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## A case study of Spanish language use in a Texas border colonia

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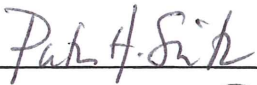
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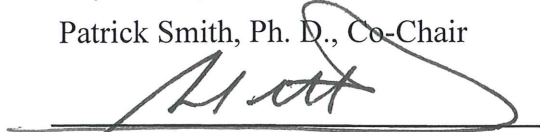
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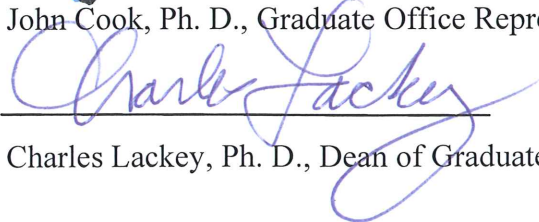
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A CASE STUDY OF SPANISH LANGUAGE USE IN A TEXAS BORDER COLONIA

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of The University of Texas  
at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in  
Curriculum and Instruction

By

María E. Díaz, M.Ed.

May, 2011

## DEDICATION

A mi padre, quien me demostró con su ejemplo, que la lucha se hace hasta el último instante.

A mi familia, mi esposo Luis y mis hijos Cecilia y Sebastián, quienes fueron la fuerza, la guía, la inspiración durante todo este proceso.

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

A case study of Spanish language use in a Texas border colonia

by

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Doctor of Education

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This case study reveals a Spanish language marginalization in a South Texas community of mostly Latinos, who are the fastest growing group in the U.S. (Colombi & Roca, 2003); furthermore, approximately 77% of English language learners (ELLs) have Spanish as their heritage language (Hopstock & Stephenson, 2003). Nevertheless, ELLs do not receive much academic literacy support in their first language in many schools (Zehler et al., 2003). Thus, out-of-school social practices play an important role on maintaining a native language (e.g., Burrows-Goodwill, 2009; Reyes, 2006). However, researchers have not explored this phenomenon in Texas border colonias, or unincorporated areas where city services are non-existent (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2005) and where almost half of residents live below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

This case study examined Spanish language use in the Texas border colonia of *El Palmar* (pseudonym). I utilized U.S. Census data, linguistic landscape analysis of the neighborhood, participant observations, language use surveys, language logs, and

interviews to determine the extent that bilingualism and biliteracy have developed in El Palmar and the factors leading to language maintenance or shift in this colonia. I used the framework of New Literacy Studies traditions (Barton, 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2008; Heath, 1983; Street, 2001) to identify literacy practices involving adults and children in El Palmar, as well as the funds of knowledge concept (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Smith, 2002) to understand and acknowledge the cultural and literacy resources recent immigrants use in new language environments. I also incorporated Fishman's (2001) ideas of language shift to analyze the Spanish language maintenance or loss in the colonia. Biliteracy of the community was analyzed by applying the linguistic landscape concept developed by Landry and Bourhis (1997).

The analysis of multiple data sources revealed that Spanish continues to be the most spoken language, but bilingualism has grown in El Palmar because more residents, particularly youth, have learned English. On the other hand, biliteracy has not developed. Even though El Palmar youth are fluent speakers of English and Spanish, they have not developed literacy in Spanish. The factors that help the maintenance or loss of Spanish in the colonia were also identified. This study also made a language compartmentalization evident in El Palmar, where Spanish is seen as the language to communicate and express feelings, and English as the language of power to succeed. The role of children and adults as language brokers (e.g., Orellana, 2009) in between these two language worlds was also analyzed. This study demonstrates the need for an awareness among El Palmar residents to value Spanish, not only as a sentimental language (Kelman, 1971), but as a language that will help them to succeed in high-power spheres, such as education and business (Fishman, 2001). Another implication is for a better communication among parents, schools, and community members to affirm colonia residents' linguistic resources and biliteracy.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this case study was to determine whether Spanish language is maintained or marginalized at the community level in El Palmar (pseudonym), a Texas border colonia. El Palmar is a Spanish term, which means a group of palm trees. A sociolinguistic approach, based on Fishman's (2001) theoretical framework of language maintenance and language shift, was employed to analyze Spanish language use in the El Palmar colonia. Spanish language use was examined by analyzing bilingualism and biliteracy, and identifying the factors that help maintain or lose Spanish in the colonia. The phenomenon of Spanish language use was observed across different immigrant generations and varied domains, such as home, after-school tutorial center, and church.

#### Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters. In Chapter I, I present a rationale for the study, and the research questions that guide it. I also explain the theoretical framework, define terms and describe my position as a researcher during this study. In Chapter II, I review areas of existing research relevant to the scope of this dissertation, with a view to build on earlier findings. I provide theoretical and research backgrounds on out-of-school literacy practices, bilingualism, and more specifically on Spanish language use in different communities of the U.S. In Chapter III, I review the methods that different authors have employed to approach the topic of Spanish language use. Then, I describe the research site, colonias in general and El Palmar in particular. I also provide a description of the case study method and a rationale for its implementation. Finally, I explain the research design that I used in this study. In Chapter IV, I present the findings of the study. I divide this

chapter in two sections. In the first section I analyze bilingualism and biliteracy in El Palmar; in the second section I describe how language is used in different domains and contexts of the colonia. In Chapter V, I discuss findings following the outline of the two main research questions of this study. I also provide concluding thoughts. In Chapter VI, I identify limitations of the study, and discuss implications for practice and future research.

### Rationale

In U.S. schools, Latinos/as accounted for 77% of the ELL population in 2002 (Hopstock & Stephenson, 2003). In the best scenario, these students could maintain their first language while acquiring English. However, bilingualism in U.S. schools is part of a language shift. By the 1980s, the focus of the federal Bilingual Education Act began to shift support to English-only programs (García, Kleifien, & Falchi, 2008). More recently, with passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, bilingualism and bilingual education was negatively affected. Although it is still possible to obtain funding for bilingual education programs, NCLB requires mandatory, high-stakes tests in English for all children (Crawford, 2004). With this change in instructional programs, a language shift into the majority language, English, was evident in Texas classrooms (Palmer & Lynch, 2008), and nationwide (Zehler et al., 2003).

However, the development of bilingualism and biliteracy is not confined to the classroom setting and the school day. Hull & Shultz (2001) have looked at this issue vis-à-vis the range of home literacy events. Several researchers have demonstrated the crucial role that home and the community have on maintaining a native language through social practices (e.g., Burrows-Goodwill, 2009; Reese & Goldenberg, 2006; Reyes, 2006; Valdés, 1996; Zentella, 1997). These authors reinforce the idea that parents, grandparents, siblings,

and other community members are as important as teachers in developing students' bilingualism and biliteracy.

Language shift and its consequences for bilingualism have been studied in different Spanish communities located throughout the United States (e.g., Portes & Schauffler, 1994; Potowski, 2004; Villa, & Rivera-Mills, 2009a) and in particular in communities located along the U.S.-Mexico border (Achugar & Pessoa, 2009; Anderson-Mejías, 2005; Martínez, 2003; Mejías, Anderson-Mejías, & Carlson, 2003; Velázquez, 2009). However studies on the language shift phenomenon have not been conducted with children, or families who live in colonias located along the U.S.-Mexico border.

### Background

This study aims to unveil the influence that out-of- school activities have on the development of bilingualism and biliteracy in emergent bilinguals who live in El Palmar, to determine if Spanish is maintained or marginalized in this colonia. El Palmar, home to almost 6,000 residents, is one of approximately 2,300 colonias on the Texas-Mexico border (Texas Secretary of State, 2010). In Texas, colonias are unincorporated subdivisions that may lack basic services such as water and sewer systems and paved roads (Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, n.d.). Almost half are immigrants and approximately 97% self-reported using Spanish as the primary language at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Colonias offer many challenges for researchers. They have many characteristics that make them unique sites for case studies and offer a new perspective for the study of Spanish language use. These characteristics are cultural homogeneity, since more than 90% of their residents are of Mexican origin, and proximity to the border which often makes them the first home to many Latino/a immigrants (Richardson, 1996). Colonias have been the research site for studies that focused on health and environmental problems (e.g., May

et al., 2003), but little research has been done in the arena of education. A more detailed description of colonias, in particular of El Palmar, will be provided in Chapter III.

### Research Questions

Two main questions and several additional questions guide this study. The main questions arose from reviewing the literature on language shift and Spanish language use in Latino communities in the U.S. The additional questions were developed in situ as a result of previous observations and interactions with residents of El Palmar before starting the present dissertation. During the year before starting gathering data for this study, I participated as a research assistant in another university project and volunteered in the after-school tutorial center in the colonia.

#### *Main Questions*

- To which extent have bilingualism and biliteracy developed in El Palmar?
- What are the factors that lead to language maintenance or shift in this colonia? What practices of the community support Spanish and what practices marginalize it?

#### *Additional Questions*

- How is Spanish used in different domains (e.g., school, home, church) of the community?
- What out-of-school literacy practices do participants report doing? Which language(s) do participants report using during these practices?
- Which language(s) do program staff members report using with children during social activities outside of school (e.g. after-school tutorial classes, and community events)? How is this language use different from that used in school?

- Is there a language use difference across generations? Do children use Spanish differently compared to their parents and grandparents?

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspectives that inform this study are from a number of disciplines, including theory and research in language and literacy development, bilingualism, bilingual education, and language shift. This study is informed by sociocultural theory. This perspective is inspired in great part by Vygotsky's (1978) work, in an attempt to understand language, thinking, and literacy as socially mediated practices within historical and cultural contexts. Central to this perspective is an understanding of the importance of social mediation and its role in learning; that is, people learn through their participation in social practices (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Scribner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978).

This study was situated in a non-formal learning environment that exemplifies how human beings utilize social processes and a variety of cultural resources to learn (Vygotsky, 1978). Under the umbrella of a sociocultural theory, I draw on the work of New Literacy Studies scholars (Barton, 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2008; Heath, 1983; Street, 2005) and the concept of funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

For proponents of New Literacy Studies traditions, literacy practices are fluid and dynamic, and are situated in different domains (Street, 2005); they also need to be considered in their wider social, cultural, historical, economic, and political contexts (Barton, 2007). Most of the work of these scholars focuses on everyday literacy practices outside of school in which families engage. These engagements not only include literacy events, but also the cultural values, attitudes, and feelings that shape and give meaning to those events (Street, 1993). According to these scholars, literacy at school cannot be perceived as a merely technical or neutral skill. Instead of seeing literacy as individual's

ability to read and write, they look at literacy from a social and cultural perspective. They also suggest that literacy practices vary from one context to another and from one culture to another, and recognize that multiple literacies are contested in relation of power (Street, 2005). Like New Literacy Studies tradition scholars, I perceive literacy as contextualized social activities. I do not focus so much on acquisition of skills, as in dominant approaches, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice (Barton, 2007; Gee, 2008; Street, 2005).

Other important concepts from the sociocultural theory include funds of knowledge within communities (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Greenberg (1990) introduced the concept of funds of knowledge, which refers to culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills needed for a household or an individual to function effectively. In this study I use the concept of funds of knowledge as a tool for identifying and representing cultural capacities normally outside the knowledge framework of school culture. Since the present study focuses on language use in a community, I also refer the concept of linguistic funds of knowledge (Smith, 2002) to address the Spanish language resources participants bring to school, and use at the community. These concepts involve a conscious effort to understand where children and their families are coming from and view their language(s) and culture(s) as resources for educators and researchers.

This study is also inspired by theories that focus on language vitality within a community. Based on Fishman's (1967, 1991, 2001) theoretical framework of language maintenance, language death, and language shift, I used a sociolinguistic approach to analyze Spanish language use in the community of El Palmar. According to Fishman (1991), the study of language maintenance and shift refers to the relationship between degree of stability in language use patterns, on one hand, and ongoing psychological



cultural or social processes on the other hand, in populations that utilize more than one speech variety. As Fishman (1991) has stated, patterns of language use are important in determining if a community is undergoing language shift. Fishman (2001) argues that cross- generational language transmission at home is fundamental for minority language maintenance; however, children’s first languages tend to shift to the dominant language when their mother tongue is restricted to non-power spheres such as the home.

Employment, formal education, and government are examples of high-power spheres.

Fishman (1967) defines this functional distribution of the two languages as *diglossia*.

Finally, this study is also based on the work developed by Landry and Bourhis (1997) in the area of language vitality. Landry and Bourhis (1997) introduced the concept of linguistic landscaping, which, at least in the Canadian context “may indeed constitute the most visible and most salient marker of perceived in-group versus out-group ethnolinguistic vitality” (p. 45). According to Landry and Bourhis, the linguistic landscape may serve as a marker of the relative power and status of the language(s) in a community. In this dissertation, I use the concept of linguistic landscape to analyze the language used in the public spaces of El Palmar.

### Definition of Terms

In this section I define key terms used in this case study.

#### *Community*

In this dissertation, I will refer to the people living in El Palmar as a community. A common definition of *community* is a “group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings” (MacQueen et al., 2001, p. 1929).

Zentella (1997), who has conducted ethnographic studies, defined *community* as “a group linked by shared primary networks” (p.25). Like other communities, El Palmar is a unit that is historically distinct from that of surrounding communities. El Palmar remains an incorporated area within the city limits of Brownsville ((Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, n.d.).

### *Bilingual Community*

Following Wenger (1998), I define *bilingual community* as communities of practice where individuals interact and communicate in two languages, and regularly share a repertoire of communal resources while engaging in activities. According to Wenger, a community of practice has the following characteristics: a joint enterprise as understood and continually renegotiated by its members; a shared repertoire of communal resources (e.g., routines, sensibilities, and vocabulary); and a mutual engagement that binds members together into a social entity.

### *Colonia*

*Colonia* is a Spanish term for community or neighborhood. Along the U.S.-Mexico border, colonias refer to unincorporated settlement characterized by a lack of public services such as electricity, water, sewage disposal, and paved roads (Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, n.d.). Due to its characteristics, El Palmar, the research site, is considered a colonia. Colonia is a term used by government agencies (e.g., Census Bureau) and adopted by researchers; however, participants in this study refer to their community as El Palmar, and not as a colonia.

### *Immigrants*

The term *immigrant* incorporates a wide variation of circumstances and experiences including length of time in the U.S., legal status, and social class background (Orellana,

Dorner, and Pulido, 2003). The case study families I worked with in El Palmar are mostly of Mexican origin. Some of their children were born in the U.S. while others immigrated with their families. Legal status varies both within and across households. In this dissertation, when I refer to *immigrants* I strictly mean foreign-born people who have migrated to the U.S. (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

### *Latino/a/ Hispanic*

Almost 97% of El Palmar's population has self-identified as being of Hispanic origin and 99% as speaking Spanish at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In this study, I use the term *Latino/a* to refer to people who are from Latin America and who live in the U.S. I use the term *Hispanic* if I refer to another author who has originally used it. Moreover, I specify particular ethnic groups among Latinos/as (Nieto & Bode, 2008). During data gathering, I asked country of origin to be as specific as possible.

### *Ethnic Identity*

As an aspect of one's social identity, *ethnic identity* can be thought of as a subjective sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the feelings and attitudes that accompany this sense of group membership (Phinney, 1989). In this study most participants self-identified as Mexicans or Mexican-Americans.

### *Culture*

Another feature of a person's social identity is *culture*. *Culture*, according to Nieto and Bode (2008), consists of "the values, traditions, worldview, and social and political relationships created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a common history, geographic location, language, social class, religion, or other shared identity" (p. 171).

### *Bilingualism/Bilinguals*

In the field of bilingualism a debate continues regarding the terminology used to describe *bilinguals*. Grosjean (1998) has described different types of bilinguals (e.g., early, late, sequential, simultaneous, etc.) and has warned researchers to describe carefully the population's characteristics when making comparisons across groups of bilinguals and monolinguals. In the present study, I adopt the term *bilingualism* as the ability of a person to speak two languages (Bialystok, 2001).

### *Emergent Bilingual*

Several terms are available to name bilingual students. One of the most recent terms is *emergent bilingual*, which was proposed by García, Kleifgen, and Falchi (2008) and refers to individuals who “through school and through acquiring English, become bilingual, and able to continue to function in their home language as well as in English” (p. 6). Students who speak a language other than English and are acquiring English in school are also referred to in the literature as *English Language Learners* (ELLs) or *Limited English proficient* (LEP). ELLs and LEP are based on a subtractive view (García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008), in which children are seen as lacking English, the dominant language and the language of prestige in the U.S. society (Fishman, 2001). In this dissertation, I use the term *emergent bilingual* to refer to those students who are learning a second language (English) while maintaining, or subtracting, the first (Spanish). However, I preserve the original term(s) as used by other authors.

### *Literacy*

The term literacy has many meanings. I use the term *literacy*, as Barton (2007) did, to cover broader views of reading and writing. According to the New Literacy Studies traditions, literacy has become a unifying term across a range of disciplines. Thus, this term

has been extended to other specialized areas, such as computer literacy, economic literacy and political literacy. In this dissertation I focus on out-of- school reading and writing practices at individual and communal levels.

### *Biliteracy*

Hornberger (2003) refers to *biliteracy* as “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two, or more, languages in or around written material” (p. xii). Hornberger’s view of biliteracy was adopted while conducting the current study.

### *Linguistic Landscape/ Environmental Print*

The concept of *linguistic landscape* was introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997) and refers to the “visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory region” (p. 23). Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, and Trumper-Hetch (2006) defined linguistic landscape as “any sign or announcement located outside or inside a public institution or a private business in a given geographical location” (p.14). Similarly, Barton and Hamilton (1998) use the term *visual environmental print*, which provides evidence of a range of literacies related to “commercial activities, entertainment, political campaigning, information-giving, and legal practice” (p.42).

Even though there is an overlap in how these two terms could be used, since both offer information about literacy practices in the community, the term *environmental print* comes from literacy instruction (Heath, 1983), whereas *linguistic landscape* comes from a non-classroom perspective on literacy. In this dissertation I use the term *linguistic landscape* to describe and analyze biliteracy in the neighborhood, and *environmental print* to refer to instruction-related literacies, such as in school, or at the after-school tutorial center.

### *Language Vitality*

*Language vitality* refers to the status and prestige of a language, as seen from an individual's perspective, and as shaped by a host of social, political, cultural, and psychological influences (Giles & Byrne, 1982). Harwood, Giles and Bourhis (1994) stated that "the more vitality an ethnolinguistic group has, the more likely that it will survive and thrive as a collective entity in the intergroup context" (p. 168).

### *Language Maintenance*

The term *language maintenance* refers to the stability of certain language within a community (García, 2009). Language maintenance can be defined as a community's continued use of an ethnic language as it has always used it, regardless of being in contact with other languages. Language maintenance may be observed in the number and distribution of its speakers, its proficient usage, and its retention in specific domains such as the home, school, or religion.

### *Language Shift*

Weinreich (1968) defines *language shift* as a situation in which the habitual use of one language is being replaced by the habitual use of another. As stated by August and Hakuta, (2005), language shift occurs when "an ethnic group gradually changes its preference and use of language from its original ethnic language to the sociologically dominant language" (p.240). It is common to find in the literature other terms that describe similar phenomena, such as language loss, language decline, and language marginalization. In this study I will use these terms interchangeably to describe the phenomenon of minority language decline and its shift into the majority one (English). However, the original terms, as used by other authors, will be respected.

## *Language Death*

In situations of language shift, forms and uses are reduced, and eventually this leads to groups shifting their use of one language to another permanently, which may lead to a *language death* (Romaine, 2006). A language dies if all of its speakers die as the result of genocide or natural disasters, or are scattered in such a way, as to break up the language community (Crystal, 2000). An example of language death is Warrungu of northeast Australia (Tsunoda, 2005).

In the following section I will describe my position as a researcher while I conducted this case study in El Palmar.

### Researcher's Position

As a Latina, middle-class graduate student born and raised in Uruguay, I am aware that I bring a particular lens to this research that is different from that of a person who has lived in the Lower Rio Grande Valley their entire lives. Moreover, my variety of Spanish is different from the one that is spoken in the Valley. Spanish is the official language in Uruguay. It is the language of instruction in public schools and universities. The Spanish spoken in the Rio de la Plata region (this region includes Uruguay and the Buenos Aires province) is characterized by the use of “yeísmo,” which consists of the loss of the traditional phoneme /ʎ/ (written “ll”) and its merger into the phoneme /ʝ/ (written “y”). The variety of Spanish spoken in the Rio de la Plata region also includes numerous words adopted and modified from the Italian language.

After having grown up in a monolingual Spanish-speaking family and society and studied English as a foreign language while a teenager, my understanding of what it means to be bilingual has changed since I migrated to the U.S. During the process of

understanding what it is to be bilingual, I developed a special interest in knowing what happens with a person's native language while they are acquiring English.

