nayeli's display of her understanding about language and culture. First, Nayeli demonstrated knowledge that language has overt meanings as well as less apparent connotations. Nayeli demonstrated this understanding when she discussed the language help, she provided to students who shared her L1 of Spanish.

While much of her assistance was the interpretation and translation of words and phrases, she also described helping her peers understand the deeper meaning of what the teacher was discussing. She explained the differences in her explanation by saying: "Most likely it is language help and I have a friend and she likes it clarified. Like she wants me to

explain deeper what (the teacher) says. It's a lot, He said this, but what did he mean by that?"

Secondly, Nayeli understood culture as consisting of safe topics that could be shared with a wide audience that were not unnecessarily revealing and personal topics that were centered on shared experiences of the group that would not be familiar to all audiences. When discussing issues such as immigration experiences, Nayeli shared stories she knew of her parents, as well as those of friends within her high school classes. I asked her if those were ever included as a part of her studies in the US History class she took last year. She looked at me directly and was clear, "...it is talk in Spanish....It just isn't spoken of in class. Those types of talks aren't in class." Therefore, she was crystal clear in understanding when culture could be shared at school, with whom, in what ways, and often centered in symbolism and without controversy, making them comfortable for the intended audience.

### **Scripted Experiences in Language and Culture**

Nayeli was a student of language, and she described her English class and the language practices, saying, "There's a meaning in that book. And I feel like (the teacher) has taught a bunch of that and he, I like his, not his language, but the words that he uses. It's really powerful. I mean we actually talk about it in class. Like everyone likes the words that he uses." When I asked for examples, she referenced the ways in which they had to evaluate a character and determine if he was a hero or vigilante when reading *Watchmen*, a graphic novel by Alan Moore (1986).

She admitted that not every text in the class suited her. The current reading of Orwell's *1984* was not compelling to her. While they were supposed to determine if they liked the character of Winston as they read the first part of the novel, Nayeli was less certain about the text because of the world it created which was represented by new vocabulary such as "doublethink" and "Newspeak." Nayeli described the experience of reading through the novel that she eventually finished as, "I know he's making up some of the words because of the setting. But it just doesn't relate to me." Yet, within the class, she had assignments completed, followed the conversations in class, demonstrated confidence after a test on the first section of the novel, and appeared skeptical when one student shared a feeling of sympathy for Winston and his conflicts amidst transgressions.

However, Nayeli recalled a text that interested her in her sophomore year in an English class. *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (1984) immediately came to Nayeli's mind as a memorable text. The novel is a series of vignettes set in a neighborhood in Chicago. The narrator is the observant Esperanza who is a Mexican American teenager who has the inner struggle of loving her neighborhood that is home and yet a victim of segregation, and want to find a way to leave, as she watches other young women attempt to leave through work, marriage, or returning to their family's homeland.

The details about the book emerged during the interview as Nayeli recalled, "The one who wore high heels to walk. I still remember stuff about the book." In recalling this chapter, she remembered the story of girls who got the opportunity to walk in high heels

in the neighborhood and experiment with the opportunities and problems that come with being perceived as grown up.

Nayeli continued, “I remember the character lived all in an apartment and they describe what the apartment looked like, and I remember creating a visual of what it looked like. A two-story house and it was really crowded. I remember them saying it was crowded inside and they wanted out of it.” Nayeli revealed that she remembered the beginning of the text when Esperanza shared how her family had rented small places and the house on Mango Street was a home that was finally theirs, a family of six.

I wanted to understand why Nayeli recalled this text so well. It had been over two years since she read it. She explained, “It was written, not chapters like what’s next? But parts of a story. That is why I liked it a lot.” She referenced feeling “connected” to the book several times, but then she explained the significance of the circumstances that surrounded her reading of the text.

I was excited. I liked reading it...I remember that my class was really quiet, and she (the teacher) would ask, anyone, do you guys...and she would say anyone? And no one would answer, but I would because I felt really connected to the book. And I remember towards the end of the year she gave us an index card for us to write something for students and someone commented and told me that they liked how I would talk and answer the teacher since no one would talk in that class. It was mostly because I felt connected to the book.

In this recollection, Nayeli again demonstrated that she received approval for her participation by a peer, a possible transactional event that demonstrated her language use was sanctioned within the school. However, it also demonstrated Nayeli’s ability to discuss language and culture in a way that was safe. While she felt connected to a novel that told stories of a female Mexican American’s experiences, she did this in reply to the

questions of the teacher. It was cultural and by describing her feeling of connection to it she may have felt it was her culture, but she discussed it from the lens of being a good student who was answering her teacher when no one else would. Her approval from her classroom peer was for answering the teacher. Nayeli never said the comment was for sharing her or her family's story.

Nayeli was aware of how textbook publishers attempt to use culturally diverse names in order to demonstrate cultural diversity in texts. When we discussed language and culture in schools, I asked Nayeli if she could recall reading texts that represented more than one cultural perspective or had characters who used more than one language. She had to think about the question, and her first reply included her observations in math classes, "Usually in math questions, they use Hispanic names. I remember reading a test or my homework and I would be like, oh, it says Juan as a name in the math problem." When probing for why that may be, Nayeli seemed to accept it as performance to demonstrate diversity.

When discussing her parents' culture, Nayeli found little opportunity to share their experiences or her own identity as a Mexican American. Nayeli discussed the role of Mexican history and how it intertwined with US history in very generic terms. She noted, "There is little I remember about Mexican history from that (US History) class." She claimed that what was discussed she already knew, such as which US states were once a part of Mexico. Little was discussed and nothing conflicted with her parents' discussions. Because there was so little of Mexico discussed within the context of the US History class, there was no opportunity to identify any conflicts between what Nayeli's

family had taught her about Mexican history and culture and what the school may have provided.

When she shared her cultural experiences at school, it was through the International Club, an informal organization of students who shared food, language, and cultural experiences. According to Nayeli, "...the International Club had a Hispanic dance celebration for Hispanic History Month, like heritage month. Like we created dances from different parts of Hispanic countries, and we presented it during flex. And someone brought flags to dance around." The performance was shared with the school during a time called "flex" which was used for study hall, extra help, and club meetings. It could also be used for assemblies and performances and students attended if they were not obligated to meet with a teacher at that time. Teachers attended if they met their quota of having four flex units open for students during the week. According to Nayeli, there were some teachers in attendance, but she did not see any principals.

Nayeli did not express any direct negative experiences of her language and cultural use within the school. However, she was engaged in practices that followed the rules of the school, as when she was the one to answer the teacher's questions about *The House on Mango Street*. She recognized symbolic acts of diversity by textbook publishers without criticism and she had no reason to challenge the school's teachings about her parents' home country, since so little Mexican history was taught. She engaged in cultural practices that were safe and were deemed neutral by the faculty and administration of the school, such as dancing and sharing flags of other countries. These practices were not controversial and were not interpreted as resistance by the school. This

security from negative feedback that she experienced was of her creation. With her non-Spanish speaking peers and teachers, she recognized diversity in symbolical acts and did not openly criticize textbooks, content area standards, or the school. In some ways, Nayeli was not positioned by the school to attempt resistance. Mexican history was not central to content and immigration stories as part of the context of US history classes were largely neutralized because the semester-long class moves rather quickly to cover over 200 years before state testing.

Nayeli carefully positioned herself to engage in conversations about language and culture with people who shared her parents' experiences, if not her very own. She had these conversations in Spanish most often, and occasionally in English, but she was careful to "resist" without seeming resistant and to "share" but with such reticence that a person who was not a part of her group would not want to intrude. Nayeli understood that some language and cultural experiences would not be recognized or relatable to her teachers or peers whose L1 was English. Nayeli was discrete in how and when she discussed the connotations of Spanish, the impact of testing for the target language on MLs, and immigration.