Two other personal reasons guided me to select this dissertation topic. Before beginning a doctoral program in Bilingual Education at the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB), I taught bilingual education in a local elementary school. During those years as a teacher I could understand the role that the school plays in the development of the students' bilingualism. This understanding was also influenced by my experiences as the mother of two children who have grown up developing their English and Spanish simultaneously. By working in the school district and observing my own children, I became aware that in the Rio Grande Valley schools, the tendency is to instruct in English-only. At the same time, I was curious to understand how the family and community contexts can also influence an individual's development of bilingualism.

Despite these experiences, El Palmar is not a completely foreign environment for me. In other words, while I am not an insider, I am not a complete outsider either. I was previously involved in the community by participating in different activities. I volunteered at the site by helping students with their homework at the after-school tutorial center during two academic semesters. I also participated as a researcher in various UTB projects in which children and adults of El Palmar were involved. My prior engagement in El Palmar made me be more aware of the dynamics of its community and at the same time, eager to understand how its residents maintain, or marginalize, their native language, Spanish. Still, not being of Mexican descent, speaking a different Spanish dialect, and coming from the local university to work as a researcher, were some of the barriers that kept me as an outsider.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE FIELD

What happens at the community level in terms of bilingualism and biliteracy? What are the conditions that lead to maintain or marginalize the Spanish language? These questions are significant because Spanish has been marginalized in many U.S. schools serving Latinos (García & Mason, 2009; Zehler et al., 2003). Spanish continues being spoken in Latino homes up to the third immigrant generation (e.g., Portes & Hao, 1998; Veltman, 1988). However, if Spanish is restricted to homes, or non-power spheres, and if it is not promoted in high-power spheres, such as in education, this minority language will more likely shift to the dominant language, English (Fishman, 2001). This literature review explores these questions. It is divided into three sections, which review out-of-school literacy practices, bilingualism, and language shift. Each section includes the theories and the studies of other scholars.

#### Section I

##### Out-of- School Literacy Practices

###### *Theoretical Overview*

This study took place in non-formal learning environments that exemplify the practices of a collaborative community. This research is informed by sociocultural theory, which is inspired in great part by Vygotsky's (1978) work, in an attempt to understand language, thinking, and literacy as socially mediated activities within the historical and cultural contexts in which they occur. Central to this perspective is an understanding of the importance of social mediation and its role in learning; that is, people learn through their participation in social practices.

This study examines language and literacy opportunities outside school. Scholars, such as Hull and Schultz (2001), have explored the relationships between literacy at school and literacy out of school and based their work on New Literacy Studies traditions (Barton, 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2008; Heath, 1983; Street, 2005). Scholars in the New Literacy Studies traditions, drawing on Vygotsky's overarching sociocultural theory, build on the ethnographic practice of documenting literacy in local communities and conceptualize literacy as a social activity situated in specific social practices. They also make evident that the interpretations of local events are part of broader cultural and political institutions and practices (Hull & Schultz, 2001).

Also important to this study are other concepts from sociocultural theory. These concepts are *funds of knowledge* within communities (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), and *language brokering* (Orellana, 2009; Tse, 1996). Greenberg (1990) introduced the concept of *funds of knowledge*, which refers to culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills needed for a household or an individual to function effectively. Greenberg's theoretical perspectives value the language and culture resources that children bring to school (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Smith, 2002).

Tse (1996) used the term *language brokers* for children who “interpret and translate between culturally and linguistically different people and mediate interactions in a variety of situations, including those found at home and school” (p. 226). Children of immigrant families use their knowledge of the English language as a bridge between their homes and the outside world (Orellana, 2009). Once these children come into contact with U.S. culture, they act as *culture brokers* (Delgado-Gaitán, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). They use their knowledge of U.S. cultural traditions to speak for others in order to accomplish social goals. They also serve their families as “societal institutions” by

providing services that should be provided by public institutions, for instance, mediating a conversation between their families and court personnel (Orellana, 2009, p. 66).

### *Research*

Teachers, parents, grandparents, and siblings are typically important in a student's bilingualism and biliteracy development. They often provide "a literacy 'eco-system' where there is mutual support (e.g., the children help with the parents' English writing), adaptability, and linguistic survival and spread" (Baker, 2006, p. 338). This section includes studies that examine relationships between children and their family members during home literacy practices and how these relationships can affect students' literacy (Burrow-Goodwill, 2009; Heath, 1983; Reese & Goldenberg, 2006; Reyes, 2006). This section also describes studies that focus on teacher-parent (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) or mentor-student (Rubinstein-Avila, 2006) interactions out of school.

Several studies have focused on literacy practices that take place outside of school. Heath's (1983) ground-breaking ethnographic work demonstrated that parents used reading and writing to share much of their knowledge with their children and with members of their community in various ways. Heath described a nine-year study of two communities in the Carolinas. One community, Trackton, was working class and African American; the other, Roadville, was working class and White. Despite contrasts in values and language use, Heath concluded that children in both communities were competent language users within their own neighborhoods, but were unable to meet expectations in school, where teachers' spoken and written ways were not well matched to either Trackton or Roadville ways. Heath described the most common uses of reading and of writing in both communities. For example, she mentions that some families shared literacy practices that were embedded in

their daily routines, such as group reading actively on the front porch with other members of the community.

Other researchers demonstrated the importance of intergenerational learning between parent-children and children with their siblings. For instance, Kenner, Kress, Al-Khatib, Kam, and Tsai (2004) conducted several case studies involving six year old children growing up in London and who were learning to write in Chinese, Arabic, or Spanish at the same time as English. These authors showed that older siblings help with school homework, fathers help with religious literacy, while mothers listened to their younger children reading story books in one or more languages. In another study, Kenner, Ruby, Jessel, Gregory and Arju (2007) analyzed the interaction between grandparents and their three- to six-year-old grandchildren in Sylheti/Bengali-speaking families of Bangladesh and monolingual speaking families living in east London. They concluded that intergenerational exchanges developed concepts and skills that complemented children's school learning, and that involved continuity of the children's cultures.

In a similar study, but focusing on Mexican-American children living in Arizona, Reyes (2006) explored the ways in which three- to five-year-old emergent bilinguals began to develop literacy in Spanish and English with the support of their communities, for instance parents, school and community. Reyes' findings showed that these emergent bilinguals learned and developed their own theories and concepts about language and literacy from an early age. Reyes states that native languages should be viewed as a resource (Ruiz, 1984), not a problem, and that they should be used when helping children to develop competency in a second language.

Also focusing on the influence of out-of-school practices on Latino children, Burrows-Goodwill (2009) described the summer literacy practices of nine high-academic

achieving second graders who were attending a small urban school in Southern California. The parents of these Mexican-heritage children were Spanish dominant and were involved in church or Bible study community activities that required literacy in Spanish. The children's older siblings helped with different literacy practices in English.

A range of similar studies described a variety of literacy practices in low-income Spanish speaking homes. For instance, Reese and Gallimore (2000) demonstrated how Mexican and Central American immigrant parents engaged in oral reading practices with their pre-school children. These parents conceived reading as "something that is learned, through repeated practice" (p. 127). In another year-long ethnographic study in Los Angeles, Reese and Goldenberg (2006) investigated the support for Spanish that children received in two communities where Spanish-speaking immigrants lived and attended school. Despite the fact that the schools serving both communities advocated for the heritage language of the students, the environmental print in the communities promoted the use of the dominant language (Reese & Goldenberg, 2006).

The above-cited studies centered on parents, grandparents, and siblings helping in children's bilingual development. However, other studies have demonstrated how children of immigrants also use their bilingual and bicultural skills to access resources for their families in their new society. Orellana, Dorner, and Pulido (2003) observed how children's everyday *para-phrasing* helps their families with educational, medical, commercial, state/legal, housing, and cultural institutions. The term *para-phrasing* is used by Orellana, Dorner and Pulido to explain the different ways children "use their knowledge of their English language and U.S. cultural traditions to speak for others and in order to accomplish social goals" (p. 508). This practice of non-professional translating has been studied by other authors and referred to it by using different terms, such as *language brokering* (Tse,

1996), *culture brokers* (Delgado-Gaitán, 2001) and *family interpreters* (Valdés, 2002). Children's translations can take place in different domains, e.g., home, and public places, and with distinct interlocutors (Orellana, 2009). Orellana also states that during these translation practices, children from immigrant families bring and use their funds of knowledge in order to mediate between people who live in different language and social worlds. In a case study of a Mexican-American eighth grader, Rubinstein-Avila (2003) described how this teenager was engaged in many oral and written translation activities for his mother, despite that he was labeled as a struggling reader at school.

Other researchers have focused their studies on teacher-household relationships. Moll (1992), and González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) have used ethnographic studies of communities to identify skills, knowledge, expertise, and interests that Mexican households possess for the benefit of all in classrooms. The researchers showed how parents and other community members have much to offer children in Latino classrooms by providing teachers with their funds of knowledge. Smith (2002), focusing on a Latino community in Arizona, examined the different ways participants of a Dual Language program incorporated the existing Spanish language resources into learning opportunities for their students. Smith introduced the term *linguistic funds of knowledge* as a “theoretical and pedagogical tool for integrating school and community efforts to maintain minority languages” (p. 165). During visits to different places in the school neighborhood (e.g., farms and a *tortilla* factory), students used Spanish to communicate with Spanish fluent speakers.

Also studying the influence of school-parent relationships on bilingualism, Zentella's (1997) research in New York and Valdés' (1996) research in California provided evidence that parents of various Spanish-speaking backgrounds are involved in their

children's education in a variety of ways, including rich linguistic exposure to storytelling and print experiences in the native language at home. Zentella's (1997) observations of Puerto Rican family language practices led her to emphasize the importance of teachers building on students' home languages for learning to support students' identity. For Zentella, maintaining the home language and developing a strong English language and literacy competence give students a chance at economic advancement. In another Latino community, Valdés (1996) describes first-generation Mexican parents' beliefs about their role in their children's schooling. These parents entrusted the teachers with the children's academic skills. Parents who did not feel they had the academic preparation to help with these skills focused instead on giving advice, instilling respect, and fostering moral values.

Focusing on mentor-student interactions, Rubinstein-Avila (2006) conducted an ethnographic case study that explored how systematic and structured engagement with multimodal literacies after school supported positive development for low-income youth. Participants, ages 14 to 20 were recruited from high school. These students were ethnically diverse, including five out of 20 Mexican-Americans. The multimodal literacies included exploring, composing, photographing, and publishing articles and photo essays on topics that were pertinent to their realities and those of their communities.

In summary, several studies have demonstrated that learning also occurs out of school. Through participant observations, interviews, writing samples and home visits, these researchers have gathered data that demonstrate the important role that the community and family members play in developing the bilingualism of immigrant children.

## Section II

### Bilingualism

Certain terms in the field of bilingual education are interdependent. This is the case of *bilingualism* and *biliteracy*. Even though bilingualism refers to the ability of speaking (Bialystok, 2001) and biliteracy to that of writing (Hornberger, 2003) in two languages, “all language processes of reading, writing, listening and speaking are interrelated and mutually supportive” (García, 2009, p.338). Therefore, concepts of bilingualism discussed in this section also apply to biliteracy practices.

#### *Theoretical Overview*

This section includes definitions and cognitive theories of bilingualism.

Bilingualism, according to Bialystok (2001), is the ability to use more than one language. Skutnabb-Kangas (2006) defines a bilingual speaker as “one who is able to function in two languages either in ‘monolingual’ or multilingual communities...at the same level as native speakers, and who is able to identify positively with both language groups (and cultures) or parts of them” (p.140).

One of the myths of bilingualism is that a bilingual person has two, equally well developed languages (Baker, 2006). In reality, bilinguals will rarely have a balance between their two languages. Terms, such as *balanced bilinguals* are idealized concepts that do not relate to the majority of bilingual people throughout the world. Since the emergence of the field of sociolinguistics, that is, of the various social characteristics of interlocutors, the concept of bilingualism itself extended beyond the traditional “balanced” conception (García, 2009). An individual’s languages rarely have the same social status; they have different power and prestige, and the individual uses them for different purposes,



in different contexts, and with different interlocutors. Baker (2006) points out that a bilingual person will tend to be dominant in one language in a specific domain (diglossia).

In the school context, two models of bilingualism have traditionally been described: subtractive and additive (Nieto and Bodes, 2008). In the subtractive model, the student's bilingualism develops at the expenses of his/her native language. In this model, the student does not really become bilingual, but rather monolingual in his/her second language. In the additive model, the student maintains his/her first language and adds a second one; the result is a bilingual person.

García (2009) reviews the advantages that children might obtain from being bilingual. García discusses two types of benefits: social and cognitive. The social benefits of bilingualism are numerous. García states that the ability to communicate in more than one language is increasingly important in today's globalized world and enhances cultural awareness, both in the culture of origin and the culture of the additional language.

Various overlapping theorists explain, interpret, and establish connections between bilingualism and cognitive processes. One construct is the *balance theory*, which Baker (2006) conceptualizes bilingualism as a weighing scale; he explains that the brain has only so much room for language skills; if a second language is acquired, it decreases the space for the first language. The consequence is, then, a lower proficiency in both languages.

Cummins (1981) developed the idea of the "two language balloons" theory in terms of the *Separate Underlying Proficiency* (SUP) model. This model is based on the belief that a separation of languages in the brain exists. The two balloons are apart; thus, lessons in Spanish will inflate the Spanish language part of the brain, while lessons in English will inflate the English part of the brain, with little or no transfer between the two parts.

Cummins contrasts the *Separate Underlying Proficiency* model with that of *Common Underlying Proficiency* (CUP). CUP is sometimes referred to as the “one balloon” theory, meaning that only one central location in the brain processes language. Cummins says that the two languages of a bilingual individual are not stored separately in the brain, as in the model of SUP, but co-exist and rely on a common, and not separate, underlying language proficiency. Cummins’ idea of CUP helps to explain why students with previous education in their first language often do better academically than students who have been in English-speaking schools longer, but who never received any schooling in their native language. In other words, the concepts learned in one language will successfully transfer over to the second language.

Another major contribution to bilingualism’s theoretical framework is the *Threshold Theory* (Cummins, 1976), which includes cognitive advantages that are associated with bilingualism. When emergent bilinguals are able to use two languages in complex ways, they pass a threshold. This theory has helped to disentangle issues of language proficiency from issues of academic functioning. For example, the Threshold Theory warns us that a bilingual child who has reading difficulties in one language may not have reached an adequate threshold of language proficiency. The problem may not lie in reading ability per se, but on the language proficiency level acquired. García (2009) explains that positive effects of bilingualism have been associated with children who have reached a threshold and who have been in additive bilingual situations. Lagabaster (1998) tested the Threshold Theory with children learning Euskara, Spanish, and English in primary schools in the Basque Country, Spain, and found that this theory can be applied to trilingual situations.

Also related to first and second language acquisition is the distinction between academic and conversational language. Cummins (1981) makes the distinction between

BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). BICS relates to the language skills that are acquired through informal conversation. It is context embedded and it takes approximately two years for a new immigrant to acquire the conversational language. This concept is important because emergent bilinguals may appear to speak well, often without an accent, but have not developed CALP, or academic proficiency, and consequently may not do well in academic tasks that have little context (context reduced), such as taking multiple choice tests and attending a teacher's lecture with no gestures or visuals. Cummins points out that ELLs need at least five years to catch up to native speakers in academic aspects of the second language. Moreover, he states that CALP may take longer for people with little academic preparation in their native languages.

However, critiques of the conversational/academic distinction exist. Troike (1984) states that the conversational/academic language distinction reflects an autonomous perspective on language that ignores its location in social practices and power relations "Social and cultural factors must be much more powerful than purely linguistic factors in influencing educational achievement" (p.49). Furthermore, the notion of CALP promotes a "deficit theory" insofar as it attributes the academic failure of bilingual/minority students to low cognitive/academic proficiency rather than to inappropriate schooling (Edelsky, 1990).

In response to these critiques, Cummins (2000) noted that the BICS/CALP distinction has been integrated since 1986 with a detailed sociopolitical analysis of how schools construct academic failure among subordinated groups. The framework analyzes how coercive relations of power in society affect both educational structures and the ways in which educators define their roles. Educational structures, (e.g. English-only instruction), and education role definitions, (e.g., low expectations for emergent bilinguals), in turn,

have resulted in patterns of interactions between educators and subordinated students, which have influenced students' academic language development and identity formations.

### *Research*

In this section I include the research that demonstrates the benefits of bilingualism at a cognitive level. I then describe studies that prove the effectiveness of bilingual education programs. I finally describe the current status of bilingual education in the U.S. schools.

#### *Impact of Bilingualism on Cognitive Processes*

The relevance of the BICS/CALP distinction for bilingual students' academic development was reinforced by Cummins' (1984), who showed that educators and policy-makers frequently conflated conversational and academic dimensions of English language proficiency. Cummins analyzed more than 400 teacher referral forms and psychological assessments carried out on ELLs in a Canadian school system. Many ELLs were designated as having language or communication disabilities, despite the fact that they had been in Canada for a relatively short amount of time. Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) also made a distinction between academic and conversational language. They studied Finnish immigrant children in Sweden, and observed a difference between the way in which language is used in academic tasks and in conversations. They pointed out that Finnish immigrant children in Sweden often appeared to educators to be fluent in both Finnish and Swedish, but still showed levels of verbal academic performance in both languages considerably below grade/age expectations.

Bilingualism has been demonstrated to be beneficial for children's development, also. Peal and Lambert (1962) demonstrated that the 10-year-old bilingual students outperformed their same-age monolingual peers in verbal and non-verbal intelligence tests.

Peal and Lambert describe a bilingual child as “youngster whose experience in two language systems seems to have left him with a mental flexibility, superiority in concept formation and, a more diversified set of mental abilities” (p. 20). Likewise, Cummins (2003) explains the positive effects of bilingualism on children’s linguistic and educational development. Cummins states that when children develop their abilities in two or more languages, they develop metalinguistic awareness. For instance, they gain a deeper understanding of language, are able to compare and contrast the ways in which their two languages organize reality, and may also develop more flexibility in their thinking.

Bialystok (1991) also describes positive cognitive gains associated with learning a second language during childhood. According to Bialystok, bilingualism has been shown to foster classification skills, concept formation, analogical reasoning, visual-spatial skills, creativity, and other cognitive gains. In a more recent study with children between four and eight years old, Bialystok (2004) with children between four and eight years old demonstrated that in solving problems that include misleading information, bilingual children perform better than monolingual children. This trend is also evident with both verbal and nonverbal tasks. The advantage of bilingualism persists for adults. Bialystok, Craik, Klein and Viswanathan (2004) looked at how executive processes, set of related abilities that are responsible for working memory, are affected by aging. The study compared the performance of a total of 104 monolingual and bilingual middle-aged (30 to 54 years old) and 60 and older adults on Simon Task. The Simon Task measures aspects of cognitive processing that decline with age. In each of the age group, half of the participants were monolingual English speakers living in Canada and the other half Tamil-English bilinguals living in India. These findings showed that bilingualism helps to off-set age-related losses in certain executive processes. For instances, those individuals who have

been bilingual most of their lives were better able to manage their attention to complex set of rapidly changing task demands. In another study, Craik, Bialystok, and Freedman (2010) studied 211 bilingual and monolingual patients diagnosed with Alzheimer disease and discovered that dementia symptoms appeared in bilingual patients four to five years after monolingual patients.

#### *Research on Bilingual Education That Demonstrates its Effectiveness*

Although the present study focuses on out-of-school language and literacy practices, it is important to understand the research to support bilingualism and bilingual education, as well as the language politics involved in the lack of implementation of research-based best practices. As stated in the previous section, many researchers have demonstrated the positive cognitive gains associated with bilingualism and bilingual education. The results of large-scale evaluation programs (August & Shanahan, 2006; Ramírez, 1992; Thomas & Collier, 1997; 2002) and meta-analyses (Greene, 1998; Rolstad, Mahoney & Glass, 2005; Willig, 1985) corroborated that using the home language in instruction benefits the academic achievement of language minority students.

For instance, Ramírez (1992) conducted a longitudinal study of 554 kindergarten to sixth-grade Latino/a students in New York, New Jersey, Florida, Texas, and California. Participants were in English-only structured immersion programs, in transitional early-exit programs, and in late-exit developmental bilingual programs. Ramírez did not evaluate two-way dual language education programs. The results favored late-exit developmental bilingual programs, that is, programs that use bilingual students' home languages for at least five to six years.

In another large-scale evaluation, Thomas and Collier (1997) investigated the fate of more than 700,000 ELLs in five large school systems in various regions of the U.S. during

the years 1982-1996. The authors concluded that only those groups of ELLs who had received strong cognitive and academic development through their first language for many years, at least through grades five or six, as well as through the second language, English, were doing well in school as they reached the last of the high school years.

More recently, Thomas and Collier (2002) conducted a study that demonstrated the effectiveness of different kinds of educational programs for language-minority student achievement. They compared the achievement on national standardized tests of students in different kinds of programs who entered the U.S. school district with little or no proficiency in English in kindergarten to first grade, following them to the highest grade level reached. The findings demonstrated that those native English-speakers who were in two-way bilingual education did well in English, learned Spanish, and achieved well above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in all subject areas on norm-referenced tests. On all measures, they outperformed their comparison groups being schooled monolingually. Thomas and Collier (1997, 2002) concluded that, at the elementary level, two-way bilingual education, or two-way dual language, is the best program because students develop academic and second language proficiency, as well as cognitive understanding, through their first language.

An alternative research methodology used to evaluate bilingual programs is meta-analysis. This methodology examines the effect size among different quantitative research studies (Baker, 2006). As an example, Willig (1985) reviewed 23 quantitative studies on United States bilingual education. As a result of the meta-analysis, Willig concluded that bilingual education programs supporting the minority language were consistently superior in various outcomes.

Other meta-analysis of the literature on the teaching of ELLs showed that students in bilingual education programs outperform those in all-English programs on tests of

academic achievement. Greene (1998) analyzed eleven studies that included standardized test scores results from 2,719 students, 1,562 (57%) of whom were enrolled in bilingual programs, in thirteen different states. Greene concluded that bilingual programs are effective at increasing standardized test scores measured in English. In other words, Greene revealed that the use of native language instruction helps achievement in English.

A more recent meta-analysis by Rolstad, Mahoney, and Glass (2005) examined the results of four studies and matched previous meta-analysis conclusions by Willig (1985) and Greene (1998). Rolstad et al. (2005) found that bilingual education was superior in English language reading achievement and mathematics. They concluded that the use of home language is more beneficial for ELLs than structured English immersion.

By also using meta-analysis, the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth, chosen by the George W. Bush administration, concluded that bilingual education approaches utilizing the child's first language are more beneficial in teaching children to read than are English-only approaches (August & Shanahan, 2006).

#### *Bilingual Education in the United States Today*

Despite the extensive research proving the effectiveness of bilingual programs, the tendency over the last decade has been to support English-only programs and to move away from programs that use the child's home language. Even though the number of ELLs in K-12 grades grew by 72% nationwide between 1992 and 2002, their enrollment in bilingual programs decreased from 37% to 17% (Zehler et al., 2003). Furthermore, in another national study, Hopstock and Stepheson (2003) reported that the most common service received by ELLs was in English only; also significant use of the native language was provided for only 16% of the ELLs.



Even when bilingual programs utilize the students' home language, most programs are early-exit transitional; thus, the native language is only used for two to three years before the children are immersed in all English classrooms. The two prevalent models for educating ELLs nationwide are English as a second language (ESL)-only, with some variants of sheltered instruction, and transitional bilingual education, early exit (August & Hakuta, 1998). These types of programs promote a subtractive model of bilingualism (Nieto & Bode, 2008) and lead to a language shift from the minority language to the majority one (García, 2009).

The literature review of theory and research on bilingual education demonstrated that bilingualism is associated with various cognitive, social and academic benefits. Additive bilingualism, in which a second language and culture do not displace the first language has been associated with educational advantages and enhanced metalinguistic development. On the other hand, subtractive bilingualism occurs when a second language and culture takes the place of the first, favoring a language shift. However, this review also demonstrated that bilingual programs have been decreasing, even though the number of ELLs is increasing.

### Section III

#### Language Shift

##### *Theoretical Overview*

In this section I describe the nature of language shift at a community level. I then focus on the language shift phenomenon in U.S. schools, and in particular, on language use in the schools of the Rio Grande Valley, Texas. I finish this section with a discussion of how Spanish and English are perceived by the U.S. society.

### *Nature of Language Shift*

Over the last decade or so, several scholars have predicted an alarming decline in the number of languages (e.g., Romaine, 2006). Romaine estimates that about half of the languages in the world have disappeared over the past 500 years and approximately only those 600 languages with the largest numbers of speakers, of more than 100,000, may survive.

The languages of the communities are not in isolation from other communities. As a consequence of the interaction among communities, certain languages become stronger, while other languages tend to decline and even die. As stated by Baker (2006), “bilingual individuals do not exist as separated islands” (p. 68). Rather, bilinguals belong to a certain social or community group where two or more languages usually exist.

The process of language decline and death may begin when two language communities come into contact (Baker, 2006) and “an ethnic group gradually changes its preference and use of language from its original ethnic language to the sociologically dominant language” (August & Hakuta, 2005, p. 240). Gradually, more speakers of one language ‘shift’ to using the other language for an increasing number of functions. This is called *language shift*. Language shift may lead to a decline in the number of speakers of a language, a loss in language proficiency, or a decreasing use of that language in different domains.

The phenomenon of language shift has been documented in a number of countries where minority language groups come in contact with more powerful dominant cultural groups (Fishman, 1991, 2001). This contact has resulted in language shift at a societal (Portes & Hao, 1998) and individual (Wong-Fillmore, 1991) levels. Wong-Fillmore discusses that language-minority children face powerful forces for assimilation when they

enter the English-speaking world of the classrooms and are vulnerable to lose their native language.

A cross-generational language shift has also been described among immigrant groups in the U.S. (e.g., Porte & Hao, 1998; Veltman, 1988). Fishman (1991) states that language shifts occur over the third immigrant generation. The first generation learns the majority language while continuing to speak the native language at home. The second generation learns English to high levels has a more limited continuation of the native language. The third generation speaks English in all domains, including at home, and has little or no working knowledge of the native language.

#### *Language Shift in U.S. Schools*

Bilingual education in U.S. schools is part of this language shift. By the 1980s, the focus of the federal Bilingual Education Act began to shift support to English-only programs (García, Kleifgen & Falchi, 2008). In fact, the 1984 reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act first provided funding for programs that use English-only in educating emergent bilinguals; the 1988 reauthorization further expanded the funding for English-only programs. It also imposed a three-year limit on participation in transitional bilingual education programs, meaning that schools had three years to move emergent bilinguals to fluency in social and academic English. This three-year limit contradicts all of the theory and research presented in this review.

Finally, with passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, bilingual education is vanishing in the U.S. (Wiley & Wright, 2004). NCLB contains Title III which is entitled Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students. The purpose of Title III is “to ensure that children, who are limited English proficient, including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency” (García, 2009, p. 185). Wiley

and Wright (2004) state that Title III will negatively affect bilingual education because of the high accountability measured by English-only assessments, combined with states' powers in the allocation of funding. NCLB requires mandatory, high-stakes tests in English for all children (Crawford, 2004, Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

This language shift into the majority language, English, is evident in classrooms nationwide. As discussed above, several scholars report the use of subtractive models of bilingualism (e.g. Hopstock & Stepheson, 2003; Zehler et al., 2003). One of the programs that promote this language shift is the transitional bilingual education, or early exit. Students in this program receive some degree of instruction in the native language; however, the goal of the program is to transition to the majority language as quickly as possible (August & Hakuta, 1998). The assumed superiority of the majority language is the basis for this program because the latter supports monolingualism and permits bilingualism only as a temporary measure. It is thus subtractive and the minority language is considered a problem (Ruiz, 1984). García (2009) states that transitional bilingual education programs usually have no clear language policy and the home language becomes a tool to assist in the acquisition of the majority language.

Moreover, transitional bilingual education programs aim to also impose the culture of the dominant group on language minority children. This tendency in U.S. schools leads to monolingualism (in English) and “could fracture students’ cultural and ethnic identities, creating social, linguistic, and cultural divisions among the students and between the students and the staff” (Valenzuela, 1999, p.5). Research conducted in bilingual classroom settings (e.g., Khisty, 1995; McCollum, 1999) demonstrated that students perceive English, not their native languages, as the language of power.

### *Language Shift in the Rio Grande Valley Schools*

As noted by García, Kleifgen, and Falchi (2008), 75 to 79% of emergent bilinguals in the United States speak Spanish as their native or home language. In the Rio Grande Valley the percentage of Spanish speakers is even higher. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 89% of the Rio Grande Valley population is Hispanic. Despite the high percentage of Spanish speakers, the schools in this region follow the nation trends. Thus, schools show a shift toward teaching Spanish-speaking emergent bilinguals in English solely with little use of Spanish to scaffold learning. Transitional bilingual education is practiced in most of the schools in the Rio Grande Valley.

As an example of a large school district in this area, the Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) policies toward ELLs and the programs provided for them seem to fit with the national trends. As cited in BISD web site, Chapter 29 (Educational Programs) of the Texas Education Code, requires that every Texan student who is identified as ELL be provided a full opportunity to participate in a bilingual or ESL program. BISD uses the transitional bilingual program model in most pre-kindergarten through fifth grades and provides ESL in grades six through 12 for eligible students; 42% of BISD students are identified as ELLs. Unfortunately, no public information shows enrollment changes in bilingual programs of the district over the last decade. However, the number of schools that implement dual programs in the district has declined. In 2006 at least four BISD schools had dual language programs; in 2011 only two exist (Brownsville Independent School District, n.d.). These data could demonstrate a tendency, like that reported in nationwide studies (Zehler et al., 2003), to favor English-only instruction.

*Is Spanish the Language of Poverty and English the Language of Power in the U.S.?*

The ways in which speakers think about their language and about languages in general affect their practices and attitudes. Language ideologies have direct consequences on people's lives (Achugar, 2008) and the value of a language always goes hand in hand with the social status of the communities that use it (Mar-Molinero, 2004). The literature review on this topic is important since El Palmar's population is considered to live in extreme poverty, with a median household yearly income of approximately \$4, 000 (U.S. Census, 2000). The term *extreme poverty* refers to a family of four that subsists on approximately \$11,000 a year (The Southern Education Foundation, 2010).

The interconnection between language and poverty has long been studied (Batibo, 2009; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). As stated by Batibo (2009), poverty is a crucial factor in language maintenance, as speakers of any language tend to identify themselves with the most socioeconomically prestigious language. This identification with the language of power will consequently help them to access resources.

Fishman's (1991, 2001) studies of language shift differentiate between languages used informally in the local neighborhood, languages used in the institutional settings in the community, and those used for broader economic, political, and academic functions. In the U.S., mainly in the public spheres, English has been identified as the language of power (Fishman, 2001). The dominance of English in government, industry, education, and popular culture has made it "the single most important element in construction of national identity, both positively as a communicative instrument shared by members of the nation and as a boundary marker affirming their distinction from others" (Zolberg & Long, 1999, p. 22).

On the other hand, Spanish in the U.S. is often characterized as the language of poverty. García and Mason (2009) discuss that Spanish in the U.S. has been associated with people with low socio-economic status, and it is linked to the language of the conquered, the immigrants, and the uneducated. As a result of how U.S. Spanish is perceived, and giving economical value and social status only to English, the process of language shift into English has been accelerated among Latinos living in the U. S. This is in agreement with Bourdieu's concept of *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1991). From a Bourdieuan perspective, "an educational qualification is in itself a form of cultural capital that is used (consciously or otherwise) as a means of vertical stratification" (O'Brien & Ó Fathaigh, 2004, p. 15).

Despite the dominance of English in spheres of power, in the context of economic globalization in the 21th century, Spanish in the U.S. is slowly being seen as a language with economic value (Alba, Logan, Lutz & Stults, 2002). The economic potential of Spanish in the U.S. market renegotiates it as a potential resource of U.S. Latinos (Villa, 2000). In the context of a free-market economy, producers of goods and services are paying close attention to the Latino community. This focus on the Latino community is evident in the instrumental use of Spanish in the media and the variety of products and services specifically targeted to this community (Mercado, 2001).

However, at the same time that Spanish is acquiring value in the global market, the U.S. school system is focusing on teaching only English, and therefore the development of Spanish-English bilingualism is being restricted (García & Mason, 2009; Zehler et al., 2003). For Latinos, subtractive bilingualism has been associated with the subordination of Spanish-speaking populations, as well as underachievement (García, 2002; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Subtractive bilingualism and resultant heritage language loss have historically been the pattern as speakers of other languages are incorporated into American

society, despite the fact that a constant immigration from Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America into the U.S. makes Spanish the language of choice among large groups of this population (August & Hakuta, 1998).

Another way to see languages is through Kelman's (1971) perspectives. Kelman describes different patterns in which individuals and subgroups involve in the national system. According to him, an individual or subgroup is *sentimentally* attached to the national system when she sees it as representing for instance, her cultural values. An individual or subgroup is *instrumentally* attached to the national system when he sees it as representing his needs and interests.

The review of literature on Latino immigrants' perceptions about languages (e.g., Achugar & Pessoa, 2009; Velázquez, 2009) shows that while Spanish is usually seen as a language for their culture and ethnic identity, or with a sentimental function, English is perceived as a way to insert oneself in the U.S. society, which is an instrumental function. In her study with U.S. native bilinguals, Tse (2001) developed the same idea but used other terms. She describes Spanish as a *private* language, a language that is mainly used at home and in the community, while English is the *public* language since it is spoken for public uses, in school, and in the larger society.

If one considers Fishman's (2001), Kelman's (1971), and Tse's (2001) perspectives on language and language shift, how does a community, whose residents live under extreme poverty, perceive their heritage language?

### *Research*

A great deal of the research on language shift in the U.S. has been done in Spanish-speaking communities (Tse, 2001). This section describes the research conducted in different Latino communities in the U. S. in relation to Spanish language use. These



investigations focus on the factors that lead to the maintenance or marginalization of Spanish in those communities.

### *Spanish Language Use in U.S. Communities*

Despite the continuous growth of Latinos in the U.S., various scholars have documented a loss of Spanish in favor of English (Veltman, 1988; Bills, Hernández-Chávez & Hudson, 1993). The research on Spanish language shift in the U.S. has taken place in large communities of New York (García, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla & Paulino, 1988; Zentella, 1997), Chicago (Potowski, 2004) and Miami (Portes & Schauflier, 1994). Spanish language use has also been studied in the Southwestern region of the U.S. (Bills, Hernández-Chávez & Hudson, 1993; McCullough & Jenkins, 2005; Villa & Rivera-Mills, 2009b) and in different communities along the U.S.-Mexico border (Martínez, 2009; Mejías, Anderson-Mejías, & Carlson, 2003; Mora, Villa, & Dávila, 2005; Velázquez, 2009).

The Spanish communities cited above are demographically different. The heterogeneity of the many Spanish language communities in the U.S. requires that the “diglossic relationship between Spanish and English be studied from a number of theoretical angles” (Villa & Rivera-Mills, 2009a, p.2) and by using different methodologies. Villa and Rivera-Mills state that both quantitative and qualitative studies are important to understand trends in language shift over a long period of time.

The study of the Spanish use phenomenon is complex, since the maintenance or shift of a language depends on different factors. Variables, such as age of arrival, proximity to a physical border, generation, education, socioeconomic status, and immigrant patterns, among others, have been related to Spanish language shift in the United States (e.g., Bills, Hernández-Chávez, & Hudson, 1993; Porter & Rumbaut, 2001). In this section, I will focus

on just five factors that influence the Spanish maintenance/shift. These factors are: geographical location of the community, immigrant generation, language attitude, socio-economic status, and different domains, including families, school, and religion.

*Geographical location.*

One of the variables reported to affect the language shift process refers to the geographical location of a particular community. As the number of Spanish speakers in the U.S., both in border and non-border regions, continues to grow (Villa, 2000), the question that arises is up to what extent a region impacts language shift. In this context, Bills, Hernández-Chávez and Hudson (1993) discussed distance from the U.S.-Mexico border as a factor in language loss among Spanish speakers in the Southwest. Bills et al., employing census data from 1980 and 1990, concluded that Spanish language loss is less likely to occur in those communities that are located close to the U.S.-Mexico border.

In a study that compares different Latino communities, Alba, Logan, Lutz and Stults (2002) found that bilingualism is substantially higher among children living in ethnic neighborhoods in regions where a biethnic culture has emerged. Thus, Cuban children growing up in or near Miami and Mexican children growing up near the U.S.-Mexican border are considerably more likely than their peers elsewhere to speak Spanish at home. Likewise, Mora, Villa and Dávila (2005) conducted a study in different communities along the Southern border of the U.S., e.g., Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, and described the positive impact that residing in the border region has on maintaining Spanish. Thus, this scenario will be very different in communities located further from the border. This is the case of Latino communities that are geographically isolated. Rivera-Mills (2005) observed a clear tendency of acceleration in the process of language shift in the Latino communities of Fortuna, California, and Flagstaff, Arizona. Rivera-Mills states that

geographic isolation from large urban centers, and therefore from large Latino populations, contributes to diminishing participants' need to communicate in Spanish.

*Immigrant generation.*

The process of language shift has been also studied in different immigrant generations. Indeed, the primary language pattern for immigrants is to learn English as quickly as possible and for their children to give up their family's native language (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Alba, Logan, Lutz & Stults, 2002). Bills, Hernández-Chávez and Hudson (1993), employing data from the U.S. Census, demonstrated that younger immigrants are less likely to retain Spanish, and that with each generation born in the U.S., a diminished transmission of the mother tongue results, and thus, a language shift from Spanish to English occurs. Veltman (1988) specifies that knowledge of a non-English language rarely lasts past the third generation.

According to the 2008 National Survey of Latinos, 24% of the first generation, 47% of the second generation, and 22% of the third generation are bilingual (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008). These survey trends were also observed in other studies; Portes and Schauflier (1994) demonstrated that second-generation immigrant children from Latin America “display, without exception, a much greater probability of retaining their parental languages” (1994, p. 653). Portes and Schauflier showed that language survival past the first generation will be more likely to happen where immigrant groups concentrate, as in the case of Cubans residing in Miami.

However, this pattern is not observed in all Latino communities in the U.S. Rivera-Mills (2005) found an unexpected Spanish language use among fourth generation speakers in a northern Arizona community. Her study reveals a correlation between generation and the participant's reported level of acculturation. However, Anderson-Mejias (2005) showed

that, in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, the situation is different. Anderson-Mejias reported maintenance of Spanish into the fifth generation, due the continuous immigration from Mexico and contact with dominant Spanish speakers. Furthermore, Villa and Rivera-Mills (2009b) presented an integrated model on language maintenance and loss. The authors studied language shift in the Southwest and found that this phenomenon sometimes becomes more complex due to intermarriage between ethnic groups and the presence of Spanish speakers whose families have been living in this region for ten generations.

Mora, Villa, and Dávila (2003) argue that migration is a dynamic factor to which the field must pay closer attention in the study of language maintenance and loss. The tendency of immigrants to transmit their mother tongue to their children (or not) may influence the rate of attrition of non-English languages in this nation. Mora et al. found that immigrant Spanish speakers are much more likely to pass the language on to their children than other non-English language groups.

#### *Language attitudes.*

Language attitudes are shared evaluations that associate particular language varieties with particular values (Woolard, 1989). As reported by several authors, the factors that appear to hold back a complete shift to English include positive attitudes toward Spanish. Tse (2001) examined the experiences of three groups of U.S. native bilinguals who had achieved a high level of biliteracy in both English and their home heritage language (Spanish, Cantonese or Japanese). Tse demonstrated that among other factors, a positive attitude toward a heritage language positively influenced the biliteracy of the participants.

Other researchers have studied language attitudes toward Spanish in Mexico-U.S. border communities. Velázquez (2009) examined the attitudes of adult bilinguals in the

border city of El Paso and stated that even in a fertile environment for sustaining Spanish, some parents do not pass their first language onto their children, while others do. Velázquez discusses that this decision is based on parents' perceptions of the benefits and costs of bilingualism. Also in El Paso, Achugar and Pessoa (2009) demonstrated that participants in this community valued Spanish use and also bilingualism in the academic context, but have mostly negative attitudes towards local varieties of Spanish and monolingual Spanish speakers.

In another U.S-Mexico border city in Texas, Mejías, Anderson-Mejías, and Carlson (2003) conducted a study over an eighteen-year period (1982 vs. 2000), and demonstrated that student attitude toward Spanish was similar over this period of time. Mejías et al. stated that students continued to select attitudinal indicators that fell within a communicative dimension more than within instrumental dimensions. First and second generation students viewed Spanish as a language to express emotions and talk with family and friends, while third and fourth generation students perceived Spanish more instrumentally and less sentimentally.

Attitudes toward Spanish were also studied in Latino communities located further from the U.S-Mexico border. Klassen and Burnaby (1993) examined the literacy beliefs of Latin American adult immigrants in Toronto, Canada. They found that although they were living in a region where English is the language of power, adult immigrants mostly aspired to acquire literacy in their first language. They viewed Spanish literacy as the most important tool with which to negotiate their environments. Spanish literacy was also valued in other immigrant communities, such as those described by Pucci (2000). Pucci explored the development and maintenance of first language literacy in a working class Salvadoran

community in Los Angeles, California, and found that this community promoted Spanish literacy as a way to maintain their cultural and national identity.

Beckstead and Toribio (2003) explored language attitudes, and other cultural attributes of the Latino adolescents attending a high-school located in a Latino/a community in Santa Barbara, California. This study demonstrated that high school students placed a high value on both Spanish and English. Students recognized the value of Spanish in the preservation of their Latino/a identity, while recognizing that wider educational and employment opportunities were available to them through English. Among Puerto Ricans in New York City, Zentella (1997) found a definite shift to English, but one that was accompanied by domains in which Spanish was preferred, a high degree of loyalty to Spanish, and a concept of Latino identity that did not require Spanish proficiency.