### **Shared Experiences in Language and Culture**

In her interviews, Nayeli referenced her identity as "Hispanic" and identified her own parents' experiences as immigrants to the US from Mexico. When discussing the dialects of Spanish that contribute to the makeup of her school, she referred to "we" and "we Hispanics." She discussed how dialects were different from the "countries we're from" even though she was born in the US, so she acknowledged that while she was born

here, there were perceptions by some that she was not because of her language. The shared language united her with those who were not born here. It also united her with people who were Hispanic but whose family ancestry may be another Spanish speaking country.

These spaces became a place in which she used and discussed experiences and language practices that would not be understood by her teachers and the schooling institution. When these experiences were shared with those outside of her language group, it was because the discussion received approval by a teacher in the form of a class assignment and it was conducted entirely in English. Without sanctioning by the school, the conversations remained in Spanish and were not shared with the school.

### **Words of Wisdom**

The expression, *words of wisdom*, was first used by Nayeli when she explained instances when she used Spanish with her friends at school. On one occasion she described using, "...just Spanish, but the words of wisdom. We like using them, like the way we say it, we like using them, it makes sense that way and we like the sound of it."

In the second interview, I asked her specifically what she meant by words of wisdom. This time her explanation was detailed, and she provided examples.

Nayeli: Like, I don't know how to say it in English, it's mostly like they're just sayings we say, like for example there's one that compares a, I don't know what it's called. It's like...something pointy, like if for example someone goes to jail, the son goes to jail with the dad? It's comparing the kid to the dad. But we have a saying for that, it's comparing a...a... pointy brick? And a small one, so it's just a saying.

Donna: An idiomatic expression?

Nayeli: Yes!



Donna: ...Tell me when you say, “We like those.” What is it that you like?

Nayeli: Umm.. I guess it’s just... I don’t know I guess it’s that ever since I was small my mom would use it and I would be like, “What does that mean?” And she would explain it. Um, I don’t know why we like it. It runs through all my friends, too. They always say it, too.

In this second interview, Nayeli explained her experience of using these Spanish idioms as sharing language and knowledge that she gained from her mother and whose meanings are understood and shared with her friends. The value of these sayings comes from whom she has learned them and with whom she can use them.

We continued the conversation about these words of wisdom as I attempted to understand when she used them at school. Nayeli admitted that interpretation of the idioms felt inadequate because it was the context in which they were used that gave them meaning.

Nayeli: ...There’s one... how do I say it? It’s *Cada palo es como cada escoba*. It’s every stick is like every broom. It’s just doesn’t make sense in English, does it?

Donna: But it’s trying to say?

Nayeli: It’s trying to say that every stick is like every broom. Comparing two people you see that the small part contributes to the big one. The whole thing exists because of each stick. No one is better or too good.

Donna: Gotcha. Gotcha.

Nayeli. Right, it has meaning when I hear it, or I see a time it applies. It’s useful in situations.

With this idiom, Nayeli was discussing comparisons. This particular one was used to discuss families and close relationships and is similar to the English, “like father, like son.” It focused on the relationships between people and family members. Nayeli’s

analysis that “No one is better or too good” aligned with the focus on relationships and staying grounded in those connections.

This conversation and the other examples that Nayeli provided of Spanish language idioms demonstrated that her knowledge of her L1 is not limited to grammar and vocabulary. She carried with her a knowledge of figures of speech, communicated phrases, and an appreciation for her audience when she was making observations or engaging in conversations. These idiomatic expressions bound her to her parents, which for her made it “mean something” and connected her to her peers at school who shared her same language.

When discussing these expressions, Nayeli admitted that she had not considered whether the idioms she used were as widely known and if one’s generation or region or native country had an impact. However, she shared that among her friend group, whose makeup was largely from central America, there had not been confusion. When I shared with her some idioms I had learned in Mexico and Ecuador, she confessed she had not heard them but understood the meaning of them as admonishments to have more common sense.

When analyzing the interview questions regarding the words of wisdom, I wondered again why Nayeli would not engage with her schoolmates in these expressions. The language of the words of wisdom was not sanctioned. It was not the language of instruction. English itself has many idiomatic expressions and I heard Nayeli refer to a famous actor as “not all that” in class and she discussed in interviews how she did not want to “stick out.” She engaged in this type of figurative language in two languages.

It also seemed that the application of the Spanish idiomatic expressions was often personal. The examples she used with me were related to close relationships and her learning of these expressions from her mother and father indicated that they were also used for instruction or even warning about life and its consequences.

### **Targeting and Testing—Counter Evidence or Counter Narrative?**

The topic of feeling targeted occurred in the first two interviews at the prompting of Nayeli. She discussed feeling targeted for her language use at her job by a colleague who complained to her about her use of Spanish with a friend. When Nayeli experienced similar complaints by peers at school, she dismissed it as less targeting and more like kidding. In both environments, Nayeli did not become defensive or complain to someone in authority. She did not display any attempts at resistance to someone else's antagonisms.

Although she did not display any resistance, Nayeli insisted that if the same complaints had been put forth in a public setting against her parents, she would react differently, saying, "I feel like if it was in a restaurant or anywhere else, other than a work or job, mostly if they say something to my parents." Yet, Nayeli's description of her schooling experiences had largely demonstrated compliance with school policies and a feeling of overall acceptance of her language and culture as she chose to display them. When asked if she felt encouraged to use her L1, she replied that her teachers, "...wanted me to use it."

However, the first artifact Nayeli chose to share that demonstrated her school experiences was the most recent copy of the annually received letter from the school

regarding her ACCESS scores. The state in which she was a student used the ACCESS test to meet the federal requirements to annually measure the English language proficiency of MLs. Students whose home language survey (HLS) identified that their primary home language, first acquired language, or most often used language was something other than English were screened using the initial screener form of the test. If their screener score did not meet the cut-off requirements, they were identified in that state as an ML and qualify for language services. The students who qualified for services must be annually assessed for English language proficiency until they met the state-determined cutoff scores. There was no opportunity for parents to opt-out their students from the test. States were required by the federal government to give a test of English proficiency to students, and states mandated testing until students met designated cut-off scores.

Nayeli's information included the letter to her parents, her ACCESS scores, and an Individualized Language Acquisition Plan (ILAP) that indicated she did not require any accommodations in her classes. Nayeli's services indicated that her services were considered "consultative" Consultative in the state in which Nayeli was a student meant that her ESOL teacher and content area teachers were in regular contact and that any language services were completed within the regular content area classroom.

The letters were mailed from the district office during the first thirty days of school. I was curious as to Nayeli's choice to make this letter and notification of test scores representative of her schooling experiences during our second interview. I was curious to understand if it was a topic of conversation for her parents, why she kept it,

and if it impacted her attitude toward school, as well as any other potential interpretations this test result notification gave her regarding school. I began by asking about the test whose results are included in the information.

Nayeli: They call us out of class in the winter. I think January or February.

Donna: And when do you learn your score?

Nayeli: When we are in school, the next year. September I think. It just comes in the mail.

Donna: Is it always in both English and Spanish?

Nayeli: I don't know. I think they always get it in both languages, but I really don't remember.

Donna: When you think about the ACCESS test, what do you do with the letter?

Nayeli: We really don't do anything. It comes every year.

Donna: And your parents don't have any questions?

Nayeli: No, I don't think they have ever asked me about it. They let me know it came in the mail. That's really it.

Based upon this introduction, it did not seem that Nayeli had strong emotional ties to the ACCESS test or its results. It was an experience among many in her schooling experiences that had become more routine than a meaningful event.