*Socio-economic status.*

Different socio-economic factors have been observed as influencing the process of language shift. For instance, Mora, Villa, and Dávila (2005) found that the higher the family is above the poverty line, the less likely the children speak a non-English language at home. Similarly, García, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla, and Paulino (1988) found a correlation between higher social class and English use in Latino communities of New York. These researchers' findings reflect the correlation between income level and language use, which Bills, Hernández-Chávez, and Hudson (1993) found as well; that is, Spanish speakers were more likely to shift toward English as they achieved a higher socioeconomic status. However, the correlation described by Bill et al. did not mirror the findings of Lambert and Taylor (1996). Lambert and Taylor showed that middle-class Cubans maintain Spanish to a greater degree than working class Cubans, who were shifting to English in an attempt to gain economic stability.

Other variables, such as ethnic identity, gender, social class, homogeneity of speech communities, and even in-group linguistic discrimination, have been attributed as influential factors in the process of language shift. Studies, such as those of Garcia, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla, and Paulino (1988) and Bills, Hernández-Chávez, and Hudson (1993) have analyzed the influence of in-group linguistic discrimination, gender relations, perceived ethnic identity, and the socioeconomic factors that contribute to the steady language shift pattern observed in the Spanish used in the U.S.

#### *Domains.*

Language cannot be divorced from the context or domain in which it is used. Even though different domains exist, such as family, school, work place, religion, policy and linguistic, for the purpose of this dissertation I focus on only family, school, religious domains.

#### *Family domain.*

Family context plays an important role in maintaining Spanish. Garcia, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla, and Paulino (1988) found that Dominicans in two New York neighborhoods reported using significant amounts of Spanish with siblings and parents, and only slightly less with children and friends. Hakuta and D'Andrea (1992) discussed that the maintenance of Spanish proficiency among high-school students of Mexican background, was principally associated with adult language practice in the home. Hakuta and D'Andrea also showed that outside of the home domain, language choice was found to show rapid and constant shift towards English. This shift in language choice was unrelated to Spanish proficiency, but instead was predicted by the subject's language attitude.

Also in a familial context, other scholars have conducted research on the influence of intergenerational transmission on language maintenance/shift. In a cross generational

study of a single Cuban American family in the U.S., Garcia (2008) demonstrated that language ideology and everyday language decisions are the major forces affecting whether a language is maintained or lost. Finally, Arriagada (2005), by analyzing data from the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study, concluded that family context strongly influences Spanish usage and proficiency among Latino children, regardless of their immigrant generation status.

School domain.

The use of Spanish has also been studied in school contexts. Khisty (1995) found that teachers tended to use the students' native language, Spanish, as an "instrument of discipline, to call students' attention to the subject of the lesson, or to punctuate a statement" (p. 288). When providing mathematical explanations, Khisty observed that teachers tended to shift into English, using only scattering Spanish words. McCollum (1999) found that in a middle school two-way bilingual program, Spanish-background students used primarily English at school by choice.

Also in a dual language school, Smith (2001) studied the influence that community-based, minority language resources had on the use of Spanish in the classroom. Smith found that the minority-language (Spanish) resources brought by fluent speakers of the community were less likely to be incorporated into the curriculum than the resources used by the majority-language (English) parents. Minority-language resources were mainly held by fluent bilingual elders and recent immigrants from Mexico. During different events, such as field trips and writing letters to a community newspaper, the dual language students interacted with adult members of the Spanish-speaking community.

Other factors have clearly demonstrated the marginalization of Spanish in the classroom. As mentioned in the introduction, school contexts concerning bilingual



education are shaped by state and national educational policies, such as the implementation of high-stakes testing (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Regarding the particular case of standardized exams in Texas (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, TAKS), Palmer and Lynch (2008) reported that teachers are encouraged to transition students gradually from Spanish into English instruction. Thus, standardized testing and accountability profoundly impact teachers' decisions with regards to language of instruction for their students.

#### Religious domain.

Research on language use in religious institutions is scarce. The Church, mostly the Catholic Church, is of immense importance for Latino/a immigrants in the U.S. Farr and Guerra (1995) consider religion as a “cultural landing point” or an important setting for the survival of new immigrants (p. 13). As observed by Baquedano-López (2004) and Farr and Guerra (1995) in different Latino communities, the literacy practiced in the domain of religion was almost entirely in Spanish. By studying the transnational experiences of a Central American woman living in the U.S., Ek (2009) concluded that literacy practices at church helped her maintain high levels of Spanish literacy. These practices included high-level vocabulary, interpretation, and argumentation skills, “which not all ELL students receive in their public schools” (p.75). Likewise, Burrows-Goodwill (2009), focusing on the out-of-school literacy practices during the summer vacation of nine Mexican-heritage children, demonstrated that the target children had church related literacy activities in Spanish. In another study at home, Rubinstein-Avila (2003) described the experience of an eight-grade ELL while he read the Bible in Spanish with this mother and an adult visitor to the home. This adolescent was a struggling reader at school and he disliked reading the Bible at home because he had not developed his literacy in Spanish.

However, a particular study described circumstances in which other forces could be causing a language shift in the religion domain. Baquedano-López (2004) examined the different reactions of Catholic parishioners in Los Angeles to the implementation of a new educational policy in a religious program. This policy eliminated Spanish-based religious classes (*doctrina*) for Mexican immigrant children in favor of English-only instruction. The findings showed that some people agreed with the English-only shift. One supporter of the shift was the director of the program, who described *doctrina* children as having to struggle with the “burden of bilingual education and also as having to receive religious education in ways that replicate their experiences in public schools” (p. 223). However, *doctrina* parents and teachers showed disagreement against the policy. One parent, who reinforced the importance of tying religious to ethnic identity, stated, “As a Mexican man, I want my children raised in my same traditions” (p. 227). A teacher of the *doctrina* program also expressed her disagreement with the new policy. She said, “I can be educated in English: But I talk to my God in my heart language which is Spanish” (p. 224).

In summary, the phenomenon of Spanish language use has been studied in different Latino communities in the U.S. Even though special attention was directed to communities located on the U.S.-Mexico border, no studies that focus on language use have been conducted in border colonias. Also, this literature review facilitated the identification of different factors that could be influencing Spanish language maintenance or shift. These factors were taken into account in the analysis of this dissertation’s findings.

### Conclusions

This literature review has shown the following. Firstly, out-of-school literacy practices play an important role in maintaining a native language. Different types of literacy practices at home or in other community domains have a positive effect on children’s

literacy development, particularly in their home language. Moreover, through constant collaboration, schools and community members can work together and be aware of the funds of knowledge that exist in emergent bilinguals' families and communities. Secondly, even though empirical work has demonstrated the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and the effectiveness of bilingual programs, research has also shown that the instruction that emergent bilinguals receive in schools is inappropriate to maintain their native language. Thirdly, the literature on Spanish language use at the community level contributed to understanding the vitality of Spanish in different Latino communities in the U.S. and, in particular, in identifying the various factors that lead to Spanish language maintenance or shift. Spanish language use varies with immigrant generations, in different domains, geographical location of the community, and socio-economic status of its residents.

Additionally, this literature review made evident the lack of studies on Spanish language use conducted in border colonias. Due to their demographic features and closeness to the U.S.-Mexico, border colonias constitute unique sites to study the phenomenon of Spanish language use and the factors that contribute to language maintenance/shift. The understanding of Spanish use phenomenon in the El Palmar colonia can help to preserve this language at the community level and in turn, possibly influence what is happening in the schools. Moreover, as social and demographic changes occur in other parts of the nation, the phenomenon of language use observed in El Palmar can be extrapolated to other Latino communities with similar characteristics.

This dissertation aims to unveil the degree of bilingualism and biliteracy in the colonia of El Palmar, as well as the different practices and factors that lead to maintain or shift Spanish in this community. In the following chapter I will explain the methodology that I utilized to study this topic.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This dissertation consists of a case study of the El Palmar colonia. I chose the case study method because an in-depth and descriptive approach is essential to understand the complexity of Spanish language use in this colonia. This chapter consists of four sections. In the first section I review the methodology used by other researchers to study the phenomenon of Spanish language use in different Latino communities of the U.S. In the second section I describe the research site. In the third section I discuss case study as a research strategy. Finally, in the fourth section I focus on the research design in terms of data gathering methods, data sources, and data analysis.

#### Section I

##### Review of the Methodology

Several researchers have used qualitative, quantitative, and multiple methodology research designs to study Spanish language use and the factors that either maintain or marginalize Spanish in Latino communities. As the strategy of inquiry, qualitative studies have consisted of either case studies (Burrows-Goodwill, 2009; Smith, 2001) or ethnographies (e.g., Alba, Logan, Lutz & Stults, 2002; Baquedano-López, 2004; García, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla, & Paulino, 1988; Pucci, 2000). The quantitative studies I found are non-experimental (e.g., Arriagada, 2005; Beckstead & Toribio, 2003; Lambert & Taylor, 1996; Lutz, 2006; McCullough & Jenkins, 2005; Mejías, Anderson-Mejías & Carlson, 2003; Portes & Schauffler, 1994; Potowsky, 2004; Smith, 2001; Villa & Rivera-Rivera-Mills, 2009a, 2009b). Very few researchers have conducted studies with a multiple methods design to examine this topic (Rivera-Mills, 2005; Smith, 2002). In this dissertation I use Smith's (2006) term *multiple methodology*, which refers to “studies or projects that

employ at least one quantitative and one qualitative method to produce knowledge claims” (p. 458).

Researchers have studied Spanish language use at national and state levels and in different Latino communities in big and medium size cities. Some of them employed datasets across the nation (Alba, Logan, Lutz & Stults, 2002; Arriagada, 2005; Lutz, 2006). Other researchers conducted studies at state level or big cities, e.g., McCullough and Jenkins (2005) in Colorado, Portes, and Schauffler (1994) and also Lambert and Taylor (1996) in Miami and Potowski (2004) in Chicago. Studies in smaller communities focused on neighborhoods of Tucson, Arizona (Smith, 2001, 2002), Southern California (Burrows-Goodwill, 2009; Rivera & Rivera-Mills, 2001; Beckstead & Toribio, 2003), Los Angeles, California (Pucci, 2000; Reese & Goldenberg, 2006), New York City, New York (García, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla & Paulino, 1988) and Flagstaff, Arizona (Rivera-Mills, 2005).

Language shift was also studied in different communities located along the U.S.-Mexico border (Martínez, 2003; Mora, Villa, and Dávila, 2005; Velázquez, 2009). Other researchers connected their studies to a university located in the Río Grande Valley (Mejías, Anderson-Mejías & Carlson, 2003) and a Catholic church in Los Angeles (Baquedano-López, 2004). Finally, several scholars studied language shift at a familial level in a cross generational investigation of immigrant families in the U.S. (García, 2008; Velázquez, 2009).

Since the reviewed studies are on Spanish language use, the participants have been mostly Latinos/as. However, a few researchers have included other ethnic groups. For instance, Alba, Logan, Lutz, and Stults (2002) studied the use of language in three groups (Chinese, Mexican and Cubans) to compare the pace of Anglicization among the descendants of Spanish speakers (Mexican and Cubans) with that of another ethnic group

(Chinese). In reference to the Latino participants residing in the U.S., few of the authors made transparent the nation of origin of their respondents. Those investigators who made the participants' nation of origin apparent examined communities of Salvadorans (Pucci, 2000), Cuban-Americans (Portes & Schauffler, 1994; Lambert & Taylor, 1996; García, 2008) and Mexican-Americans (Mejías, Anderson-Mejías & Carlson, 2003). Some of the researchers specified the immigrant generation of their participants. For instance, Beckstead and Toribio (2003) and García, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla, and Paulino (1988) reported working with recent immigrants while others studied different immigrant generations (e.g., Alba, Logan, Lutz & Stults, 2002; Anderson-Mejías, 2005; Rivera-Mills, 2005; Portes & Schauffler, 1994).

The Spanish language use phenomenon has been investigated using different types of instruments. Alba, Logan, Lutz and Stults (2002), McCullough and Jenkins (2005), Mora, Villa and Dávila (2005) and Smith (2002) obtained quantitative data from the U.S. Census Bureau; Arriagada (2005) and Lutz (2006) from the National Center for Education Statistics (NELS:88); and Anderson-Mejías (2005), Lambert and Taylor (1996), Portes and Schauffler (1994) and Potowski (2004) collected information directly through surveys/questionnaires. Of those researchers who have used questionnaires, few have reported having used self-reports (Lambert & Taylor, 1996; Potowski, 2004). This type of questionnaire can determine individuals' perceptions about the amount of Spanish and English they speak and hear in their daily lives. While Lambert and Taylor (1996) asked students to select from predetermined categories, e.g., 'always', 'a few words' or 'never,' Potowski (2004) asked students to estimate the actual percentage of Spanish and English they use with different individuals.

Other qualitative studies employed participant observation (García, 2008; Pucci, 2000; Smith 2001, 2002), interviews (Baquedano-López, 2004; García, 2008; García, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla, & Paulino, 1988; Rivera-Mills, 2005; Pucci, 2000; Smith 2001, 2002), archival information (Smith, 2001), logs of reading and writing activities (Pucci, 2000) and discourse analysis (Baquedano-López, 2004).

This review of the methodology has demonstrated that researchers can study Spanish language maintenance/shift by using different research designs, strategies of inquiry, instruments, and data analyses. Both qualitative and quantitative studies contribute to the understanding of Spanish use in the U.S. While the qualitative methodology facilitated the understanding of the different factors that may lead to the maintenance or loss of Spanish, the quantitative methodology provided further information on certain trends in the population and on different demographic variables that play a role in Spanish vitality. Moreover, since the sample of the quantitative studies is generally larger, their findings provide a broader idea of the status of Spanish at the national and state levels.

Finally, this review of the methodology suggests that, even though the Spanish use phenomenon has been examined in different communities across the nation, research is needed in colonias located in the southern border of the U.S. Furthermore, this review has demonstrated that this phenomenon has been mostly studied by using either quantitative or qualitative tools. Thus, a multiple methodology research design (Smith, 2006), that uses complementary methods, can contribute to understanding the Spanish language maintenance or marginalization in the colonia of El Palmar more in depth. During the process of developing a research design I drew on the concept of *bricolage* developed by Lévi-Strauss (1974). Lévi-Strauss appropriated the word *bricolage* from the French verb “bricoler” meaning “to tinker.” According to Lévi-Strauss *bricolage* is a creative process in

which the materials must change in order to form something new. *Bricolage* implies gathering information without any particular use in mind, but with the researcher's hope that it might turn out to be useful. Lévi-Strauss states that the bricoleur works within a closed universe and that the "rules of this game are always to make do with whatever is at hand" (p. 17). Building upon Lévi-Strauss' concept, I used multiple complementary methods to understand the arena of Spanish language use in El Palmar. I collected data with the materials that I had at hand, and without any specific use in mind.

## Section II

### The Research Site

This study took place in El Palmar colonia. El Palmar, a small community on Texas southern border, is located within Brownsville, a border city of 139,722 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This section includes a general picture of Texas border colonias and a particular description of El Palmar colonia.

### *Colonias*

Approximately 500,000 people live in 2,300 colonias on the Texas-Mexico border (Texas Secretary of State, 2010). *Colonia* is a Spanish term for neighborhood or community. In Texas, colonias refers to "an unincorporated settlement that may lack basic water and sewer systems, paved road, and safe and sanitary housing" (Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, n.d., p. 1). Thus, as colonias are unincorporated areas, although they are within city limits, city services such as street maintenance and police protection are poor or non-existent (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2005). Although the largest concentration of colonias is found along the Texas-Mexico border, colonias are also located in southern Arizona and New Mexico (Esparza & Donelson, 2008).



In the 1960s, colonias constituted a way of life for many low-income families when developers created subdivisions of land in unincorporated rural areas. Inadequate infrastructure has been a problem ever since for the colonias. Because of the potentially serious consequences for public health and its effect on quality of life, one of the greatest concerns regarding colonias is the lack of sewer systems (Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, n.d.). Richardson (1996) narrates the origin of the colonias of the Rio Grande Valley:

Before 1950, colonias were little more than worker camps on ranches and farms. Then, a few land owners found that they could subdivide poor farm land (especially the areas that flooded), construct a few roads, put in occasional power lines, and sell lots for a substantial profit. Farm workers and Mexican immigrants were ready buyers. Because the lots were outside of city limits, subdivision codes were loosely-written and poorly-enforced. Developers were able to sell lots lacking water, sewer connections, drainage, and paved roads. Buyers were able to construct without worrying about permits or building codes (p. 52).

Yet Texas colonias have received help since the abysmal conditions began to draw more statewide attention. The infrastructure of colonias improved when Texas passed a bond authorization (Cisneros, 2001). In 1999, Texas authorized a colonias initiative to coordinate state efforts to improve transport, housing, health and water, and hundreds of millions of state dollars have been allocated for the work over the past decade. State and federal resources are being used to improve conditions in colonias. A recent report in *The Economist* (2011) describes the improvement that U.S. colonias have had in the last few years. In 2006 about 63,000 people lived in “red” colonias, with no drinkable water or drainage, compared with 145,000 in “green” colonias or those with basic infrastructure,

including sewerage and paved roads. In 2010, 45,000 people lived in the reds and 194,000 in the greens.

Despite the difficulties that colonia residents have faced since the very beginning, several authors have discussed the positive aspects of living in colonias. Díaz, García, and Smith (2009) reported community strengths, such as productive social interactions and a shared culture among colonia residents. Similar results were found by Coronado (2003) and Richardson (1996) in other colonias along the U.S. border. For instance, Coronado mentioned that people living in colonias are proud of owning a land and Richardson stated that colonias are popular because they “meet basic physical and cultural needs” (p. 53). Bussert-Webb and Díaz (submitted for publication) also discuss the underlying social practice of families sharing electrical costs by using power cords between homes, as well as children sharing hand-held electronics and computers as other community strengths.

Furthermore, colonias have many characteristics that make them unique sites for case study research and offer a new perspective for the study of Spanish language use. Richardson (1996) states that these particular characteristics are colonias’ cultural homogeneity, since more than 90 percent of their residents are of Mexican origin. Also, their proximity to the border favors a constant mobility of their residents within the U.S. and back and forth from Mexico. However, the permeability of the border between Mexico and U.S. has been affected by law-enforcement efforts around illegal immigration after the 911 tragedy (Austin & Franklin, 2002). Legal and physical walls have been slowing down immigration, particularly among undocumented immigrants. The border, this special place that Anzaldúa (1999) called “the third space,” has been lately shifting its socio-cultural landscape. Colonias, as part of the border communities, might have followed similar demographic changes.

## El Palmar

According to the information retrieved from the Cameron County Court in February, 2009, El Palmar was founded in 1962 and is one of the 2,300 colonias located along the 1,248 mile Texas' border with Mexico (Texas Secretary of State, 2010). El Palmar is a census-designated place (CDP) in Cameron County, Texas, United States. It is part of the Brownsville Metropolitan Statistical Area (see Figure 3.1). According to the U.S. Census (2000), El Palmar has a total area of 0.6 square miles (1.6 km<sup>2</sup>).

**Figure 3.1. Map of El Palmar.**

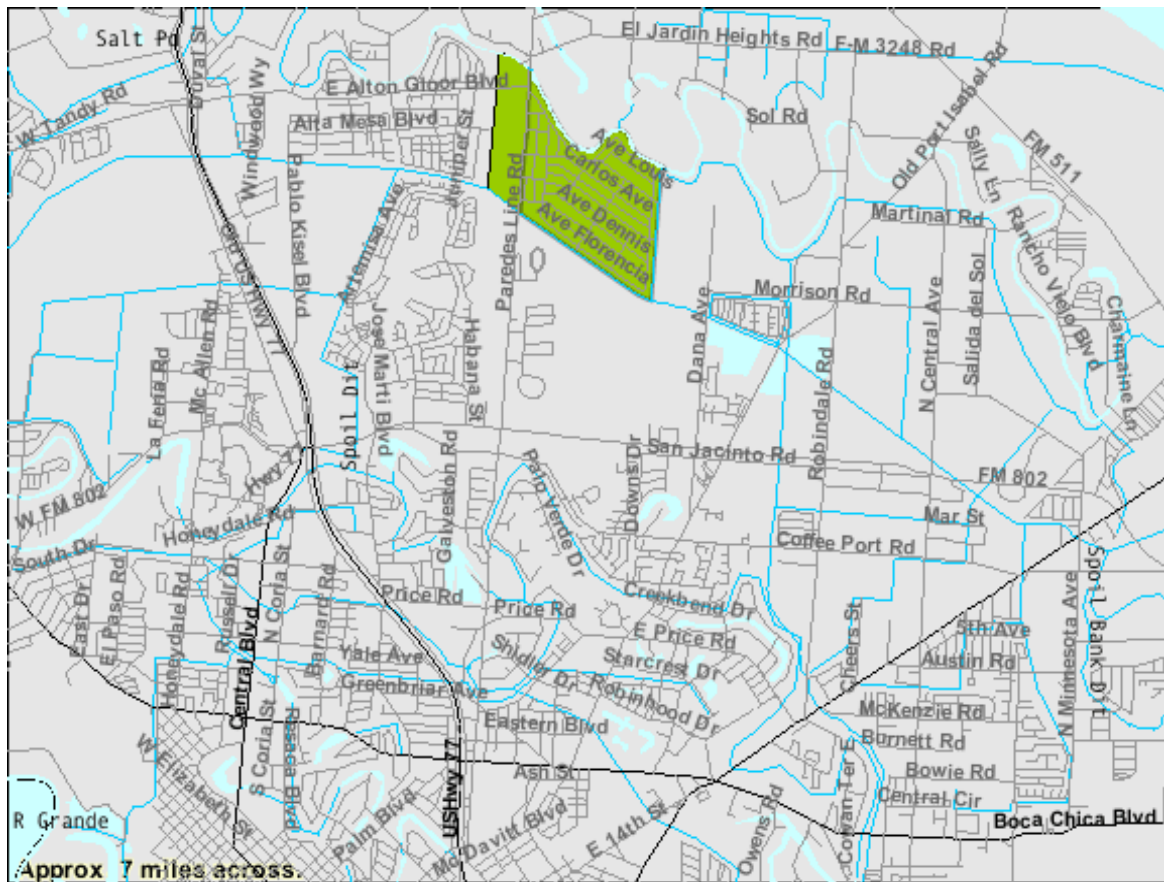


Figure 3.1. El Palmar, Texas (in green), is located within Brownsville metropolitan area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

El Palmar’s population was 5,961 for the 2000 U.S. Census. Nearly all its residents (99.3%) self-identified as being of Hispanic or Latino origin and 96.9% reported speaking Spanish at home (U.S. Census, 2000). About 58.1% of families and 61.2% of the population were below the poverty line, including 66.4% of those under age 18 and 41.9% of age 65 or over. El Palmar is the poorest neighborhood for its size in the U.S., with a per capita income of approximately \$4,000 and median household income of less than \$17,000 (U.S. Census, 2000). Related to education, among those residents of 25 years and over, 58.6% has completed less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 10.2% has a high school degree (or equivalent), and 2.3% has obtained a bachelor’s degree. Some of the social and economic characteristics of El Palmar, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas, and the United States are described in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1. Comparison of demographic data of El Palmar with those of Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas and United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)**

	Total population	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	Families below poverty level*	High school graduate (includes equivalency)**
El Palmar	5,961	99.3%	58.1%	10.2%
Brownsville	139,722	91.3%	32.4%	17.2%
Cameron County	335,227	84.3%	28.2%	20.1%
Texas	20,851,820	32%	12%	24.8%
United States	281,421,906	12.5%	9.2%	28.6%

*Note.*\* The Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). \*\* This percentage corresponds to people 25 years and over who have graduated from high school.

In terms of ethnicity and claimed language(s) spoken at home, the population of El Palmar does not differ greatly from that of Brownsville or the rest of Cameron County, with nearly all residents (99.3%) self-identifying as being of Hispanic or Latino origin and speaking Spanish at home by most Census respondents (96.9%). Eighty seven percent and 78.3% Census respondents have respectively reported speaking Spanish at home in Brownsville and Cameron County. El Palmar has a high rate of recent immigrants, but no available statistics exist. About half of El Palmar residents (43.9%) were born outside U.S., nearly all in Latin America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Data of the percentage of residents who were foreign born from the 1990 Census version were not available for El Palmar.

El Palmar residents share many of the same socio-economic and environmental challenges of other colonias along the border (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2005). These challenges include lack of health care, high drop-out rates, poor basic services and housing infrastructure, and lack of access to public transportation. However, El Palmar has shown progress since the Census version in 2000, more than ten years ago. According to the most recent estimates, income per capita has increased from \$4,100 to \$5,700. Moreover, most of the roads have been paved by now and more people have access to running water and electricity (The Economist, 2011).

As other colonias in Texas, El Palmar constitutes challenges, but also great possibilities for educators and researchers. Even though this colonia is within the Brownsville city limits, its geographical boundaries are well set. Moreover, community institutions and programs, such as churches, the Cultural Center, and the after-school tutorial center, are places that demonstrated being a bridge between educators and researchers, and the colonia residents. Despite growing attention to issues of health and

environment (e.g., May et al., 2003) little published research focuses on the educational issues faced by El Palmar residents (e.g., Bussert-Webb, 2008, 2009a).

### Section III

#### Case Study as a Research Strategy in Education

In this section I describe case study as a research strategy in education. I first discuss case studies' definitions and purposes and describe their characteristics. I then focus on the methodology usually utilized when case study methodology is selected as a research strategy.

##### *Definitions, Purposes and Characteristics of Case Studies*

Case study is one approach of qualitative research. Even though case study is a well known qualitative research method, researchers differ as to its definition and purpose. For instance, Stake (1999) defines case study as a strategy of inquiry to which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. More recently, Meyer (2001) states that case studies have been regarded as a design, as a qualitative methodology and, as a particular data collection procedure.

Yin (2006) stresses that compared to other methods, “the strength of a case study method is its ability to examine, in-depth, a ‘case’ within its ‘real-life’ context” (p. 111). Miles and Huberman (1994, cited in Meyer, 2001) think of the cases as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p. 330). Merriam (1998) characterizes the case study as a “bounded system” based on the boundaries of number of participants, time spent gathering data, or number of data sources use. Merriam sees the case as “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 25). She states that, by implementing a case study, “I can fence what I am going to study” (p. 25).

The purpose for carrying out case studies is also discussed. Some researchers regard case studies as supplements to more rigorous qualitative studies to be carried out in the early stage of the research process; others claim that “[they] can be used for multiple purposes and as a research strategy in its own right” (Meyer, 2001, p. 349). Stake (1999) states that “the case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing...the case could be a child. It could be a classroom of children or a particular mobilization of professionals to study a childhood condition [and] all the schools in Sweden can be a case” (p.2). Stake clarifies then that a relationship among schools, the reasons for innovative teaching, or the policies of school reform are less commonly considered a case.

Merriam (1998) describes case studies as “particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic” (p.29). Case studies are *particularistic* because they focus on a particular person, situation, event, program, or phenomenon. They are *descriptive* because the result is a rich description of the phenomenon under study. They are *heuristic* because they illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study. Case studies are also *inductive* because generalizations and hypotheses emerge from examination of the data, versus deductive reasoning, which includes a priori hypotheses before a study.

#### *The Methodology that Case Studies Utilize*

Unlike experimental, survey, or historical research, case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis (Merriam, 1998). Any and all the methods of gathering data, from testing to interviewing, can be used in case study, although certain techniques are used more than others. Case studies are frequently discussed within the context of qualitative research and they are often referred to interchangeably with ethnography, field study, and participant observation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The case study method is best applied when a researcher addresses “descriptive or explanatory questions and aims to produce a firsthand understanding of people and events” (Yin, 2006, p.112). For instance, Yin explains that the case study method is pertinent when a research addresses either a descriptive question (*what* happened?) or an explanatory question (*how* or *why* did something happen?). Moreover, Yin states that to get a close understanding of a situation, the study should be conducted in natural settings and should not rely on ‘derived’ data (e.g., test results and other statistics maintained by government agencies). Yin relates ‘natural setting’ to Bogdam and Biklen (2007)’s concept of ‘naturalistic inquiry,’ which considers places, such as a classroom, neighborhood or home, as natural settings.

Yin (2006) also discusses that good case studies benefit from having multiple sources of evidence. Yin says that by collecting case study data, the main idea is to establish converging lines of evidence to make findings as strong as possible. According to Meyer (2001), the case study approach typically combines data collection methods, such as archives, interviews, questionnaires, and observations.

Case studies can involve single or multiple cases (Yin, 2006). Meyer (2001) recommends including more than one case study in the research design and she states that the problem of single cases is limitations in generalizability and several information-processing biases. Thus, one way to respond to these biases is by applying a multi-case approach. Multi-cases augment external validity and help guard against observers biases (Eisenhart, 2006). Moreover, by looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it behaves as it does (Miles & Huberman, 1994, cited in Meyer 2001). Thus, a case study approach is appropriate for my study. This research approach provides an in depth



description of the case, the Spanish language use phenomenon, in a physically bounded place, the El Palmar colonia.

## Section IV

### Research Design

This case study used a multiple methodology approach (Smith, 2006) as a research design. Even though this study mainly uses qualitative methods, it also incorporates quantitative analysis. The qualitative component includes a description of the linguistic landscape of the colonia, participant observations, language logs, and interviews. The description of the linguistic landscape of the colonia was based on taking photographs of signs, posters and banners located in public places. The quantitative component uses a non-experimental strategy and consists of collecting and analyzing data provided by the census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000). This study also includes surveys, which are considered important quantitative tools in language and literacy research (Genishi & Glupczynski, 2006). Due to the small sample size, it was not possible to statistically analyze the collected surveys; however, the use of surveys provided findings supported by numerical statements. This section includes a description of settings, participants, and data collection and analysis.

#### *Settings*

The present study took place in different settings within El Palmar. Most of the settings were familiar to me. I had spent almost a year in the colonia working as a research assistant in different research projects, and as volunteer at the after-school tutorial center. Following is a description of different places of the colonia where I collected data. A further description of the type of instrument used in each of the settings will be depicted in a table format in the *Data Collection* section.

Figure 3.2. Data collection sites.

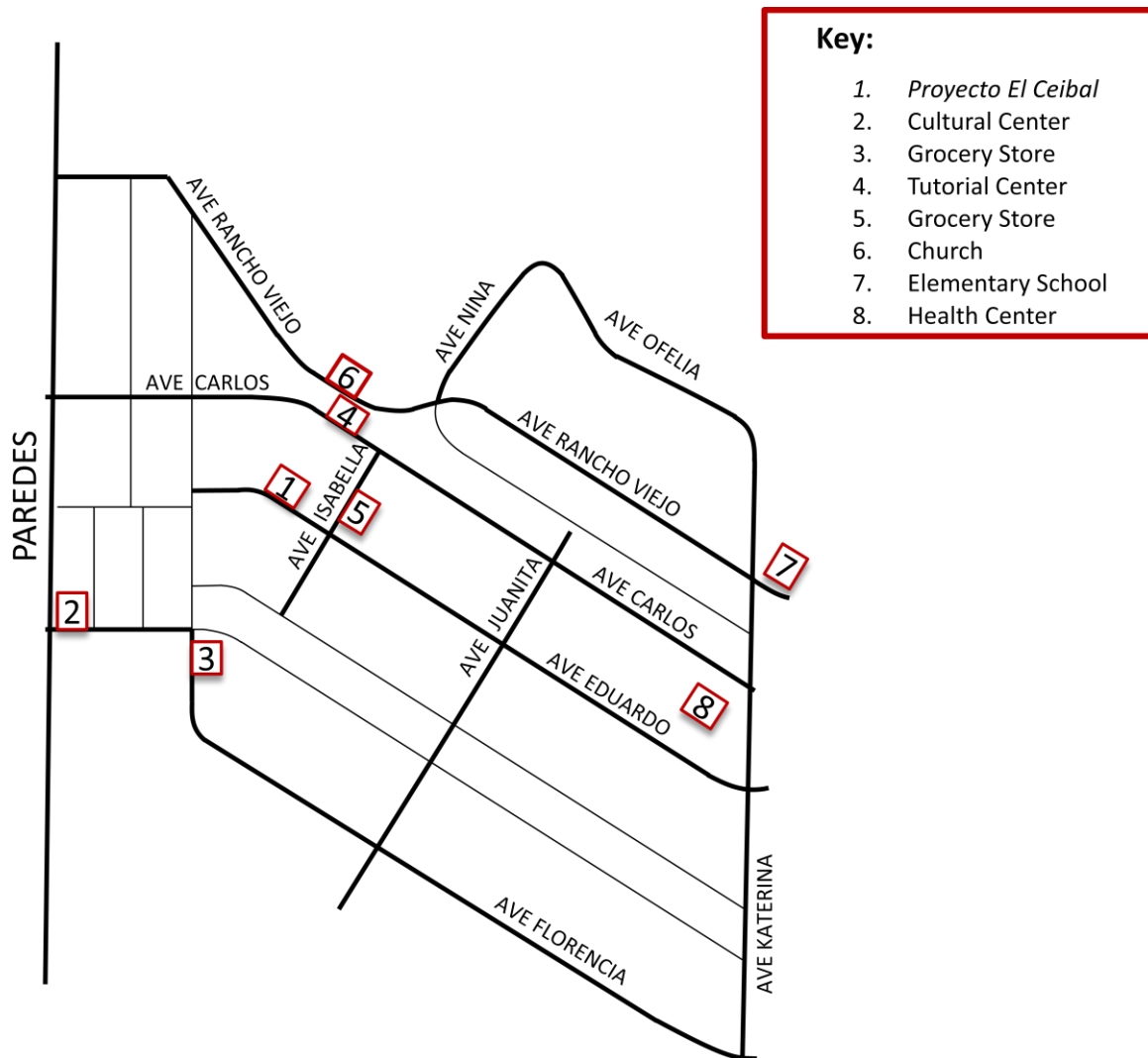


Figure 3.2. Map of El Palmar showing the sites where data were collected

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The Church (*La Iglesia*), marked as 6 in Figure 3.2, is at the heart of El Palmar. This church plays an important role in the colonia. It is the heart of the neighborhood, where social workers, healthcare workers, volunteers, educators, and church employees gather to empower this community. It offers different services for its residents, such as

catechism classes and church services. Children who attend catechism (*doctrina*) classes are given the opportunity to have this service either in English or Spanish. Other services in this church were traditionally offered exclusively in Spanish. However, with the change of church administration in 2009, one of the services is also conducted in English, which participants of this study call “the bilingual service.”

The church is also evidence to many aspects of Mexican language and culture. This church has preserved and regularly celebrates many religious traditions from Mexico such as *quinceañeras* (religious and cultural celebration for daughters who are 15 years old), *El Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), and *Los Reyes Magos* (Three Wise Men). This church has different projects. One of these projects is *Proyecto El Ceibal* (pseudonym), which includes General Educational Development (GED) test preparation classes, citizenship classes, English classes for adults, and after-school tutorial classes for children. Classes for adults and tutorial classes for children take place in different sites, marked in Figure 3.2 as 1 and 4 respectively. English classes for adults are taught by personnel of the Villa Maria Language Institute of Brownsville twice a week, and throughout each academic semester.

Another setting for data collection in this study was the after-school tutorial center, marked as 4 in Figure 3.2. This center is on grounds of the church and runs on Mondays through Thursdays from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. The program, funded by United Way, consists of assistance with homework and projects for schools. Children also participate in outdoor recreational activities across the street after they finish their homework. The after-school tutorial program offers additional activities, such as fine arts, gardening, and educational field trips. Volunteer tutors from the El Palmar, Brownsville private high-schools, and the University of Texas at Brownsville come to assist children in the program. As a volunteer, I

assisted children with their homework and school assigned projects once a week during one academic school year. I also helped to organize the center's library. During this period I observed and took field notes, which are part of the data used in this study.

Other settings in this study were the Cultural Center (*Centro Cultural*) and the Health Center (*Clínica de Salud*), respectively marked as 2 and 8 in Figure 3.2. The Cultural Center offers different services, such as free computer, English, and GED preparation classes for adults. At this center also, a non-profit family literacy program, *Apasionados por la lectura* (Passionate for Reading), offers reading workshops to mothers in Spanish. The goal of the program is to develop parents' literacy skills in their first language.

The Health Center has different health services and programs. One of these programs focuses on migrant and seasonal farm workers. Both, the Cultural Center and Health Center, host a colonia program developed by Texas A& M University. This program counts with lay outreach workers called *promotoras* (May et al., 2003). *Promotoras*, from a Spanish term for lay community educators, are community female leaders who live in the colonias and build important bridges between residents and the federal and state agencies such as the U.S. Census Bureau (Ramos, May, & Ramos, 2001). In El Palmar, *promotoras* facilitate social networks by visiting homes. For instance, they provide environmental and health education, and inform about Census data collection procedures.

Another setting in this study is an elementary school located inside El Palmar, which is marked as 7 in Figure. 3.2. I worked in this school several times as a substitute teacher during an academic semester. This school uses the early transitional bilingual program model in pre-Kindergarten through fifth grades, and has an ELL population of 56 % (Texas Education Agency, 2009). While working in this school I was able to observe the

language other teachers used during instruction, the language on materials on the walls, as well as worksheets, textbooks, and classroom library books. The collection of these data helped me understand how language used in schools is different from language used during instructional activities outside of school.

Data collection also took place in the homes of participating families. These houses are not depicted on the map (Figure 3.2) to keep the identity of the participants anonymous. Interviews, language logs, and language use surveys were conducted in the homes of participating families. By visiting their homes, I was able to observe language use in environments in which participants felt comfortable. The richness of family interactions when parents and children are using their full linguistic range in a relaxed home setting is an advantage for researchers (Kenner, 2005).

Finally, I also visited two grocery stores, marked as 3 and 5 in Figure 3.2. The purpose of visiting these stores was to collect printed materials, such as newspapers, fliers and bulletins, as well as to listen to the language(s) spoken at the site. During these visits I could talk to the sellers and take photographs of signs and bulletin boards.

### *Participants*

Participants consisted of six children, eight parents, and seven staff who work at the church, the after-school center, or the Cultural Center. Characteristic of participants are depicted in Table 3.2. Ages, occupations and living situations were all as at their interviews. Of the 21 participants in this study, 11 were female and 10 male; 20 were Mexican or Mexican-American, and one was European American. Participating children were from ages seven to 16; one attended elementary school, three middle school, and two high school. All participating children were born and/or raised in El Palmar. Participating adults' ages

ranged between 21 and the late 60s. Exact age of adults was not asked to prevent embarrassing them, as some adults are sensitive about this subject; these ages were estimated.

**Table 3.2. Brief profiles of participants**

Participant	Type of interview	Gender	Age	Immigrant generation	Occupation	First language
1****	Parent	M	28	First	College student	Spanish
2	Parent	F	30s	Second	Homemaker	English
3	Parent	F	40s	First	Homemaker	Spanish
4	Parent	F	40s	First	Homemaker	Spanish
5	Parent	F	40s	First	Homemaker	Spanish
6	Parent	F	40s	First	Homemaker	Spanish
7	Parent	M	50s	First	Homemaker	Spanish
8	Parent	F	60s	First	Homemaker/ Catechism teacher	Spanish
9	Child	F	7	Second	1st grader	Spanish
10	Child	M	11	Second	5th grader	Spanish
11	Child	M	13	Second	7th grader	Spanish
12	Child	M	13	Second	7th grader	Spanish
13	Child	F	15	Second	9th grader	Spanish
14	Child	F	16	Second	11th grader	Spanish
15	Staff	M	30s	Second	University lecturer	Spanish
16	Staff	F	22	First	Tutorial Center staff/ Catechism teacher	Spanish

**Table 3.2 (continued)**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Type of interview</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Immigrant generation</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>First language</b>
17	Staff	M	21	Second	English teacher at Cultural Center	Spanish
18*	Staff	F	40s	Second	Tutorial Center staff	English/Spanish
19 **	Staff	M	60s	Fourth	Former church leader	English
20**	Staff	M	50s	First	Present church leader	Spanish
21*	Staff	M	50s	Second	English teacher at <i>Proyecto El Ceibal</i>	Spanish

*Note.* Participants marked with an asterisk (\*) never lived in El Palmar but have worked in different settings of the colonia; with two asterisks (\*\*) were born and raised outside El Palmar, but have worked and lived in El Palmar for several years; and with (\*\*\*) have been raised in El Palmar but at the moment of the interview were living outside the colonia.

Out of 15 adults, 11 were either born or raised, or lived for at least ten years in El Palmar; two came to the colonia to work and also resided there for several years; and two worked there but resided outside the colonia. Participants were contacted either at the center, by phone, and, if necessary, by going to their homes. Participants were informed with a letter that stated the purpose of the study. These letters were given personally to participating adults and to the parents or guardians of participating children. After they

verbally agreed, I went over the consent and assent forms with them. Written consents and assents were gathered at the beginning of the project. All forms were in English and Spanish.