As I continued probing for her purpose in sharing the document, Nayeli shared her feelings about the ACCESS test. The letter, ILAP, and ACCESS scores symbolized what she wanted to talk about, which was the actual ACCESS test and the time periods in which she would have to leave class to take the test.

In discussing the ACCESS test, Nayeli was clear that this was an event regarded as a negative experience that was discussed among other students who also must take the test and view it similarly. The only public discussion that she related regarding the test was in a class in which the teacher shared the same opinion as Nayeli and her peers. When discussing the test, Nayeli discussed the test and created categories of MLs that were different from the ways in which she had earlier spoken of them.

Nayeli began her explanation of her choice of artifact by saying, “I feel like this test should only be for people from a different country.” At this point, Nayeli was clarifying her position as an insider when it came to the language of schooling. While she had positioned herself as with those who were from other countries when discussing Spanish dialects and referencing the Spanish “where we’re from,” in the context of the ACCESS test, Nayeli adopted the orientation of being a US native and therefore not needing or being required to take the annual assessment. She identified with the group of students whose L1 was Spanish and connected with those who were from another country, even though she was aware that she was a native-born US citizen until the topic of testing for English language proficiency.

In discussing testing, Nayeli adopted the belief that language was gained or lost, and growth occurred at the expense of the other language. In the first interview, she stressed the use of *Spanglish* between herself and her brothers, as well as between her and her friends. Yet, when discussing the ACCESS test, Nayeli discussed the test as resulting from a belief from school authorities that English could be lost. From her perspective, the test of English proficiency was to ensure that she did not lose the English that she already

possessed. She saw herself as already English proficient, the point of the test was to ensure that she did not lose it. Nayeli explained it in this way:

I feel like that just because of the idea that people think that because a person speaks Spanish at home can affect them, I think they think I'll lose my English. No one can lose English. It's what I use at school and at home, too. And I feel like, and if I'm being honest, I've lost more Spanish than English, since I have to use English throughout the whole day than I do Spanish. I just get to use Spanish when I can.

Nayeli demonstrated a belief that at school, Spanish was used when there was an opportunity, but English was the language that was sanctioned. While she did not identify a conflict that required her to choose between her two languages, she felt that the requirement to use English in these environments was at the expense of her knowledge of Spanish.

I asked Nayeli if she felt this was a shared opinion of her peers who also had to take the test. She explained that they had talked about it. However, she did not share any public discussion about the test with outsiders or attempts at overt resistance. Instead, she described resistance by refusing to take the test seriously.

Donna: And how many tests are there?

Nayeli: I am out of class three times. I think we take two tests in the same day.

Donna: So, four tests total?

Nayeli: Yeah, I believe so. It looks like it here. It takes the whole class to do it. And I remember, I think it was sophomore year, that I just skipped through a bunch of them. Or maybe it was last year. I just skipped through things, a bunch of them. I was just skipping through it. I was trying to go back to class to finish my work.

When I asked Nayeli about sharing these concerns, she discussed one instance in which she shared them with a teacher. She described the conversation, saying,

...for my teacher cadet class, we had a presentation about...classwork. We were discussing about how we feel in this, if we feel comfort or if we feel left out. And one of my friends said how she hates how they have ESL ACCESS testing because she feels people are judging her because she has to leave class to take an “English” test. And the teacher in that class said she felt like it should have been only for the Spanish speaking or anyone who came from another country.

It is important to note that Nayeli shared again in the context of a class assignment, so the discussion received approval from her instructor. In this case, her teacher was approving of the assignment topic and, at least from Nayeli’s recollection, also shared in agreement that Nayeli and her peers should not have to take the test. Nayeli seemed to have shared the reasoning of her teacher that because she was born in the US, she should not have to take the ACCESS test. She felt the teacher’s perspective on MLs, both those born in the US and those who came from other countries, was an agreeable position. It was not clear from the interview if Nayeli adopted that lens and found it shared by her teacher or whether Nayeli agreed to that perspective after hearing her teacher’s statements.

While Nayeli’s reasoning that she initially shared with me indicated a perception that the school’s goal was to ensure she did not lose her English language skills, with her teacher, Nayeli shared the concern that the time out of class was of great cost to herself and other students. She emphasized the use of “time” and the “time out of class” when discussing the four tests. She emphasized that “It takes the whole class (period) to do it” and “It takes time out of class for me.”

While this class assignment gave Nayeli and her peers an opportunity to discuss the frustrations of the ACCESS test, it was not clear to her the purpose of the test. While she had already indicated a perception that it was to ensure she did not “lose” her



English, when I asked her to describe the ACCESS test, she recalled it as a repetitious test, with identical questions each year.

Donna: What do you feel about what the test is measuring?

Nayeli: I don't know. I think it is just the same questions every time.

Donna: You can recall some of the questions as you are taking the test.

Nayeli: I don't remember from middle school. I sort of recall it in eighth grade, but I don't know. But I recognize some of the questions each year. It gives you the same questions every single time. It gives you a letter, that's what (the ESOL teacher) told me. It gives you your standardized level, like if you get a five, you have had harder questions. I don't know. And the way they grade it, it's also weird. Cause people, mostly for speaking, most people don't like speaking, so they don't want to get their thoughts out. Speaking into the microphone.

Donna: Has the test changed in what you have to do since you started? Are the tasks different?

Nayeli: The recording...we don't do that anywhere else.

When Nayeli referenced the recording, she was discussing the speaking test in which students must respond to a series of questions in the areas of science, social studies, math, or language arts to which they must respond.

In the discussion of the ACCESS test, it was clear that Nayeli's attempts at resistance were covert. She only discussed resistance in terms of taking the test without seriousness by taking it quickly, or as she characterized it, "skipping through" many of the questions so that she could return to class. However, she shared how her peers discussed the test and the negative feelings they had toward it.

The spaces for discussing ACCESS testing with those in the schooling institution occurred when there was a class assignment that included this topic. The conversation with the classroom teacher was described as having occurred in an English-speaking

classroom. Because there was not a space for information and discussion of the test, several important items occurred:

- Nayeli and possibly other students did not have a clear understanding of the purpose of the test.
- The meaning of the scores and how the assignments of each part of the test were misunderstood.
- The understanding of language was discussed in terms of gains and losses with the presumption that one language gained was a loss for the other.
- The dichotomous perspective that MLs were either born in the US or not and being an immigrant should result in a different set of testing requirements, without any further context or analysis, was at least perceived as accepted by a classroom teacher.

This was an area in which the restrictions of what could be discussed as language and culture became costly for LTELs. Because there was not a space for these uncomfortable discussions, Nayeli and her peers came away with ideas about testing that were not entirely correct. The emotional results of testing and being called from class for testing were uncomfortable in the school setting, as were the conversations that it seems Nayeli and her peers still need to have.

The perception that some conversations were only for the group who shared a language provided a source of comfort as they shared their experiences regarding the test. However, because there were no direct means of discussing the test with experts on the test, information was lost that could have helped the students who had to take the

ACCESS test, including the LTELs. Instead, surreptitious resistance which would only hurt her scores was Nayeli's means of indicating any discomfort. Her conversations were limited by the appropriateness of conversations in the classroom. When these conversations were not a regular part of classroom instruction, the most likely well-intentioned conversation that occurred did not provide the knowledge necessary to encourage the students to promote their own voices with concern and questions about the ACCESS test.

### **Immigration as Culture and Language Experiences**

Immigration was another sensitive topic for Nayeli that she described as a discussion for connection with her family and with her peers who had immigrated to the US or whose parents had experiences of moving to the US like her parents. When discussing immigration, Nayeli made clear that most of her discussions about immigration occurred in Spanish, she understood that immigration itself can be described by people having a wide range of experiences, and she felt no connections between the personal stories she heard from family and friends and the history of immigration taught in her US history class,

Nayeli shared immigration stories throughout each interview. In the first interview, she talked about her parents and their different experiences arriving in the US. In the last interview, she shared information about a friend from one of her classes. I was curious if the conversation was connected to any of her classes or shared there. Nayeli pointed out that "It just isn't spoken of in class. Those types of talks aren't in class."

By identifying immigration stories as “those types of talks” and saying they are not in class, she seemed to be identifying them as conversations that would not be approved of by others in the school and classrooms. When asked about the language in which these conversations occurred, Nayeli replied, “...it is talk in Spanish.” In the first interview, she mentioned that there were some conversations she and her friends had in Spanish so that people would not overhear them. It seemed that the personal stories of immigration fell into that category.

Of course, immigration stories are personal and, in some cases, brutal. Nayeli shared an example of a story of immigration that one of her peers in the school experienced upon coming to the US:

Only one of my friends, she has told about when she came...she said it was raining, and that it was, and she had to walk almost like in the water or really through it, since it was getting flooded. And she had to, and she made it in like a day or two to the US and that's like really fast... for someone to walk into the US where she crossed.

The intimate nature of that story, that included danger and a conclusion that feels like magical realism, was shared among friends. Yet, it did not have a space in Nayeli's classes.

Her parents' experiences in border-crossing and immigration gave Nayeli an understanding of how people moved to the US from the same country with entirely different experiences. Her parents told her their immigration stories usually in Spanish and repeated them to her at different times in her life. Sometimes, those stories included comparisons to what their lives were like in Mexico.

Nayeli's father described his immigration experience as a "game" or a "game of survival." His first attempt at crossing the border from Mexico into the US was thwarted as they were pursued by border patrol. Attempts to hide behind bushes and under natural surroundings were unsuccessful. The second attempt, when he was seventeen, provided greater luck. He and his brothers crossed together and created new lives.

Nayeli describes her father as "dark-skinned" and has experienced racism with people perceiving him as African American. His work required that he quickly learn English with his brothers when they arrived in the US. He worked jobs in which he has been told to, "Go back to Mexico." While Nayeli described her father's crossing into the US as unsanctioned by the US government, she said that when he has been harassed for his race by others, he replies, "I'm not going back to Mexico, I am an American."

This language of identifying as an American, whether her father means a North American or an American in the United States, is part of an immigration experience in which families are divided by borders that cannot be crossed. For a person to cross into the US without government approval is a crossing of the Rubicon, since they cannot afford the risk of crossing that border again in case they are denied reentry. This may be why Nayeli and her brothers have never visited Mexico. The risk may be too great for her parents.

Nayeli's mother tells her the story of her own family's crossing into the US with the assistance of a coyote. For her mother, this story was "scary." Nayeli recounted her mother's retelling in this way:

I don't know if she paid, or someone paid for her? I know she said that the police had stopped them but like...her family all looked white. One of my uncles knows

English very well, he had been here before. So, he was the one talking and my mom, she was like, she had glasses on, she was listening to some English music and then she said my other aunt faked sleep.

In both stories, Nayeli recognized the role of government sanctioning in the form of police as a part of her parents' immigration story. The police make the story of immigration one of "survival." The police represented the remaining obstacles to being able to stay in the US. All that was left was to hide behind a shrub with enough width, as in the case of her father, or appear to listen to English language music and seem American, as her mother did.

The other piece that Nayeli recognized was the role of race in her parents' experiences. Nayeli recognized, whether on her own or through her mother's storytelling of the events, that her mother's family was able to move on beyond the police because "...her family all looked white." Yet, she also recognized that people saw her father as not having the identity of being a white American and he was identified as African American or Mexican. His journey to the US resulted in a chase across the border twice.

The immigration experience of families who have crossed the border without government authorization have the same aspirations as others who come here for a fresh start or new life, but the space for sharing those experiences were often not provided in the school setting. Nayeli never used the term "illegal" in describing the crossing of her parents, but their stories did not seem to fit with the social studies standards that focused on Hispanic migration in the US during the nineteenth century as the nation expanded westward. Yet her parents' stories were of people who wanted to be here or felt they

needed to be here. Their comparisons between Mexico and the US demonstrated that they came to the US for economic improvement:

They tell me over and over. They always compare the US to Mexico. In Mexico, you have to fight for what you want and it's...really heartbreaking over there and over here it's like, people get more money and also work hard, but they don't admire what they have. Compared to Mexico. In Mexico, my mom says, kids will cry if they get a piece of candy because they are so excited. While here, they may not like the candy you want to give them.

For Nayeli, her current sources for understanding recent Hispanic immigration to the US are her parents and her peers in school. Her understanding of Mexico from her parents' experiences of over twenty years ago were what she had to guide her until she can visit for herself, which is a graduation gift for the summer. She and her older brother anticipated a visit for the first time this summer with relatives from her mother's side of the family.

### **Brilliance Over Compliance**

A review of the coding and findings led me to recognize the abilities Nayeli demonstrated in language use. Nayeli did not discuss the pragmatics of language, such as body language and eye contact that may change according to social interaction, yet she adjusted with the same fluidity in which she accessed the two languages she has used in her lifetime. Nayeli adopted formal register when speaking with her teacher and understood the impact of her terminology choices when she discussed research topics, specifically requesting a search engine as she asked for guidance in her research. Yet, with her peers, she understood the use of consultative register to promote their engagement in working on a group project by asking her peers open-ended questions that

would direct their work process. She also engaged in informal register, ad-libbing as she shared stories that they would understand.

These practices occurred as Nayeli engaged in her two lifetime languages. It seems that for her, the choice of language was not a choice at all. It was the result of a lifetime learning vocabulary, semantics, social context, and pragmatics. It resulted from her ability, most-likely self-taught, to see her audience and settings holistically. While her language use may have provided feedback from her school and work audience, Nayeli learned through experiences the meaning of that feedback and navigated education and later work, in ways that made her successful. She may have seemed compliant, but she was observant and willing to interpret language, physical responses, and facial expressions to further her own ambitions and to help those students with whom she identified. Nayeli was the person that made those choices and decided when, not the other way around even in school settings.

Nayeli recognized the experiences of schooling that were directly influential in her learning and those that were the result of policies and regulations that were often outside of the influence of her teachers and administration. She successfully navigated advanced coursework and received a scholarship opportunity from a local hospital, but Nayeli also recognized that the English proficiency test that she was required to take each year had no immediate impact upon her learning or the opportunities she would earn outside of school. Therefore, she did not put forth her best effort for this test, which showcases how standardized testing may not assess what it is intended. Clearly, Nayeli was brilliant and an expert in both languages. She learned how to “play the game” when



needed, but also did not feel obligated to honor rules and policies with which she did not agree. When thinking about Nayeli across the five weeks, it is clear to see her brilliance.

### **Perspectives**

When addressing the first research question, “*How does one LTEL perceive their schools' awareness and support of their use of native language within instruction?*” the two observations and three interviews identified Nayeli’s perception of a transactional relationship. She used her L1 to benefit the teacher by assisting in the instruction of students who were learning English. This made her L1 permitted by an authority. The next group to authorize the use of her L1 for their benefit were students who were native English speakers studying Spanish. Their acknowledgement provided the language and Nayeli with prestige and a sense of honor.

However, Nayeli was also aware that some practices related to her L1 were not shared with those outside of her language group. Scripted language practices were shared because they were requested by the school and often resulted in feelings of acceptance or approval. However, language practices in her L1 that were personal or included an evaluation of relationships were kept within the group. Those words of wisdom could be ad-libbed for performance, but they carried a greater meaning that was understood within the group but would not be comprehended outside of it.