This study also included 28 children who were participants under another approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) project of University of Texas at Brownsville. This project took place during three weeks in May, 2010, at the after- school tutorial center. I participated as a research assistant during this project (Díaz & Bussert-Webb, submitted for publication; Bussert-Webb & Díaz, submitted for publication). I will provide further details about these 28 participants in the next section, *Data Collection and Analysis*. The 28 children were 14 boys and 14 girls, ages 6 to 14, and in grades first through 7<sup>th</sup>. Twenty-two children attended elementary school, and six middle school.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

I compiled a variety of different data sets in order to check the integrity of the data from several vantage points (Meyer, 2001; Schwandt, 2001). Data were collected by using census analysis, linguistic landscape analysis of the neighborhood, language use surveys, participant observations, language logs, and interviews. These multiple vantage points helped to establish the trustworthiness of the findings (Schwandt, 2001). A detailed description of data collection and analysis procedures is provided in Table 3.3.

Data collection described in this chapter took place within the period from February 2009 to December 2010. Even though this project was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Brownsville at Texas (UTB) to start collecting data in January 2010, gathering data by informal participant observation began earlier (February, 2009) while I was working as an IRB- approved research assistant in other university research projects. Specific actions are depicted in Table 3.4.



**Table 3.3. Data collection procedures and analysis**

Instrument	Sources	Analysis
Census analysis	Data from 1990 and 2000 censuses	Comparative analysis of census data
Linguistic landscape photographs and printed samples	Community literacy landscaping and printed materials	Digital photography of signs. Collection of bulletins, fliers, etc.
Language use surveys	Child (n=6) and adult (n=11) participants	Participants self-reported their language abilities in English and Spanish Data analysis using descriptive statistics
Language logs	Child participants (n=6)	Children completed a log describing the language use during day's activity
Field observations	Observations in different settings of the community (Most observations took place at the after-school tutorial center. Other settings were: the church, local elementary school, health clinic, and cultural center)	Field notes during and after observations
Long interviews	Child (n=6), parent (n=8), staff member (n=7) participants	Participants were interviewed in their houses or workplaces Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed
Short interviews (two questions)	Child (n=28) participants who participated in a three week project conducted by local university researchers at the after-school tutorial center	Participants were interviewed at the after-school tutorial center. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed

**Table 3.4. Time frame for data collection and analysis, February 2009 – December 2010**

	Census analysis	Photos/ printed samples	Field observations	Language logs	Language use surveys	Short interviews	Long interviews
Feb '09	<input type="checkbox"/>		✓				
Mar '09			✓				
Apr '09			✓				
May '09			✓				
Jun '09			✓				
Jul '09			✓				
Aug '09			✓				
Sep '09			✓				
Oct '09			✓				
Nov '09			✓				
Dec '09			✓				
Jan '10	✓						
Feb '10			✓	✓	✓		✓
Mar '10			✓	✓	✓		✓
Apr '10			✓	✓	✓		✓
May '10			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jun '10			✓	✓	✓		✓
Jul '10			✓	✓	✓		✓
Aug '10		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Sep'10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Oct' 10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Nov '10		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

*Census Analysis*

The U.S. Census division (U.S. Census Tract, El Palmar, Texas) provided additional data information about language use in the community. A comparative analysis of the demographic data from the 1990 and 2000 versions of the Census gave information on the changes of English-speaking ability over this 10-year period in El Palmar.

Census data were drawn from the responses to questions 15 (a-c) in 1990 and 11 (a-c) in 2000. These questions, the same for both versions, were:

- a. Does this person speak a language other than English at home? (Yes or No);

- b. What is the language? (Respondents write the name of non-English language);
- c. How well does this person speak English? (The census provides the following options: Very well, well, not well, not at all).

Data from previous census versions were not available for El Palmar; moreover, the 2010 Census results for this colonia were not available at the time this dissertation was written. From 1980, the Program Development and Management Department of Cameron County have counts with only estimates obtained from a El Palmar door-to-door Rural Condition Survey, conducted in 1980 (Cameron County Department of Budget and Planning, 1981). However, this survey did not have any question in reference to language use.

#### *Linguistic Landscape Photographs and Printed Samples*

With the purpose of identifying the linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) and environmental print (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) in the neighborhood, I walked and drove around El Palmar and documented (1) linguistic landscaping, including signs, banners, ads, posters, and notes, and (2) literacy materials of various types, such as books, newspapers, magazines, fliers and ads.

The documentation of linguistic landscaping items was collected with a digital camera; data, in form of photographs, were stored in a computer. Photograph collages were made by using Microsoft Office PowerPoint, 2007 version. Free printed materials were collected from the following settings: church, Cultural Center, Health Clinic, after-school tutorial program, *Proyecto El Ceibal*, and grocery stores. By keeping one of the main research questions in mind, “To which extent have bilingualism and biliteracy developed in El Palmar?,” I arranged photos by the language used in each of the signs and created three

categories, which were signs written in English, in Spanish, or in English and Spanish combinations.

Data on the availability of books, magazines, and newspapers in Spanish in the community were obtained through field observations while volunteering in the after-school tutorial program and visiting local stores. The information on availability of books in Spanish at home was gathered through interviews. An estimation of the amount of Spanish books in one of the elementary school libraries serving El Palmar children was provided by a school district librarian.

### *Language Use Surveys*

With the purpose of understanding bilingualism and biliteracy at an individual level, I conducted self-rating scale language use surveys (see Appendix B). This instrument intended to measure participants' ability to speak, listen, read, and write in English and Spanish. Respondents were offered the response choices of "not at all," "a little," "well," and "very well." Responses were measured in a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 4 ("very well"). This questionnaire was based on the survey developed by Portes and Rumbaut (2001). Surveys could be completed in English or Spanish.

Even though all participants were surveyed (21), only 17 language use surveys were selected for further analysis. The criterion for this selection was the following: participants had to be born and/or raised, or had lived in the colonia for several years. Those participants who lived outside and came to El Palmar to work or volunteer were not considered in the analysis.

To analyze data, I grouped surveyed participants according to their age and immigrant generations. The resulting groups were: 1-participating children (n=6), all second immigrant generation; 2- participating young adults (n=5), ages ranging between 20

and 30 years old, and either first or second immigrant generation; and 3- adults older than 31 years old (n=6), all first immigrant generation. The four language abilities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), in English and Spanish, were analyzed for each group. A further analysis consisted in comparing all groups in each language skill, in English and Spanish. Means and standard deviations were obtained by using Microsoft Office Excel. Graphs were made by employing OriginLab software.

### *Field Observations*

Most field observations took place while volunteering at the after-school tutorial center. I volunteered at the center during two academic semesters, two hours a day, twice a week. I also conducted shorter field observations during community special events (e.g., celebrations, festivities), services at church, and at the Cultural Center, Health Clinic, and grocery stores. Furthermore, I conducted observations at the elementary school in El Palmar while working as a substitute teacher during one academic semester, on an average of seven hours a week. In addition, to have a general understanding of everyday language practices, informal observations were done in the households when I visited participants to conduct interviews. People present at home varied according to the purpose of the visit. For example, mothers were always present during his/her child interview. Sometimes, during adult interviews, both parents were present, but children were rarely at home. When visits occurred during holidays or weekends, the whole family was generally present.

I took field notes during observations. These notes were more extensive and detailed in those places where I was a passive observer, such at the church services and the after-school tutorial center. Field notes were more difficult to take during home visits. Since the main purpose of home visits was to interview participants, field notes were either taken before or after interviewing. Field notes focused on observed participants' language

use and literacy practices; they were then transcribed, summarized and categorized. For instance, categories were determined by observing the most spoken/written language in different domains (e.g., home, after-school tutorial center, church) or with different people (e.g., parents, siblings, after-school tutorial staff members, community members).

### *Language Logs*

Participating children completed a 24-hour language log (see Appendix A). In these logs, children indicated the language that they used in different domains and with different people. For example different domains could be school, home and during varied leisure activities. The language log is a modified version of the 24-Hour Reading Log developed by Bussert-Webb (2009b). It comprised of five questions, focused on children's self reports of language used at home, school, after-school tutorial program, technology activities, and in other places or activities. Children also self-reported with whom they did the activity, if applicable. Children were to complete the logs alone, but if some had difficulty, I assisted them. Spanish or English versions of language logs were given to the children according to their language of preference. For language log analysis all children responses were compared and grouped in categories. One resulting category was, for instance, all the activities children reported they did at home. Further analysis consisted in determining the language used in each activity, and if applicable, with whom.

### *Interviews*

Two types of interviews took place in this study: long interviews and short interviews (see Figure. 3.3). Twenty one participants were interviewed using long questionnaires. These participants were six children, eight parents, and seven staff members. The questionnaire for each of these groups of participants was different (see Appendix C). All questionnaires were developed by the researcher. Interviews were

arranged at the convenience of participants. Children and parents were interviewed at their homes, typically in the living rooms or kitchen areas. Parent interviews were generally conducted in the mornings or early afternoons, while their children were at school. Children interviews took place during weekends, holidays, or summer vacations. Staff members were interviewed at their workplace or in another place at their convenience. Only one participant was interviewed via email. Each interview was conducted by the researcher and lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour. In certain cases I conducted follow-up interviews through phone or email conversations. This was the case when I was missing important information or I needed clarification.

Although I originally planned to interview more children, I could interview only six. The child population was difficult to interview due to their multiple activities and responsibilities in school and after school. In order to get more information from children, I conducted short interviews with 28 children, who attended a three-week Community Service Learning project at the tutorial center. During this project, and under the supervision of a university professor, preservice teachers tutored El Palmar children on homework and implemented lessons. By participating in this project as an IRB-approved research assistant, I conducted a 24-question interview but I only utilized two of these questions for my dissertation fieldwork. These questions referred to the use of languages and literacy practices; their responses were used in this study. These two questions were: (1) I know you are bilingual. Tell me about what you read in Spanish and in English; and (2) Do you like to read in Spanish? Why or why not? Do you like to read in English? Why or why not? Because of the limited timeframe and to make children comfortable, two friends or siblings were interviewed together. All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Interviews were carried out in English or Spanish, at the

preference indicated by the interviewee. In many cases, interviews took place in both languages, which reflects the bilingualism of the community.

Interview analysis consisted of looking for patterns and was based on grounded theory, following Glaser and Strauss (1967). I transcribed each interview right after I completed it. This helped me to develop a summary of the patterns of key issues that arose, or were absent, in the interviews. Unanticipated emerging themes that came across the first interviews were considered to be addressed during follow-ups, or in subsequent interviews with other participants. The exposed areas that needed further exploration led me to modify the subsequent interviews. For instance, the original questionnaires did not have questions that addressed language use in the religion domain. As this theme spontaneously arose in several interviews, I added questions related to this topic. In other circumstances I had to develop a completely new questionnaire. This was the case for certain staff member participants, who I did not initially plan to be interviewed. The original idea of this study was to interview, beside children and parents, only the staff members who were working at the after-school tutorial center. However, through the data gathering process, it became important to also interview other community members, such as church leaders and English and catechism teachers. To approach these unexpected situations, I adapted and organized my methodological tools basing on the concept of *bricolage* (Lévi-Strauss, 1974).

The general topics that guided the interviews (see Appendix C) varied among the different types of participants (children, parents, and staff). For instance, for participating children the general topics were: 1-language use at school; 2-language use at home; and 3-language use at the after-school tutorial center and in the community. Following the transcription of each interview I read the transcripts repeatedly, took notes and colored code to identify specific categories. As a result several themes emerged. Themes were identified



and categorized by making comparisons and looking for similarities across informants or across the different sections (Bogdan & Biklin, 2007). For example, some of the original identified categories were: language use at home, language use in the religion domain, language use outside El Palmar. Next, within each original category, I selected and labeled some data as more significant than others, or those data that responded suitably to the main questions of this study. For instance, within the original category of “language use at home” I identified more specific themes, such as communication with different family members, literacy practices at home, and language brokering.

*Final Analysis of Field Observation, Language Log, and Interview Data*

Data obtained with those qualitative instruments (field observations, language logs, and interviews) that provided with more in depth information on language use, were further analyzed. Through this analysis I collapsed the different emerging themes into the final themes. In this phase of analysis, by cycling back and forth with my theoretical framework (e.g., Barton, 2007; Fishman, 2001; González, Moll & Amanti, 2005) I came with the different factors that lead to Spanish language maintenance or loss in El Palmar. For instance, within the category of “factors that help maintain Spanish” I grouped family and home support, presence of mothers, peer influence, and ethnic, cultural, and religious identity. Likewise, within the category of “factors that lead to a shift into English,” I included schooling, participation in an after-school program, and the incorporation of English into once Spanish-only church services. Detailed descriptions of these final themes are discussed in the following two chapters.

## Summary

The study of El Palmar was conducted using a case study approach in order to document and analyze the Spanish language use in this colonia. Using mainly qualitative methods and a comparative analysis of data obtained from different versions of the Census Bureau, this study built on similar studies that have studied the Spanish language use phenomenon in different U.S. Latino communities. This study differs from previous studies in the same topic because it took place in a border colonia. To my knowledge, this is the first research that examines language use in this type of community. Furthermore, while most of the studies until now have researched this topic by either using quantitative or qualitative strategies, I approached this phenomenon by using multiple complementary methods (Smith, 2006).

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This chapter addresses the two main questions of the study, 1- To which extent have bilingualism and biliteracy developed in El Palmar? and 2- What are the factors that lead to language maintenance or shift in this colonia? This chapter is divided in two sections. In the first section I describe bilingualism and biliteracy at the community and individual levels. In the second section I focus on language use in different domains and contexts. The analysis and categorization of findings became sometimes difficult. In certain cases both languages were intertwined in complex ways and many variations were possible within the same person.

#### Section I

##### Bilingualism and Biliteracy in El Palmar

In the field of bilingualism and second language acquisition there has been a continuous debate regarding the terminology used to describe bilingualism and biliteracy. While conducting the current study, I adopt the terms “bilingualism” as the ability of a person to speak two languages (Bialystok, 2004), and “biliteracy” as “any or all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in and around writing” (Hornberger, 2003, p. xii). Bilingualism and biliteracy were analyzed at a community and an individual level.

##### *Bilingualism in the Community*

To understand the changes in the use of English and Spanish in El Palmar, I analyzed demographic data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. My initial intention was to gather demographic data on language use since 1962, the year in which El Palmar was founded, according to information retrieved from the Cameron County Court in February,

2009. However, as shown in Table 4. 1, the only data that I could obtain were from the 1990 and 2000 census.

Separate data from 1970 are not available for El Palmar. From 1980, the Program Development and Management Department of Cameron County have counts with only estimates. The El Palmar door-to-door *Rural Condition Survey*, conducted in 1980, estimated a population of 1,357. The estimated percentage of the total population per age group was 64%, 0-20 years old; 24%, 21-40 years old; 9%, 41-60 years old; and 3%, 61 and over years old (Cameron County Department of Budget & Planning, 1981). However, this survey did not have any question in reference to language use.

Comparative analysis of the demographic data from the 1990 and 2000 versions of the Census (see Table 4.1) provided additional information on the English-speaking abilities of people in El Palmar. Comparison was not possible for all Census information because some data were not available in the 1990 version. The same questions on language use were asked in the both Census versions. They correspond to questions 15 (a-c) in 1990 and 11 (a-c) in 2000. These questions were: a. Does this person speak a language other than English at home?; b. What is the language?; c. How well does this person speak English?

This comparative analysis shows that while the total population of El Palmar has increased from 3,802 in 1990 to 5,961 in 2000 (56.7%), the number of persons who “do not speak English very well” has decreased by 42.5% (persons five to 17 years) and by 20.8% (persons 18 years and over). These data demonstrate that more people in El Palmar, mostly youth, have reported speaking English well in 2000 than in 1990. Still, the percentage of people who speak only English in 2000 is low (3%). We can infer from these data, that even though the population of English speakers has grown, Spanish is still spoken in the colonia. The Census survey does not have any question regarding the nature of

**Table 4.1 Comparative analysis of English-speaking ability in El Palmar according to 1990 and 2000 versions of the Census**

	1980	1990	2000	Change (%)
Total population	1,357*	3,802	5,961	(+) 56.7
Total population 5 years and over	_____	3,155	5,068	(+) 62.2
Percent who speak <u>only</u> English (5 years and over)	_____	_____	3.0	_____
Percent who speak a language other than English (Spanish) (5 years and over)	_____	_____	96.9	_____
Persons 5 to 17 years Total	_____	1,408	1,697	(+) 20.5
Persons 5 to 17 years “percent who do not speak English very well”	_____	58.5	16.0	(-) 42.5
Persons 18 years and over Total	_____	1,747	3,217	(+) 84.1
Persons 18 years and over “percent who do not speak English very well”	_____	67.4	46.6	(-) 20.8

*Note.*\* corresponds to an estimate and was provided by a different source: Cameron County Department of Budget & Planning (1981).

respondents' Spanish language abilities. The maintenance of Spanish and the increase in the number of people speaking English are indexes of a development of bilingualism in El Palmar.

Data derived from the Census analysis, and then confirmed with surveys and interviews, demonstrated that bilingualism in El Palmar becomes more evident among the second immigrant generation. However, survey and interview analysis showed that those first generation residents who had several years of schooling in the U.S. reported they are also able to speak English and Spanish well. On the other hand, bilingualism was not observed among those first immigrant generation participants, usually adults, who did not attend schools in the U.S. A more extensive analysis of bilingualism at an individual level and in different immigrant generations will be provided in this chapter.

#### *Biliteracy in the Community*

Self-report data from the Census Bureau provided information on the oracy (speaking) and not on literacy (reading and writing) abilities of El Palmar residents. As stated by several authors (e.g., Pucci, 2000; Reese & Goldenberg, 2006), for the maintenance of a heritage language the presence of biliteracy in the community is important.

The study of literacy in El Palmar was based on Barton's and Hamilton's concept of social practices related to literacy (1998), and on understanding how people make sense of their lives through everyday literacy practices. Barton and Hamilton discuss that one way the community influences literacy activities is through access to printed material of a variety of types. This study is also based on the concept of *linguistic landscape*, defined by Landry and Bourhis (1997) as the "visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory region" (p. 23). In this study I adopted the term

*linguistic landscape* to describe the language used in a plethora of print (e.g., signs, ads, posters) that is present in the public spaces of the community.

With the purpose of identifying and analyzing biliteracy in the community, I walked, drove, and visited different places in the colonia, and documented (1) the linguistic landscape, including signs, banners, ads, posters, and notes, and (2) other literacy materials of various types such as books, newspapers, magazines, fliers, and bulletins. Free printed materials were collected from different settings, and photographs were taken of the linguistic landscape.

### *Linguistic Landscape*

The linguistic landscape in the colonia provided evidence of a range of literacies. I observed and photographed examples of signs related to commercial activities, (e.g., food stores, auto repair shops, and small home businesses), posters advertising local events and entertainment, and political campaigning. For purpose of analysis, these signs have been categorized into English-only, bilingual, and Spanish-only signs. As shown in Figure 4.1, English-only signs mainly corresponded to official concerns, such as traffic signs and political campaigning signs. Most commercial businesses were advertised in English. Examples of Spanish-only (see Figure 4.2) were announcements made by the churches which included services and entertainment events. Some signs for small businesses at homes were in Spanish. Bilingual signs, both English and Spanish in the same text, were also present in the linguistic landscape of El Palmar. As shown in Figure 4.3, bilingual signs were mainly observed outside small commercial businesses and businesses at home and health community service announcements.

Figure 4.1. English-only signs.



Figure 4.1. English-only signs were found in grocery stores, beauty salons, and auto repair shops.



Figure 4.2. Spanish-only signs.



Figure 4.2. Spanish-only signs were observed in small businesses at home and church announcements. The name of the church was hidden to protect participants.

Figure 4.3. Bilingual signs.



Figure 4.3. Bilingual signs were present in small businesses at home and at the community Health Center.

### *Other Literacy Resources*

Other literacy resources collected for this study included pamphlets, fliers, and bulletins. These types of literacy resources were collected from different settings, such as the church, Cultural Center, Health Center, the after-school tutorial center, and grocery stores. These resources generally announced different health programs; GED, English and computer classes for adults; and social events in the community. They were almost exclusively written in Spanish, with a few exceptions that had the same information in both languages. However, the business advertisements that generally appeared in the back of the bulletins, e.g., the church bulletin, were almost exclusively in English.

In the colonia, there are no bookstores, kiosks, or newsstands that sell newspapers, popular magazines, or books. However, mini-markets or local stores, which usually sell groceries, offer a small selection of daily newspapers. During a visit to these stores I observed, on the stand, one newspaper in English (*Brownsville Herald*) and three in Spanish (*El Nuevo Herald*, *El Mañana*, and *El Bravo*). Of those newspapers written in Spanish, one is published in the U.S. and two in Mexico. This greater representation of newspapers in Spanish, mainly edited in Mexico, suggested the language in which El Palmar adult residents choose to read. During an informal conversation with an employee in one of those minimarkets she confirmed that people mostly buy newspapers written in Spanish. She said, “Los de inglés ahí nos quedan, casi nadie los compra”, [Those written in English remain; almost nobody buys them].

There are no public libraries in El Palmar. The closest two public libraries are located at least four miles from the colonia. The lack of transportation among El Palmar families makes the access to libraries difficult; to take public transportation, residents have to walk several blocks since city buses do not enter the colonia. Also, the lack of a direct

bus route makes the visit to the public libraries even more a barrier. One book source easily available to El Palmar children is a small library located at the after-school tutorial center. This library does not have more than 500 books but only a small percentage, around 10 percent, is in Spanish; the vast majority of the tutorial center books are in English. The books in Spanish are underrepresented also in the public elementary school located in the colonia. These books are about 10% of the total collection; this estimation includes the bilingual books, or those written in English and Spanish (School librarian, personal communication).

The analysis of linguistic landscape and other literacy resources showed that biliteracy is present in the community of El Palmar. Signs located in public places and outside homes were written either in English, Spanish, or both languages. Additionally, bulletins, fliers, and newspapers were available in both languages. However, children's access to books or other reading materials, in either language, is limited. Biliteracy in the tutorial center library is almost inexistent; books written in Spanish are underrepresented if we consider that El Palmar is a 99% Latino community with many recent immigrants.

#### *Bilingualism and Biliteracy at the Individual Level*

In order to understand the degree of bilingualism and biliteracy at an individual level, I conducted a survey intended to measure residents' ability to listen, speak, read, and write in English and Spanish. Respondents were offered the response choices of "not at all," "a little," "well," and "very well." Responses were measured in a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 4 ("very well").

Unlike the data obtained from the Census, responses from language use surveys come from a small sample (n=17). Sixteen out of the 17 surveyed participants were current El Palmar residents; only one participant, a 28 year-old adult, was not living in the colonia

during data collection; however, he was raised there until he was 18 years old. For survey data analysis the 17 participants were categorized into three groups. The characteristics of each group are depicted in Table 4.2. The criteria to establish these three groups were based on each participant's age, immigrant generation, and the number of years they attended a U.S. school. The established limit of years in U.S. schools was three, since research suggests that this is the minimum number of years needed to acquire informal communication skills in a second language (Cummins, 1981).

**Table 4.2. Characteristics of surveyed participants**

Groups	Number of participants (n)	Ages (years old)	Immigrant generation	More than three years in a U.S. school
1	n=6	7-16	Second	Yes
2	n=5	20-30	First and Second	Yes
3	n=6	31+	First	No

Survey analysis (see Figure. 4.4) suggested differences in the language ability among different groups. Group 1, children, ages ranging from seven to 16, reported feeling fluent in listening and speaking in both English and Spanish; however in reading and writing most participants reported being stronger in English than in Spanish. Only one child, age 13, felt more confident in all the skills in Spanish. This may be explained because, even though he was born in the U.S., he attended elementary school in Mexico. Group 2, adults, ages ranging from 20 to 30, demonstrated being a more homogeneous group in terms of language abilities. Participants in this group felt equally confident in both

languages, whereas they still considered their reading and writing skills slightly better in English. Finally, participants of Group 3, adults older than 31 years old, reported feeling stronger in Spanish for all language and literacy skills.

**Figure 4.4. Language skill abilities of surveyed groups.**

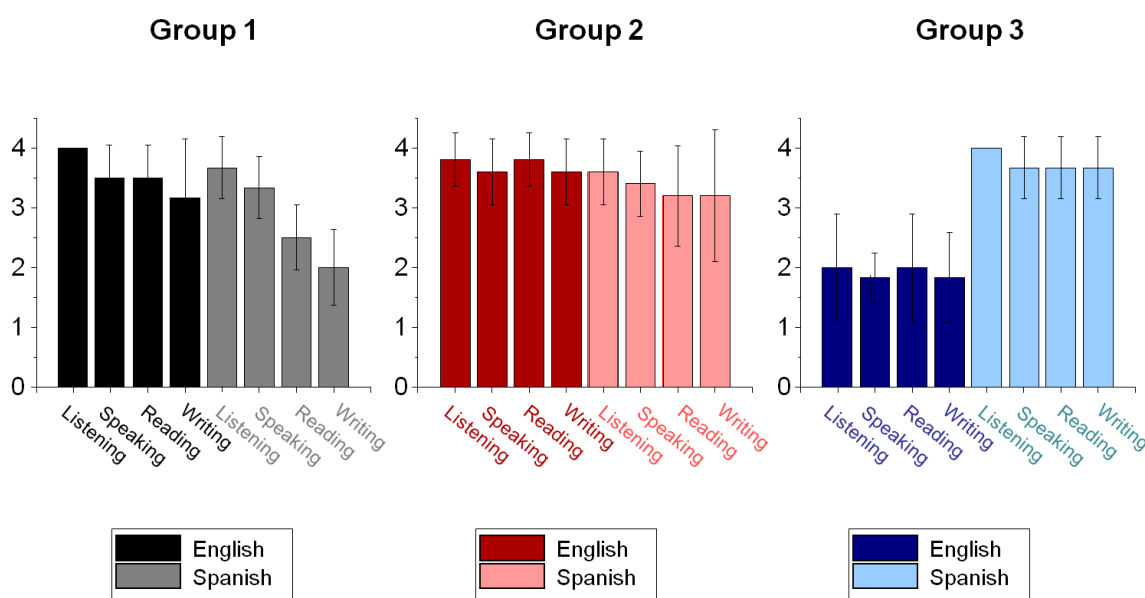


Figure 4.4. Graph that represents English and Spanish language skill abilities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) for three groups of participants. This graph depicts mean and standard deviation. Means were calculated in a scale from 1 to 4, since the survey was on a 4-point scale.

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When data were analyzed considering the different immigrant generations, a difference in language abilities was evident. While first generation, Group 3 participants, reported being dominant in Spanish in all skills, the second generation, Group 1 participants, believed they were bilingual in terms of oral skills, but clearly were stronger in reading and writing in English. By focusing on Group 2, composed by first and second generations, it could be noticed that those first generation participants who mainly attended

school in Mexico felt stronger in Spanish; however, second generation participants who attended school in the U.S. were more confident in English.

Survey data were also analyzed by comparing the three surveyed groups in each language skill, in English and Spanish (see Figure 4.5). If we consider language abilities in English, Group 1 and 2, children and young adults, are clearly stronger in all skills than Group 3, older adults. In Spanish, there was not an obvious difference in listening and speaking abilities among the three groups. However, the three groups self-reported having different abilities for reading and writing; Group 3 was ranked highest, and Group 1 the lowest. This analysis confirmed the data derived from census analysis. Bilingualism is present among children and young adults because they have developed their speaking abilities in English and Spanish; nevertheless, biliteracy has been barely developed in El Palmar. Only few participants from Group 2 self- reported biliterate.

**Figure 4.5. Group comparison of language skill abilities.**

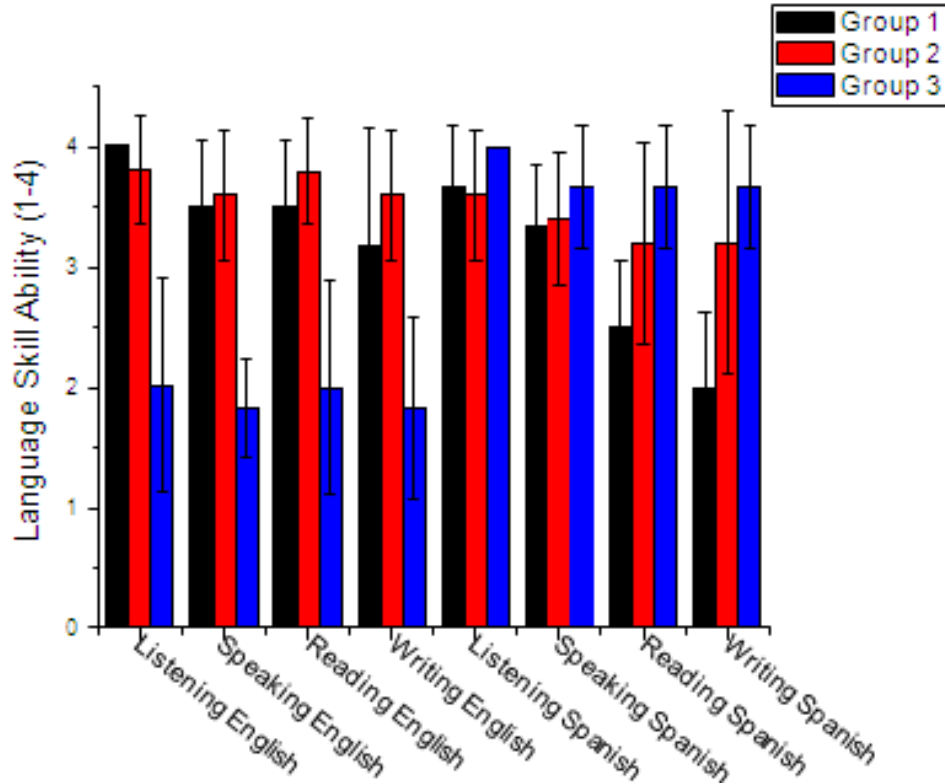


Figure 4.5. This graph depicts a comparison among the three analyzed groups of participants, for each language skill abilities, in English and Spanish. This graph depicts mean and standard deviation. Means were calculated on a 4-point scale.

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## Section II

### Language Use in El Palmar

This section addresses the second question that guided this study: What are the factors that lead to language maintenance or shift in El Palmar? To address this question I used more deliberate and in-depth qualitative explorations which included field observations, language logs, and semi-structured interviews. The data obtained with each of



these instruments will be explained separately. The different factors that play a role in language use in the colonia will be further analyzed and discussed in Chapter V.

### *Field Observations*

Observations were conducted in different places within the colonia and thus provided a broad idea of language use at the community level. While visiting those places, I focused on the languages people used in their oral communication. I also had informal conversations, mainly with employees. Examples of informal observations occurred at the Health Center, the Cultural Center, and a convenient store. Each of those visits lasted less than an hour. Other field observations were longer. Regular observations took place for at least two hours, once a week, and during two academic semesters while I was working as a volunteer in the after-school tutorial center. Extended observations occurred also when I worked as a substitute teacher in the local elementary school, or as a research assistant in different projects conducted by University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) researchers, which took place in the after-school tutorial center. I also attended masses at the church.

The language most spoken varied in the different places. In general, the language most often heard in the streets and in other public places in the colonia was Spanish. This observation was supported by the comments of several participants. For instance, a participant observed, “No tengo problema cuando voy a las tiendas aquí; todos hablan español”, [I do not have any problem when I go to buy here; everybody speaks Spanish]. Also, a Cultural Center staff member commented, “My co-workers speak English; but whoever person [sic] comes from El Palmar to the *Centro Cultural*, would [sic] speak Spanish.” However, observations conducted in the after-school tutorial center and the local elementary school demonstrated a clear predominance of English, as will be addressed address in the section entitled *Language Use in Different Domains*.

### *Language Logs*

Language logs provided data on language use at a more individualized level. These instruments were completed by six participating children and focused on participants' self reports of language used during different activities at home, school, after-school tutorial center, and while using technology. Even though the log questions were in English and Spanish, five participants answered in English and one in Spanish. The language in which most participants chose to complete the language logs showed preference for reading and writing in English.

Table 4.3 summarizes the different answers provided by participants. Children wrote the language used in varied activities at home, school, after-school tutorial center, while using technology, and other times. If applicable, they also specified the person(s) with whom they were doing the activity.

Data analysis of language logs demonstrated that children used both languages in most of the activities. However, they mostly used Spanish at home and English during school-related activities in which teachers were involved. The other person(s) intervening in the activity seems to be important in the language children used. For instance, the presence of family members (at home, in Mexico) triggered children to use their heritage language; however, in presence of staff involved in curricular activities (teachers, coaches, tutorial staff), children used more English. It is important to notice how the presence of Spanish-dominant mothers, even in contexts where English is the predominant language, led children to use Spanish. An example would be the "snack time" in the after-school program. Snacks at the center are usually served by staff and mothers.

**Table 4.3. Language used during different activities throughout a day**

Activity	Language used	With whom
At home		
Watch TV	English/Spanish	_____
Listen to music	English/Spanish	_____
Play on the computer	English	_____
Do homework	English	
Have dinner	Spanish	Parents/siblings
Pray	Spanish	
At school		
Physical education	English	Coach/classmates
Classroom activities	English	Teacher/classmates
Extracurricular activities	English	Teacher/classmates
Cafeteria	English/Spanish	Friends/Cafeteria staff
On the school bus	English/Spanish	Friends/bus driver
At the after-school tutorial center		
Do homework	English	Staff
Sports outside	English/Spanish	Staff/friends
Field trips/summer	English/Spanish	Staff/friends
Snack time	Spanish	Staff/mothers/friends
Social events	Spanish	Staff/parents/friends

**Table 4.3. (continued)**

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	Using technology	
Texting messages	English/Spanish	Friends/siblings
Use of Facebook/MySpace	English/Spanish	Friends
Play games on the computer	English	_____

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	Other activities or places	
Stores	English/Spanish	Cashiers
Doctor's office	English/Spanish	Doctor/nurses
Mexico	Spanish	Family members

---

The presence of friends also plays a role in the language used by participating children. Even in more structured domains where English is the dominant language, such as school and the tutorial center, children used Spanish with their friends during lunch and sports. In activities where children were alone (e.g., playing computer games, doing homework at home), the language used was mainly English. In these latter cases, children did not have the choice of using a language since both the assigned homework, and computer games were in English.

#### *Interviews*

The interviews contributed to understanding how languages were used in different domains and contexts, and the factors that either helped to maintain or lose Spanish in El Palmar. I identified several themes during interview analysis. These themes were: (1) language use across immigrant generations; (2) language use in different domains (family, after school tutorial classes, church, and school); (3) Language use inside and outside of El

Palmar; (4) children and parents as language brokers, (5) language and religion; and (6) language and identity. These themes are discussed in the next sections.

### *Language Use across Immigrant Generations*

As observed in the results obtained from the surveys, responses from the interviews also reflected a difference in the language use across immigrant generations. Those second generation participants who were born in U.S. and who attended school in this country reported that even though they could speak both languages fluently, they felt more comfortable reading and writing in English. Thus, they follow the pattern of other adult immigrant Latinos in the nation (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Rong & Preissle, 2009). Their parents spoke mainly, or only, in Spanish, and this was the language they used at home to communicate with their family. However, in other contexts, such as school and work, second generation participants used more English. Of those second generation participants, few reported feeling comfortable with their reading and writing skills in Spanish. These participants, even though they were born in the U.S., they attended, at least for a few years, a school in Mexico. A participant narrated his experience as a student in Mexico, “I went two years to Mexico; I studied over there when I was seven. The spelling and grammar, let’s say [sic] is better there. That [experience] made me improve my Spanish skills.”

Comparative analysis among the responses from first generation immigrants showed also a variation in the usage of English and Spanish. Based on this analysis I identified three subgroups of first generation participants as: (1) those who attended only U.S. schools; (2) those who attended U.S. schools but also had several years of education in Mexico; and (3) those who never attended school in the U.S. The first and second

subgroups corresponded mostly to children or young adults; the third subgroup consisted mainly of adults over 30 years old.

The first subgroup, participants who attended schools only in the U.S., commented about being able to speak both languages fluently, but reported feeling more comfortable in reading and writing in English. When asked which language they preferred to read, 96% of 28 children said in English, since it is easier for them (Díaz & Bussert-Webb, submitted for publication). One participant said, “In English, [because] I understand it.” Another participant added, “Only in English, because it is much better than Spanish.” One first grade participant made clear the strong influence that teachers have on children’s language choices. She said, “Mi maestra me dijo que me tenía que olvidar de el español, que de ahora en adelante todo iba a ser en inglés”, [My teacher told me that I had to forget Spanish, that since now, everything had to be in English]. Conversely, those few participants who said they also read in Spanish believed that reading in their mother tongue is a path to maintain their culture. For instance, one participant stated, “I read in Spanish because my parents speak Spanish.”

The second subgroup considered themselves bilingual and biliterate. They reported they were able to speak, and read and write equally well in both languages. They also mentioned that they were able to maintain academic Spanish because they went to school in Mexico, and received academic instruction in Spanish. An adult participant, who attended school up to fourth grade in Mexico, compared his Spanish abilities with his brothers and sisters who went to school only in the U.S. He said, “Yo estudié en México hasta cuarto grado, por eso, si yo me comparo con mis hermanos, yo lo primero que aprendí cuando fui a la escuela fue el español, y ellos no; por eso yo sí puedo leer y escribir en español, y ellos no”, [I studied in Mexico up to fourth grade and, if I compare myself with my brothers and

sisters, the first thing that I learned in school was Spanish and they did not. I can read and write in Spanish, and they cannot]. These findings demonstrated that it is crucial to having received a solid academic instruction in both languages in order to become biliterate. Participants' reports also showed that their academic Spanish was learned in Mexico, while English instruction was received in the U. S. None of them mentioned having strong academic instruction in Spanish in the U. S. even though most of them were placed in bilingual classes. Indeed, this participants' strong academic instruction was received in Mexico.

Those who felt equally comfortable with both languages reported they could use either language with their friends, but the language they chose to use with them would depend on two factors: the language ability of the person they are communicating with and the topic. Most bilingual participants reported that they preferred to express their feelings in Spanish. This was expressed by a 21 year-old interviewee, "When real friends get together, they will speak Spanish because this is the way we, Spanish people, were raised: to make friends, to be loved." However, in certain cases, they conceived other purposes when they decided which language to use in a conversation with friends. For instance, a young adult stated, "If I had the option of speaking either language, I would prefer to speak in English just to practice and improve it." These quotes showed that even though Spanish can be perceived as a language to express participants' feelings, English is still seen as an instrument to succeed.

Finally, those participants in the third subgroup, generally adults and recent immigrants, reported being Spanish dominant in all the language skills. Some of these participants commented that they felt comfortable being Spanish monolinguals in the colonia. An interviewee, who was in her 60s and had been living in El Palmar since it was

founded, said, “El 98% de la gente aquí [El Palmar] habla español, yo no necesito el inglés, lo necesito sólo cuando salgo de aquí...cuando tengo que ir a la corte o a los bancos”, [Ninety eight percent of the El Palmar people speaks Spanish. Thus, I do not need the English here. I need it only when I leave here...when I need to go to the court or to the banks]. Obviously, for this particular participant speaking only Spanish is enough to communicate while she lives in the colonia.

However, not all participants expressed their comfort with mastering only Spanish. Other Spanish dominant residents made transparent their desire to learn English. Several of the parent interviewees commented that they have attended English courses in El Palmar. One parent expressed why she wanted to attend English classes, “Otros se ríen de mi porque no sé en inglés....y yo quiero saber qué es lo que hablan los otros, así no me da pena o me siento sola cuando están hablando en inglés”, [Others are making fun of me because I do not know English...and I want to know what others are talking about, so I would not feel embarrassed or lonely when they are talking in English]. Learning English for this recent immigrant was a way to feel more accepted by the new society where she lived. An adult male participant expressed another point of view in which he associated knowing English with having better job opportunities. He stated, “Por falta de inglés no agarro buenos trabajos”, [Due to my lack of English, I cannot find a good job].

Two places in the colonia regularly offer English classes for adults. These places are *El Centro Cultural* and *Proyecto El Ceibal*. In order to know the population attending these classes, and to understand the reasons that led them to learn English, I interviewed two persons who were teaching English in the places mentioned. One employee, who was teaching adults English in the colonia during data gathering, commented, “The three main reasons people want to learn English are: to get a job, to go into college, but mainly to help



their children with their homework.” Another English teacher, who was also an El Palmar resident during data gathering, referred to what one of his students had said, “I want to learn English be a better person, to know English, to be in a country where you speak English.” Both teachers also commented that the majority of their students were females, with ages ranging between 25 and 40.

#### *Language Use in Different Domains*

This study demonstrated a compartmentalization of languages in different settings. While Spanish was observed to be confined at home and community cultural and social events, English was most used at school and other school- related settings such as the after-school tutorial center. This language compartmentalization was evident in one of the adult’s comments, “El español debe ser en la casa, y el inglés, la educación, eso lo vas a agarrar en la escuela”, [Spanish should be at home; English, the education, that is going to be get in school.] A mother from a different family reinforced this idea by saying, “En este país uno tiene las opciones, habla inglés donde trabajas, donde se necesita, pero en tu casa habla español”, [In this country you have options, speak English at work, where you need it, but at home you speak Spanish].

One participating parent also claimed the importance of keeping Spanish at home. He discussed the consequences of not maintaining Spanish within the family, “Mi hija va a crecer con puro español, y las hijas de mi hermana con puro inglés, y yo sé que eso está dividiendo la familia”, [My daughter is going to grow up with only Spanish, and my sister’s daughters with only English, and I know this is dividing the family].