The second research question, “*How does one LTEL perceive their schools' awareness and support of their cultural identity within instruction?*” was answered by analyzing the differences in which Nayeli shared cultural experiences within the group and with the schooling institution. While her peers who shared her language experiences

discussed topics like immigration and their positioning by state testing requirements, with the schooling institution, Nayeli kept cultural discussions at a level that was performative and engaged in the symbolism of culture without discussing the nuances of it. Only when she was approved of by a teacher did she share more of her cultural connections with a text and receive the acceptance of a native English-speaking peers.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LTEs are often viewed from a deficit lens and their designation often results in missed educational opportunities, yet their voices on how they perceive the school's approach to their language and culture is rarely heard. The purpose of this research was to ask an LTE to share their perspectives on their schooling experiences and the influence it has on them as learners and community members of their school. To learn about this, two questions guided this research:

- How does one LTE perceive their schools' awareness and support of their use of native language within instruction (i.e., in regard to being tracked based on language, assimilated on their own, required monolingualism, translanguaging, CSP, dropping out of school)?
- How does one LTE perceive their schools' awareness and support of their cultural identity (i.e., family involvement, CSP, etc.)?

Three interviews and two observations of a student who is identified as an LTE based upon existing literature led to the following findings (see Table 2):

1. L1 or L2 use is viewed as transactional by the participant student I observed and interviewed and occurs between her and two groups: the student and her teachers or the student and native English speakers wishing to learn Spanish. The currency in these transactions was related to emotions of feeling appreciated, approved, and seen as capable of a supervisory role.
2. It is understood that some language and cultural practices are shared with people who are outside of the participant's language group when they are requested, symbolic, and ubiquitous, so that they may be shared in a way that is scripted.

3. Some language and cultural practices are shared only with people who are in the participant's language group and have the same knowledge and experiences. These practices are usually discussed in the L1 of the participant and spontaneous or ad-libbed.

**Table 2**

***Research Questions, Findings, & Discussion Points***

Research Question	Related Findings	Discussion Points
How does one LTEL perceive their schools' awareness and support of their use of native language within instruction (i.e., in regard to being tracked based on language, assimilated on their own, required monolingualism, translanguaging, CSP, dropping out of school)?	L1 or L2 use is viewed as transactional by the participant student I observed and interviewed and occurs between her and two groups: the student and her teachers or the student and native English speakers wishing to learn Spanish. The currency in these transactions was related to emotions of feeling appreciated, approved, and seen as capable of a supervisory role.	Transactional Use of Language
		Depth of Meaning
		Words of Wisdom
How does one LTEL perceive their schools' awareness and support of their cultural identity (i.e., family involvement, CSP, etc.)?	It is understood that some language and cultural practices are shared with people who are outside of the participant's language group when they are requested, symbolic, and ubiquitous, so that they may be shared in a way that is scripted.	Scripted Experiences in Language and Culture
		Targeting and Testing—Counter Evidence or Counter Narrative?
		Shared Experiences in Language and Culture
	Some language and cultural practices are shared only with people who are in the participant's language group and have	Immigration as Culture and Language Experiences

	the same knowledge and experiences. These practices are usually discussed in the L1 of the participant and spontaneous or ad-libbed.	
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### **How Appropriateness is Communicated through Transactions**

In reviewing how these findings connect to the research, reference will be made to two terms that were included in raciolinguistics: *appropriateness* and *white gaze*.

Appropriateness in the student’s use of her L1 or discussing her culture and background was subject to the schooling institutions and what was determined in that environment to be *appropriate* which was often determined by how it made instruction easier for the teacher or students who were learning Spanish. While Nelson and Flores (2015) wrote of appropriateness as a determiner for the academic setting, appropriateness can also be used to define what is comfortable for teachers or native English-speaking students to hear. The *white gaze* has been defined as “...a perspective that privileges dominant white perspectives on the linguistic and cultural practices of racialized communities” (Nelson & Flores, 2015, p. 150).

The meaning of this research focuses on the importance of the sanctioning of language by the schooling institution. Sanctioning in this case refers to the *appropriateness* of language use as determined by those in power (Rosa & Flores, 2015). In this study, the participant understood her language use and its appropriateness as it is determined useful by the teacher. The participant engaged in translanguaging, accessing both her L1 and L2 in her learning experiences, but these were often at the desire of the

teacher. The translanguaging experiences assisted the newcomers and students who were early in learning English and beginning their academic careers in US schools, but the practice was sanctioned by the teacher for the purpose of engaging in academic language. This experience reflects the work of Flores (2014) who notes how translanguaging and the language practices of multilingual learners is “...marginalized by the larger society” (454). While Nayeli is using her L1, the end goal remains the production of academic English (Cioè-Peña, 2021; Flora & Rosa, 2015; Flores et al., 2018; Kutlu, 2020).

Nayeli interpreted the appropriateness of her language use by what she received from her teachers and native English-speaking peers. Their acceptance, approval, and compliments guided her understanding of when her L1 use was acceptable. Appropriateness was understood because of the exchanges that took place between the LTEL and her teachers and peers. While Nayeli was helpful to both newcomers learning English and her peers who were learning Spanish, she took her cues from the transactions that took place in school. As Rosa and Flores (2015) note that it is the institution and the dominant language speakers who sanction language, that sanctioning was administered through the feedback of transactions.

Since this study focused on one LTEL and centered around interviewing her, it is not clear if teachers themselves are aware of their sanctioning and feedback, or these transactions of approval for helping other students direct Nayeli’s behavior and other students. Research from Hakuta and Garcia (1989) to Dewale (2015) have focused on the importance of the environment and teachers’ understanding of their students’ experiences who are bilingual in impacting their educational choices.

The practice of translanguaging itself was not included in the sharing of cultural experiences. When Nayeli discussed the cultural programming of her school, it was demonstrated to the larger school setting in English and embraced the symbolism of the culture rather than the experiences of the group. The more personal experiences of the group were shared in their L1. While translanguaging could have been accessed as a means to share cultural experiences with a larger body of the institution, its approval was granted for what it could do to help the teacher help new students. Nayeli's use of translanguaging did not centralize her L1 as much as it centralized English and what the use of English could do for the teachers in instruction. While Nayeli had conversations with her Spanish-speaking peers that utilized both English and Spanish, the goal of creating products for the teacher that were entirely in English made the practice teacher-centered, a concern in previous research of Liu et al. (2020). Since Nayeli was the focus of the study, I am not certain if her teacher recognized the fluidity of her language use, yet her ability to engage in these practices was important for her peers' learning and for her teachers to feel they could provide access to the content to these students who were early in their path of bilingualism. Nayeli's assistance was contextualized by the project, the listener, and her own needs to finish an assignment successfully or get answers to her own questions.

These observations counter the suggestions of Rowe (2018) that teachers should be "...highlighting students' use of multiple languages when speaking or writing" (p. 32). For Nayeli, her translanguaging practices were done with peers and served the teacher as well as both herself and the new student to the US was in English. The valuing of the

students' cultures and languages was not centralized or highlighted. Nayeli received approval for her language skills and products that she and her peers produced in English. She and her peers did not share how they used their languages or submit work that reflected a bilingual experience.

Accessing L1 and L2 came with the permission of not only the teachers, who hold positions of power in the school but are also sanctioned by the students with whom Nayeli is in class. This evaluation of language use by those of the dominant language group continues to subject Nayeli to the *white gaze*, as her language use is valued because of its English production and the way in which it helps other students produce English (Stewart & Gachago, 2020). There is a certain prestige that she holds as a student who can speak, read, and write in English, but that prestige is what it can do for those students, rather than what this means for her own language development and talents (Briceño, et al, 2018; Flores, 2020). Her skills in her L1 are valuable because they allow a native English speaker to practice her Spanish and allow her to guide and help students of Spanish with their lessons and homework.

These experiences not only centered English but centered native English speakers and their approval of the use of L1 and L2. Nayeli's language schooling has not been neutral but has neutralized her use of Spanish to be used for the language acquisition of native English speakers and the English production of work provided to teachers by multilingual learners who are beginning to use English. The authority in these cases does not rest with only the faculty of the school but is also with the students who are native English speakers. Whether it is with a teacher or a student, Nayeli recognizes the



transactions that take place and where her L1 use is sanctioned. Her language practices are subjected to the *white gaze* and deemed *appropriate* by those whose only language is English (Flores, 2020).

### **Positive Resistance**

Nayeli's understanding of sanctioning and transactions with her teachers was counter to the resistance that she described of her peer who insisted upon using the dialect of Spanish of her parents. Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) described how the resistance of students may be intended for justice, but teachers may view this resistance differently. Nayeli recognized that her friend's choice to insist upon using a different dialect of Spanish resulted in an in-school suspension. Nayeli used her first language for purposes the teachers required.

The centralization of culture in schools is determined by the native English speakers, as well. The *appropriateness* of their stories and experiences are determined by those of the dominant language group of the school. Nayeli acquiesced to the "appropriateness" of the experiences she was to share about her culture that were set by the school (Briceño et al, 2018; Flores, 2020). The classroom and the school building are not neutral when it comes to the sharing of cultural experiences. In this case, *appropriate* culture is only recognized by the teachers who determine the spaces where the symbolic acts of culture take place. The teachers organize the event, provide the practice space, and schedule the event to which students can attend. Relegating culture to such acts has created a space where the culture that has language embedded in it is discussed in English before the audience. The language of the cultures represented by those flags and dances is

not a part of the presentation. This is an example of the *white gaze* in which Nayeli's culture is shared for its value and interpretation by English speakers who do not share in her culture (Stewart & Gachago, 2020).

The discussions of the culture of Nayeli's group takes place in their shared L1, Spanish. By limiting its discussion to the group and not sharing it in English, it limits the space where it is considered appropriate to discuss these experiences, such as immigration. The concept of "appropriateness" is manifest again, as Nayeli and her peers perceive the spaces in which they can discuss their own or their families' immigration experiences (Briceño et al., 2018; Flores, 2020). Sharing of these experiences is in a space the students have to create for themselves, since the school is not providing a space for it. The advantages of sharing these experiences enrich the group but create the sense of outsiders to the school. While Seltzer (2019) noted the value of discussions and role-play in helping LTELs discuss their experiences and racialization, Nayeli found the opportunities for these experiences herself and was never able to feel that school is a space for sharing these experiences and to engage in these topics in the ways in which they are presented in the classroom.

Nayeli's language use was limited because it was not designed for her growth and improvement. Nayeli's use of L1 and L2 and the practices of translanguaging were not valued for the potential for sharing culture, welcoming newcomers, and allowing her to use her repertoire to expand her knowledge or demonstrate more skills. The school was not a neutral place for her language or culture, so her growth was limited since she utilized her skills to help teachers ensure that projects and assignments were completed

by newcomers in English. Her language was valued for its ability to ensure that the teachers did not have to explain further information to students who were beginning to learn English. In those ways, Nayeli's language use was still teacher-centered, validated in its use and purpose by the teachers' approval (Brooks, 2016). While Brooks (2015) has noted the centrality of teachers in meaning-making in literacy practices, Nayeli's schooling experiences demonstrated how teachers were centered in her choice of languages, as they relied upon her to help other students. While research has been completed on various strategies for teaching MLs, such as sheltered instruction (Daniel & Conlin, 2015; Echevarria & Short, 2000; Echevarria et al., 2008), ExC-ELL Observation Protocol (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2011), co-teaching (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010), and ESOL (Whiting, 2017; Hill et al., 2019), it is not clear if Nayeli's teachers had training or experiences in any of these. Their reliance on her may have been a coping strategy.

For Nayeli, many translanguaging experiences were dismissed and replaced for code-switching as a means for her to help her teachers and monolingual English-speaking peers. Rather than exercising her language repertoire for her own learning in ways that empowered her to discuss the context for her choices, her teachers and monolingual English-speaking peers utilized her skills for translating, interpreting, and accessing language in its discrete parts (Sahan & Rose, 2021).

Yet, Nayeli was a student who was taking advanced courses, going to college, and had the opportunities of bilingualism, yet there was no validation of that skill that would help her in a way that pushed her ahead academically. Nayeli demonstrated the ability to help students and teachers communicate with each other in four language domains, yet

that skill was not acknowledged as an example of giftedness or a rare talent. Just as prior research has demonstrated the deficit lens in schools that attribute LTELs as weak in their L1 and L2, Nayeli's abilities were subject to a lens that acknowledged that while her language talents were useful, they were not meeting the demands as established by testing (Aria, 2018; Fu, 2021; Olsen, 2014; Shin, 2020). She was required to take the ACCESS test each year of her schooling, while also interpreting and translating for teachers, students, and parents. Rather than expanding the opportunities that came with her gifts, she felt marginalized by the annual testing. Therefore, her multilingualism was still assessed as below the standard of the school, and yet regularly accessed by her teachers to help them in instruction of other multilingual learners. She responded to the testing with positive resistance and did not perform as well on the test.

Nayeli's decision to rebuke the English language proficiency testing demonstrates the potential inaccuracies of the test scores and makes the validity of the test questionable. Nayeli was motivated as a student and willing to move quickly through the test so that she could return to class where she felt the true work of schooling was completed. Her analysis of the situation led her to recognize the significance of her advanced coursework and choose its academic benefits over the time-consuming test of English proficiency that provided no validation to Nayeli.

Nayeli's feelings of marginalization were reflected in the experiences of a bilingual student interviewed by Fernandez (2002) who felt trapped in ESOL classes when he transferred to a new school after so many years of studying English. His resistance was internal. He skipped classes. For Nayeli, she expressed internal resistance

by taking lightly the results of the ACCESS test and admittedly skipping through many questions so that she could return to her classes.

Nayeli's experiences as an American citizen, first-generation, born in the US to immigrants, are a part of the development of this nation. She would refer to her parents' stories as her reason for staying in school. By positioning her story outside of the norms of class discussion, she is subjected again to the school's determination of *appropriateness* of her story for sharing in the classroom. Her family's immigration stories were not a part of the course content during the time you observed her classroom or based on what she shared during interviews, and she and other students who are immigrants or children of immigrants tell their stories to themselves in their L1 because those immigration stories are not yet sanctioned in the curriculum. This creates a classroom climate in which stories that are outside of the curriculum are not viewed as essential, and the curriculum itself is viewed as impartial when its stories and foundations are often biased and represent the dominant group at school (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Taylor et al., 2023). The options in this space are to present as a part of the dominant group or remain silent (Rolon & Davidson, 2021; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Therefore, Nayeli's education at school was symbolic and did not contain the Culturally Responsive Teaching practices that would have included her home experiences and culture as important to her learning (Nieto, 2021; Gay, 2002; Gay, 2020).

### **Context**

The findings of this study shed light on the perspective of LTELs and their perspectives on how the schools view their language and culture. Nayeli, the LTEL in

this study, perceived L1 use and culture to be shared based upon approval or sanctioning of the schooling institution and monolingual English-speaking peers. The power of approval by teachers and their peers is important to the decisions of LTELs. One's L1 use can be directly linked to the environmental approval of teachers and peers. Students make decisions regarding language use according to transactions with teachers and native English-speaking peers. The transactions that occur are often for approval of the teacher or greater access to the teacher. While the participant is often helping the newcomers to the US who are beginning to learn English, their skills are benefitting the teachers who may not know how to communicate with the new students.

This study was conducted in the spring of Nayeli's senior year. The last interview was one week before her last day of school since seniors were permitted to leave early. Her perspectives are perhaps the most open that I would be able to receive from a student who is an LTEL and who does not feel constrained by being a student in the school. While the spring of her senior year limited the opportunities to observe any potential cultural practices within the school, it did provide a participant who was the least hampered by the potential control of schooling.

The decision to observe Nayeli in an English classroom occurred because I wished to view her language use in a class in which there would be opportunity for class and small-group discussion, so that I could observe her use of translanguaging practices in the domains of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The connection between the observations and interviews strengthened because most of Nayeli's recollections of her schooling centered around reading, writing, and literature classes.

## Significance

The significance of this study is the following:

1. The LTEL participant of this study demonstrates how students engage in transactional relationships in order to be a part of the schooling environment.
2. The LTEL participant of this study demonstrates how students engage in internal resistance and the impact of that when they feel stigmatized for their language use.

Nayeli's decisions for using English or Spanish were not really centered around her needs. Translanguaging is for the student to use all their language skills in all of their languages to their best opportunities and to enhance their learning and engagements. However, for Nayeli, her decisions were centered around what was approved of by the English speakers in her classroom. While she was helping students who were emergent learners of English, she was doing so with the approval of the teacher. Her use of Spanish was to help English speakers improve in a second language. Her skills were not centered and how those skills could help her were not at the center of the language use decisions.

According to Hammond (2015) and Nieto (2017), Nayeli's experience in school could have been focused upon social justice and opportunities to reflect upon real-world situations by leveraging her experiences and those of her parents. Yet, Nayeli's education was centered around the needs of her teachers for receiving products in English that were limited in controversy. While LTELs such as Nayeli are described by Cavallaro & Sembiante (2021) as problem-solvers and decisions makers who can utilize translanguaging to embrace all their language capabilities (Vogel & Garcia, 2017), their limits of language to standardization and a content that shares no controversy or expands

the base for understanding US history and literature lacks the rigor to which many of these LTELs are quite capable. These students had the capabilities to discuss microaggressions, immigration, and racism (Compton-Lilly, 2020; Lopez & Masanti, 2019; Mendoza, 2019). But Nayeli's actual educational experiences were not as challenging as she was capable of pursuing. She learned to navigate her educational space by engaging in transactions with the native English speakers and the school. She met the criteria of an acceptable student and seemed to ignore the microaggressions of teasing about using Spanish. The opportunities to engage in an uncomfortable discourse with native English-speaking teachers and peers about immigrating to the US, starting a new life here, utilizing two languages, and understanding what it is like to be perceived as not an American were never presented to her, yet she had the skills and could have grown in that type of educational space. Prior research has focused on the issues of opportunities for advanced classes, AP coursework, and educational achievement for LTELs (Olsen, 2010; Okhremtchouk et al., 2018; Mavrogordato & White, 2020), yet when the opportunities to build upon the complex experiences and knowledge of LTELs presented itself, the school could not provide the challenge. The focus remained upon how Nayeli could help her teachers get through to her peers.

Nayeli's understanding of immigration, race, and the intersectionality these share with language positions her and other LTELs to a different and more complex lens for understanding history, literature, and other content areas of schooling (Del Pino, 2022; Wright et al., 2000; Zantella, 1997). Yet, by not building on these experiences, the LTELs are not getting to expand on their depth of knowledge and complexity of ideas on



which they have a foundation and could build for an outstanding education. Nayeli had discussed testing from the lens of those who were born here versus those who were not. Had she had the opportunity to engage in an education that provoked her thinking and leveraged her background, she may have had the opportunity to reconsider this dual version of who takes the ACCESS test and questioned her own thinking. Yet, her education did not provide that type of rigor.

This research contributes to understanding the complex identity of LTELs who are first-generation Americans. Nayeli has never visited her parent's home country, yet she recognizes that her identity as Mexican American means that there are instances in which she is identified with the immigrant students. Yet, at other times, because she is native-born, she feels her identification with the immigrant student unfairly marginalizes her and her language skills. This is more complex than the categories in which people attempt to place students who are bilingual.

This research draws attention to the complexities of oral language use and decisions in using language by LTELS. Nayeli could not explain all her decisions. However, for the schooling institution audience she centers her choices around the approval of teachers and native English speakers. With students who share her L1 and are emerging with English as their L2, her decisions are often centered around the shared experiences and an understanding of what is shared within the group and outside of the group. How those choices can then impact learning and achievement are important considerations.

### **Future Research**

Recommendations based upon this study are guided by the need for further academic research regarding LTELs and the relationships built with teachers who are often monolingual. Real-world recommendations have the potential to improve opportunities for the students to access their bilingualism for themselves, include transactional relationships that recognize the biliteracy of LTELs, and develop spaces in which LTELs learn more about their curriculum as it relates to them.

While Nayeli represented an understanding of accessing her L1 and L2, she admitted that she did not have the benefit of this kind of help when she was a student in elementary school. Her ability to interpret and translate in two languages in the four language domains seemed to be “caught” rather than “taught.” Her translanguaging experiences allowed her to utilize the full range of languages she possessed, yet they were centered around the acquisition of language for her peers, whether emergent bilinguals who were new to the US or students who were studying English. Her translanguaging was not centered around her own academic and social needs. Teachers’ abilities to scaffold to include translanguaging in spaces in the classroom is an area for continued research. Understanding how teachers and students comprehend the discrete skills of language in code-switching and if they can differentiate these skills from the fluidity and context of translanguaging are also significant areas of study.

Also, this study focuses on a student who successfully completed a public education in the US. However, it is important to consider how students who were identified as MLs and remained in the ESOL programming for more than five years may have answered the questions of their own perceptions of the schools’ perspectives on

their L1 and culture. Would those responses represent part of their rationale in choosing to drop out of school?

Furthermore, this research included a discussion with an LTEL who had successfully made it to her last semester of high school and who, after this research study was completed, would graduate on time with her peers. Yet she never met the exit criteria for reclassification that would have exempted her from further English proficiency testing. She saw the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs test as having little impact on her and felt she had to choose between taking the test or brushing it off and returning to class. These lead to questions of how many MLs view language proficiency testing in this way and provides an opportunity for questions regarding the validity of the test.

### **Real-World Suggestions**

It was clear in the interview that Nayeli did not understand the ACCESS testing purpose or how it is scored. During the interview, I wondered why students who are in high school and capable of understanding the test are not better informed of the test. She demonstrated an ability to comprehend college preparation courses, yet the school did not explain to her how the test assessed her language proficiency in English. This is not the same as addressing the idea of teaching to the test, but it is an argument for better explaining to these students how they are assessed so that they can better perform on the test. She admitted to skipping parts of the test for one year, simply because she found the test repetitive. She did not explain how the test is assessed and did not seem to understand that.

Related to this, her district had not adopted the *Seal of Biliteracy* that the state board of education had approved. This adoption could have provided her with the opportunity to study a language of her choice, or her L1, as well as English. If she met the criteria, she and other students would have been recognized as biliterate, proficient in two languages in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. However, without the proverbial seal of biliteracy, her bilingualism was centered around the needs of native English speakers. There was no reward or recognition that could be interpreted as recognizing the true exceptionality she possessed as a bilingual learner.

Furthermore, her district did not provide heritage language opportunities for studying her L1. While she shared the story of a friend who recognized the different dialects and vocabulary of Spanish languages, there were no opportunities to develop one's L1 as a heritage learner. Nayeli ultimately decided to study French, rather than to engage in expanding upon her first language. With the focus on Castilian Spanish and the determination in school that the study of other dialects of Spanish were not *appropriate*, Nayeli's choices seemed limited when they could have been limitless. Classes were organized for native English speakers and students had to follow the same sequence, even if the language was native to their homes and families. Again, the curriculum and opportunities were centered around native English speakers, resulting in Spanish speaking students sitting through classes that were not as engaging because it was their home language, and the curriculum is designed for native English speakers.

Finally, spaces for cultural discussions could be created within the school system. The history class did not provide opportunities for Nayeli to learn more about her

parents' home country and their experiences. However, the opportunities for discussions existed within the English literature classroom. Nayeli could recall only one book that she felt culturally connected to during her four years at high school. When she was able to engage in a discussion of *The House on Mango Street*, she was the person most engaged. Using the classroom space for these discussions requires nuances and may be better utilized with text sets, so that students who do not share the background of the text have the information necessary to engage in it. The use of text sets to build background knowledge and improve reading comprehension is a proven strategy. Often, teachers presume it is the MLs who require the opportunity for background knowledge, but as teachers provide more diverse literature, text sets can help inform native English speakers from the dominant culture who require more information to participate in class discussion and engage in projects related to the mentor text.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Semi-structured Questions for First Interview

Background questions to alleviate potential discomfort in the interview setting:

- Share with me when and how you learned English?
- Do you have experiences with teachers that remain especially memorable for you in school? What are those experiences and what makes them memorable to you?

Interview questions to answer my research questions:

- Describe how your teachers taught you English?
- Do you have any English instruction in your current secondary school?
- When do you use your native language at school?
- What activities do the teachers do to help you learn in class?
- Do your teachers include your native language in class? During lessons?
- Do you use your first language when working with peers, completing group work, or collaborating on assignments?
- Do you use your native language for socializing at school?
- What skills you learned from teachers do you continue to use today?
- Do you have experiences with teachers that remain especially memorable for you in school? What are those experiences and what makes them memorable to you?
- Under what circumstances are you asked to use your first language at school?  
Under what circumstances do you use your first language outside of school?

- Do you notice reactions from others when you are able to speak a language other than English? How would you describe them?
- Do you ever have opportunities to discuss your culture at school? When do those opportunities occur?
- Have you ever been asked to contribute to a cultural celebration, assembly, or class project at your school? What were you asked to do? How did it go? What feedback did you receive from your teachers and principals?
- If you could present information to your teachers and principals about your language and culture, what would you want them to know? Why are those items important to you? How would you best convey that information?
- What opportunities exist for you to share what you have learned at home with your teacher and peers at school? What questions do your teachers ask you about your home activities?
- What do you share with your family about school? What kind of questions does your family ask you about school?
- Are there opportunities for you to invite your parents to the school? If so, what conversations do they have at the school? With whom do they speak?

## **Appendix B**

### **Semi-structured Observation Guide for the classroom**

#### **Speaking**

- Does the participant answer questions in class? In which language?
- What language does the participant use when speaking with peers?
- What language does the participant use when speaking with the teacher?

#### **Reading**

- Does the participant engage in reading activities? In which language?
- Does the participant read aloud or silently?

#### **Listening**

- How does the participant engage in listening when it is in the L1?
- How does the participant engage in listening when it is in English?

#### **Social**

- With whom do participants sit before, during, and after class?
- Who engages in talking and listening before, during, and after class with the subject?
- What role do the participants have in the organization of the classroom?
- How are expected behaviors reinforced as appropriate?
- How is time allocated in the classroom?

## Appendix C

### Semi-structured Questions for the Second and Third Interviews

- Tell me about the artifact. What is it? What time period is it from? Why did you choose to show it to me?
- How long have you kept this artifact? What did you do to be able to keep it?
- What do you intend to do with this artifact?
- Does this artifact relate to your choice of language(s) to use at school? If so, explain.
- Does this artifact relate to your feeling(s) about school and instruction? If so, explain.
- Have you ever shared this artifact with anyone else? How did you make the decision to/not to share with someone else?
- I want to talk about the activities and practices I see in the class in which I observe you. Would you list for me the order and organization of activities in the class, as you see them?
- Why do you think those activities stand out in your memory?
- Which of these activities are routine and happen regularly in the class?
- Which of these activities are new to the class procedures and routines?
- Would you agree that \_\_\_\_\_ is in the order of activities that also happen in the class? Why do you think you did not recall that activity(ies) in the classroom?
- During activity (defined here), I noticed you had the response or reaction of \_\_\_\_\_. What led you to respond or have that reaction? What are some things you like/dislike about that part of class time?
- During activity (labeled here), I noticed that you used your first/second language. What influenced your choice to do so?
- As I discuss each segment of the class activities, I want you to share with me your thoughts on each one.

## Appendix D

### Codebook

Code	Abbreviation	Description	
Feeling appreciated	Fappreciated	Feeling that one's skills, talents, or actions are valued	
Feeling confused	Fconfused	Feeling overwhelmed by events or reactions; negative response to stimuli or actions of others	Feeling puzzled by the language or actions of others
Feeling empowered	Fempowered	Becoming more confident	
Feeling grateful	Fgrateful	Feeling thankful for one's resources, benefits, or circumstances	
Feeling helped	Fhelped	Feeling that one is receiving the help of others	
Feeling isolated	Fisolated	Feeling one has little in common or is very different from others	

Feeling targeted	Ftargeted	Feeling as if one is getting attention negatively or is being attacked for being perceived as different in some way	
Helping by advocating	hadvocating	states support for other MLs, immigrants, or students.	
Helping by asking	Hasking	Helping others by asking questions on their behalf or asking questions one has. The second part is often followed up with sharing responses received to one's question with others	
Helping by clarifying	hclarifying	Helps others by restating or making statements of others less confusing or more understandable, often by using L1 or L2.	



Helping by empathizing	hempathizing	Helping others by sharing in or relating to their feelings or experiences in some way.	
Helping by explaining	hexplaining	Helping by providing more detail or examples often in two languages	
Helping with humor	hhumor	Using humor to help others cope with change or adversity	
Helping by Listening	hlistening	Helping others by being a listener	
Helping by organizing	horganizing	Help others by assisting them in organization	
Helping by protecting	hprotecting	Helping other by ensuring they are safe from ridicule	
Helping by Responding to targeting	hresponding to targeting	Helping others by providing a negative response to those who attack them	

Helping by supervising	hsupervising	Helping others by observing their work and ensuring they do it correctly	
Helping by switching languages	hswitching languages	Helping others by using the language they are learning to assist them in growing in their L2.	
Translating	htranslating	Helping others by explaining to them the meaning of a written text from L2 to their L1	includes writing or explaining orally a written text
Understanding	hunderstanding	Helping others by being aware of their negative feelings	
Welcoming in L1	hwelcoming in L1	Helping others by using their L1 when first meeting them	done without prompting or without being told of the L1
reticent immigration stories	rimmigration	Talking about the experiences one has heard about people who have moved to the US from another country	Person storytelling is often careful of audience and only shares with members of his or her own group

reticent language comparison	rlanguage comparison	Talking about the differences and similarities in completely different languages or discussing the differences in dialects of the same language	Person talking is careful of audience
reticent reading at school	rreading at school	Explaining when reading at school has been positive or negative	
scripted choices	schoices	talking about opportunities to choose in the present and future with a particular audience as listeners	
scripted connections	sconnections	Identifying when there is a relationship or commonality between one's self and others	expressed in careful dialog
scripted differences	sdifferences	Identifying when one is different from others in both negative and positive ways	expressed in careful dialog and aware for the audience

scripted diversity	sdiversity	Noticing the diversity of cultures, races, languages and interests of others	aware of audience in discussion
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