Adult and children participants reported that at home, they speak almost exclusively Spanish. Even bilingual participants stated that at home, everything tended to be in Spanish. As a result, the home language and family context were important domains that

influenced the pattern of language use. One adolescent reported that he instinctively texted in English and Spanish, but if he texted from home, he would prefer to do it in Spanish. This participant commented, “Es que hago ‘texting’ desde mi casa, y como en casa hablo más español, entonces me siento más cómodo con el español”, [I text mainly from home, because at home I speak more Spanish, and then I feel more comfortable to do it in Spanish]. The last quote shows the influence that home had on the language a bilingual child chose. This influence is very strong if we consider that: first, as reported in the language survey bilingual children have better writing skills in English than in Spanish; second, ‘texting,’ as with other types of technology, usually takes place in English.

Within the home domain, mothers play an important role in the maintenance of their children’s Spanish. Mothers not only expressed that it is important to continue speaking in Spanish, but they also fostered literacy in this language at home. Four out of the six mothers that I interviewed got at least a high school degree in Mexico. Those mothers with more years of formal education are the ones who reported having different literacy practices in Spanish with their young children (e.g., teaching the alphabet and, reading aloud). Generally, these activities ended when their children entered school. This could show the parents’ belief that, once their children start school it is only the teacher responsibility to teach them. When a participating mother stated, “Pues aquí, en la casa, se aprende el español”, [Here, at home, we learn Spanish], she meant more than developing the speaking skills in Spanish. The same participant spoke about her literacy practices at home with her daughter,

*Desde que mi hija era chiquita yo le enseñé...yo le enseñé las letras, y también a juntar las sílabas. Así es como aprendió a leer en español. Cuando estaba chiquita, en ‘Kinder’, y tampoco sabía leer, pues entonces se basaba en los dibujos de*

*cuentos y los iba contando más o menos lo que iba pasando. Cuando ella iba a entrar a 'Kinder' ella ya sabía las letras. Y cuando iba a entrar a primero ella ya sabía leer.*

(I taught my daughter since she was little...I taught her the letters and how to put syllables together. This is how she learned to read in Spanish. When she was little, and she was in Kindergarten, and she did not know how to read, she was creating her own story basing on the book pictures. She had already known the letters when started Kindergarten and by first grade she knew how to read).

For children acquiring language and literacy skills in two languages, the situation is complex. Different literacy skills and languages may be used in different contexts.

Participating children mainly speak and listen to Spanish at home, but read in English.

When I asked 28 El Palmar children which kind of reading material they had at home, most participating children reported they had mostly Spanish reading materials, including magazines and newspapers. Few participants mentioned having books at home. However, when asked if they read those materials, most responded they did not because of their difficulties to read in Spanish. Those participants usually read materials which were mostly in English. These materials, mainly related to school work, are textbooks, test preparation worksheet and passages, and school library books (Díaz & Bussert-Webb, submitted for publication). A child said, "I can read only in English because, in school, they taught me to read in English." These ideas were reinforced by the comments made by a tutorial center employee, "They [tutorial students] read in English because they were taught in English." However, literacy practices at home related to religion were predominantly in Spanish. Interviewed parents and children usually have a Spanish version of the Bible and they pray in Spanish.

Spanish was also the most heard language in social events and festivities that take place in El Palmar. Even children and youth, who usually speak in English in more structured contexts (e.g. the after-school tutorial center, and school), reported communicating in Spanish during social events. As discussed above, these events are generally advertised in Spanish. During data gathering, I was invited to a celebration that took place at the tutorial center on church grounds. The guest musical group, well-known in the Rio Grande Valley region, had a song repertoire exclusively in Spanish with mostly songs originally from Mexico and other Latin American countries. The people who were in this celebration were the students who regularly attended the after- school tutorial center, their parents, the tutorial program staff, and people from the outside who had some kind of relation to the colonia. The language most heard among children and their parents and between staff members and guests was Spanish.

Data from interviews provided similar findings, confirming that Spanish is the predominant language during social events and festivities. A parent participant described *Las Posadas* celebration in El Palmar. *Las Posadas*, Spanish for “the inns,” is a nine-day celebration for many Catholic Mexicans and takes place during Christmas time. She said, “Cuando celebramos *Las Posadas* es como estar en México... todo es en español”, [When we celebrate *Las Posadas* is like being in Mexico...everything is in Spanish].

However, in other contexts of El Palmar, English is the dominant language. In the after-school tutorial center, the use of English is more evident. All staff members who work in this center are bilingual. They usually communicate with parents in Spanish, but with the students who participate in the program in English. By observing and taking field notes in this center, I noticed that students, generally elementary students from grade 1 through 5, spoke in Spanish with their peers but in English with the staff members. Both academic and

behavioral instructions were in English. Instructional materials on the wall were also in English. This observation was supported by what one staff member mentioned. She said, “The instruction is in English....we help children in Spanish only if they bring homework in Spanish.” These data demonstrated a school language practice extended to the tutorial center.

The director of the after- school tutorial program supports the idea that English has to be learned as soon as possible. Another staff member, who is also a bilingual certified teacher, expressed the director’s ideas as follow: “Ella ha recomendado a varios papás que saquen a sus niños de los programas bilingües; les está recomendando que vayan a la escuela y los cambien a puro inglés”, [She is recommending several parents to remove their children from the bilingual programs; she is recommending them to go to the schools and place their children in all-English classrooms]. The same staff member also discussed that parents also emphasize the importance that their children learn English. She reported, “Para los padres es más importante que el niño aprenda el inglés, a que mantenga los dos idioma; yo creo que quieren ver resultados rápidos, que aprendan el inglés rápido”, [For the parents is more important that their children learn English rather than they maintain both languages; I believe that they want to see fast results, that their children learn English fast]. Certainly, the tutorial program director and some parents believe that bilingual programs could be a waste of time; from their perspective, children need to learn English as soon as possible.

One staff member in the after-school tutorial center is also a resident of El Palmar and personally knows some of her students as neighbors or family friends. She explained how knowing the children and families from a more familiar context influences the language children use with her during the tutorial classes. She commented, “Los que no me conocen muy bien, me ven más como maestra, y entonces yo veo que me hablan en

inglés... tratan de hacer el esfuerzo de hablarme en inglés, pero los que me conocen de más tiempo me hablan en español”, [Those children who do not know me very well, they see me as a teacher and thus, they talk to me in English... They try hard to talk in English, but those who know me for longer time, they talk to me in Spanish]. This comment clearly demonstrates that children associated academic instruction with English, and sociability, or friendship, with Spanish.

Language compartmentalization was evident when the same staff member explained language use during some outdoor recreational activities after the children finished their homework at the tutorial center. She said, “Cuando salimos de ahí [centro de tutorías] y es en inglés, y seguimos con el inglés. Pero ya jugando, el español se nos hace más fácil”, [When we leave the tutorial center, where everything is in English, we continue in English. But once we start playing, the communication becomes easier in Spanish]. A shift from English into Spanish seemed to be a natural process when children start playing certain sports, e.g. soccer, with their friends in a playground that it is across the street from the tutorial center. This street could represent a physical separation between schooling (English) and playing (Spanish).

Finally, participants also made transparent the influence that school had on shifting their heritage language into English. Following is what a fifth grader, attending a transitional bilingual program reported,

*El español fue mi primer idioma. Pero cuando comencé la escuela aprendí el inglés. Y tenía todas las clases en inglés. Y aprendí el inglés porque todas las maestras me acostumbraron a leer puros libros en inglés, porque la clase es de inglés y la maestra dice que leamos en inglés.... Cuando vamos a la “library” sólo los niños*

*que nomás saben en español pueden sacar libros en español. Nosotros tenemos que sacarlos en inglés.*

[Spanish was my first language. But I learned English when I entered school. All my classes were in English. I learned English because all my teachers made me read books in English. The teacher said that we need to read in English because the classes were in English...When we go the library only those children who know only Spanish can check out books in Spanish. We need to check out books in English].

A participating mother narrated her daughter's experience at school, 12 years ago. Her daughter was 8 years old when she entered school in the U.S.; before that she attended school in Mexico. This mother said,

*Cuando mi hija entró a la escuela me platicaba que la maestra la castigaba si hablaba en español. Así que ella aprendió porque aprendió, tuvo que aprender a fuerzas, tuvo que aprender porque la maestra la castigaba si no hablaba en inglés.*

[My daughter told me that when she entered school, her teacher punished her if she did not speak English in the classroom. Thus, she struggled to learn, she was pushed to learn; she learned because the teacher would have punished her if she did not speak English].

I asked her daughter, who was also a participant in this study, about her experience when she entered school in the U.S. and this is what she narrated,

*Pues me acuerdo bien de esa experiencia. Cuando estaba en cuarto grado, era mi segundo año aquí en Estados Unidos... y la maestra nos prohibió hablar español. Hacíamos actividades en grupo y ella decía que estaba prohibido hablar español, ella quería escuchar puro inglés. Entonces, había un grupito que éramos los que*

*estábamos en nuestro primer-segundo año aquí, y no nos tenía mezclados con todos los demás; nomás nosotros estábamos aislados. Y un día mis compañeros de grupo estaban hablando en español, entonces la maestra volteó hacia nosotros, y sin preguntar quién fue, a mi me dijo que me fuera al rincón, y que me parara allí hasta que ella quisiera.*

[I remember very well that experience. I was in fourth grade, my second year in the U.S....and the teacher prohibited us to speak Spanish. We used to do group activities; she wanted to hear only English. My group members, who all had only one or two years in this country, were isolated. Everybody else was mixed. One day, my group members were talking in Spanish, then the teacher turned around, and without asking, she told me to remain in the classroom corner as long as she wanted].

Most participating parents reported not being informed of the bilingual programs that their children were attending at school. However, they showed a positive attitude toward bilingualism. One father commented, “Yo tengo amigos que me preguntan, *¿para qué hablan español? Si con el inglés viven en U.S., ¿para qué quieren español? Yo les digo están equivocados, que mis hijos van a tener mejor trabajo que los suyos*”. [My friends ask me, *why do you speak Spanish? If knowing English is enough in the U.S., why do you want to speak Spanish?* I tell them that they are wrong, that my children are going to have better job opportunities than theirs].

Another participant commented on the importance of being bilingual, mainly outside of the Rio Grande Valley. She also made clear, that Spanish is not valued in this region. She said,



*Es muy importante. Yo digo que una persona bilingüe es muy valiosa, porque tiene más capacidad para comunicarse... No hay que encerrarse como aquí que es el puro inglés. Los de habla hispana, no digo raza, están como una plantita. Vete al norte, y verás que te buscan para intérprete, traductora, en las conferencias.*

(It is very important. A bilingual person is very valuable because he/she has the capacity to communicate... It should not have to be like here, where everything is in English. Spanish speakers, and I am not referring to a race, are like plants. However, if you go to the north you will easily find a job as an interpreter or as a translator at conferences).

#### *Language Use Inside and Outside of El Palmar*

Most participants expressed that they felt comfortable with the use of Spanish in the colonia. Participants commented that Spanish is the language most heard and, that everywhere they go in the colonia for non-academic purposes, everybody speaks Spanish. Participants demonstrated also being aware that the colonia's environment does not threaten their first language. This idea is clearly stated in one participant's comment, "Yo creo que es imposible perder el español, aquí donde vivimos; vas a la tienda y también te hablan en español", [I believe that it is impossible to lose the Spanish language here, where we live; if you go to the store, they also speak Spanish]. Another participant supported the same idea and further made evidence of the prevalence of Spanish in El Palmar. This participant said, "Since I remember, the people in El Palmar only speak Spanish; if you tell something in English they won't understand."

Nevertheless, other participants, who self-reported being bilinguals, showed concerns about losing their English skills. A participant parent, who had lived in Southern California, spoke of backsliding in English, "Nosotros fuimos a California, allí es donde yo

agarré el inglés, el inglés que hablo, pero ya se me está olvidando, porque aquí no lo practico”, [We went to California, there is where I learned English, the English that I speak, but I am forgetting it because I do not practice it here]. This type of concern came from mainly adult participants who had been exposed to English at certain points of their lives, but did not have the opportunities to practice it since they moved to El Palmar.

Even though most adult participants reported being pleased with the use of mostly Spanish in the colonia, they also made transparent their awareness that their language needs are different once they leave El Palmar. Outside of the colonia English becomes more necessary for them. For instance, parent participants commented that sometimes they need to visit bigger stores or public offices in Brownsville, the city of about 139,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), that surrounds El Palmar. Even though these participants did not notice a big difference in language use between El Palmar and Brownsville, in certain circumstances they became more conscious of their lack of English language skills.

Communication in English becomes harder for El Palmar residents when they have to travel farther than sites located in the Rio Grande Valley. A participant, who left El Palmar to live in other regions of the U.S., narrated his language experiences as follow,

*Yo empecé a desarrollar el inglés cuando salí de aquí (El Palmar). Lo podía hablar (el inglés), no lo tenía bien practicado, pero nunca se me hizo a mi útil, siendo que aquí en el Valle el idioma principal es el español. Pero empecé a salir fuera, a los 16 años y me empecé a dar cuenta que el inglés es el idioma principal en los Estados Unidos.*

(I started improving my English when I left here [El Palmar]. I was able to speak English, despite not mastering it, but I never felt that it was useful for me since here,

in the Valley, the main language is Spanish. But I realized that English is the main language in the U.S. when I was 16 years old and started travelling farther).

Many other El Palmar residents sometimes experience language barriers between their homes and the outside world. To face these languages difficulties, participants used different resources. One of these resources is *language brokering* (Tse, 1996) in which bilingual youth mediate language interaction and facilitate their parents' access to a dominant English environment.

### *Children and Parents as Language Brokers*

The use of the term *language brokers* is from Tse (1996), who described language brokers as those children who “interpret and translate between culturally and linguistically different people and mediate interactions in a variety of situations including those found at home and school” (p. 226). Morales and Hanson (2005), Orellana, (2001, 2009), Orellana, Dorner, and Pulido (2003), Tse (1996) and Weisskirch (2005) have applied this term to children of immigrants who help their parents or other adults to translate or interpret a variety of documents from English to their parents' first language. In this study, I extend the term *language brokers* to adults who also translate or interpret for other adults and children.

Most of the participating children were language brokers for their parents in many different settings in and out of home. At home, children helped their parents to translate letters and other school documents, medical forms or bills, and forms or documents from court or other governmental offices. At home also, they translated for their parents and younger siblings while they watched television or for their homework. But language brokering was not limited to family members, as demonstrated in the comment from a youth participant, “I help my mother to translate, but sometimes also neighbors come to my

house with letters from the Court...and they asked me what it says because they know I know English.” Children also mediated a language interaction between neighbors and their parents as described by another child,

*Yo una vez ayudé a mi papá cuando fue a trabajar, y vino un “gringo” y quería que le ayudara, y como mi papá no entendía le expliqué que el “gringo” quería que le ayudara a mover un trampolín para llevárselo....y así le ayudamos a subirlo a su “troca”.*

(Once I helped my father while he was working and a *gringo* came asking for help and as my father did not understand what he was asking I explained to him that he wanted to move a trampoline. We then helped him to get it in his truck).

El Palmar children also translated for their parents when they attended public settings outside the colonia, such as big stores, courts and their schools, and where not everybody spoke Spanish. Translation tasks varied from relatively simple things such as asking for the name of items in a store or directions in the street of how to arrive to a specific place, to more sophisticated translations at the court or schools. Parents emphasized the important role their children played while translating during parent-teacher conferences and open houses. Since all elementary schools that serve El Palmar children had bilingual personnel, language mediation between parents and teachers was reported to be used mostly at high school level. For example, one parent said,

*Cuando iba a las escuelas primarias de mis hijos no había problema pues las maestras hablan español, pero ahora es diferente pues muchos no saben, son puro inglés, por eso voy a las ‘open house’ con mis hijos, para que me expliquen lo que los maestros están diciendo.*

(I did not have any problem when I used to go to my children's primary schools because the teachers knew Spanish, but now is different [referring to middle and high schools] because several of the teachers do not know [Spanish]. They are all English, and that is why I go to 'Open House' with my children, so that they can explain to me what the teachers are saying).

Children also translated for those recent immigrant class members at school. A fifth grader narrates his experiences as language broker, "A veces vienen niños que no saben inglés...ellos me preguntaban que había dicho la maestra y yo les explico que dijo y se los digo en español", [Sometimes children come to the classroom and they do not know English...they asked me what the teacher had said, and I explain to them in Spanish].

In the previous quote, one can see how El Palmar children function as language brokers. However, language brokering is not limited to children in the colonia. Sometimes parents also translate and interpret, mainly for families whose parents are usually second immigrant generation and who are able to speak Spanish, but who lack the academic skills in this language. That is the example of one participating family. The children of this family are third generation immigrants. While taking Spanish as a foreign language requirement in high-school, they needed to ask their neighbors, whose first language was Spanish, for interpretation of their homework. Their mother reported, "I can speak Spanish, but I cannot help my children when they are taking Spanish courses; my children also struggle with Spanish, so I send them to my *comadre*'s <sup>1</sup> house for help." Like in the other

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<sup>1</sup> The term *comadre* is given as f. noun. "Madrina de bautizo de una criatura", [Godmother of one's child] or, f. fam. "Vecina y amiga con quien tiene otra mujer más trato y confianza que con las demás", [Female neighbor or friend.] Diccionario de la Lengua Española [electronic version].

examples, this mother was using others' language brokering skills and also valued their *linguistic funds of knowledge* that promoted a connection between home and school (Smith, 2002).

Finally, parents who have poor English language skills use different resources to help their children with their homework in English. They either send their children to the after-school tutorial center located on church grounds, or ask their older children to assist their younger ones. As stated previously, several parents reported attending the English classes offered in the colonia for adults, for the purpose of helping their children with homework. Two of the mothers interviewed commented that when their children were in the lower grades, they were bringing books in English from school to be read at home. As neither parents nor children were able to read in English, those mothers said that they had to make up the stories, based on the books' pictures or drawings. One of those mothers said, "Cuando mis hijos eran chiquitos, y no sabían leer, entonces me basaba en los dibujos de el cuento y les inventaba la historia", [When my children were little, and they did not know how to read, I invented the story, just centering on the drawings of the book].

### *Language and Religion*

Understanding language use in a religious context was not in the original plans of this study and thus I had not included questions regarding language and religion in the original set of interview questions. The idea of going further into this topic arose as a consequence of its recurrent and spontaneous appearance across different interviews. Participants naturally linked language use in their religious practices. As a result of these unexpected findings, I acted as a *bricoleur* (Lévi-Strauss, 1974), utilized the useful information that was at hand, and thus, decided to interview people who were working in one church of El Palmar.

Findings related to this topic were the following. Religious practices at home were reported to be almost exclusively in Spanish. Several participants stated that they read the Bible and prayed in Spanish. One interviewee said, “I was taught to pray in Spanish, so it is easy for me to pray in Spanish... sometimes I asked myself if God understands all the languages, but since I know he does, I do not have to pray in English, I can pray in Spanish; it is easier for me.” Participants reported they usually were taught to pray in Spanish by their parents or grandparents as an oral tradition. One child commented, “Mi mamá me enseñó a decir los rezos en español y me los sé de memoria”, [My mother taught me how to pray in Spanish and I learned prayers by memorization].

Various participating children and parents demonstrated having a strong connection between Spanish and religion. This manifestation was evident not only in those participants who were dominant in Spanish, but also in those who were bilingual or even more skilled in English. For instance, an adult interviewee, who considered herself bilingual, stated, “Cuando me dirijo al Padre lo hago en español; quizás sea por la imagen de Padre religioso que tengo, pues las reglas de la iglesia yo siempre las he aprendido en el idioma español”, [I always address the Priest in Spanish; perhaps this is due to the image of Priest that I have since I have learned all the church rules in Spanish]. Another adult interviewee narrated his experience praying when he was in a military mission in Iraq, “Cuando hacíamos una misión en Irak, nos juntábamos y rezábamos el Padre Nuestro ... ellos lo decían en inglés y yo lo pronunciaba en español por dentro... así es como me identifico más yo”, [When we were in a mission in Iraq, we got together and prayed Our Father... They said it in English and I said it silently in Spanish... This is the way I identify myself better]. Both participants showed a solid relationship between language and religious identity (Farr & Guerra, 1995);

they also demonstrated that Spanish is the preferred language to use during religious practices independently of the context.

Catechism (*doctrina*) classes take place at the Catholic Church twice a week. One participant, who was one of the founders of El Palmar and a former Catechism teacher, reported that few years ago, these classes were taught only in Spanish. However, due to parent requests, the Catechism classes are currently offered either in English, Spanish, or both languages. According to one of the current Catechism teachers, the parents are the ones who decide in which language they want their children to receive these classes. This teacher further discussed that she did not understand very well why parents sometimes want their children in English classes if those children had already learned how to pray in Spanish. She gave the following explanation,

*Muchos niños saben español. No más los padres los quieren en inglés por alguna razón, no sé cual sea... yo siempre les di la opción de que escogieran uno u el otro, o si querían un rezo en inglés, otro rezo en español, dependía de ellos.*

(Many children already know Spanish. For a reason that I do not understand, several parents want their children in English classes...I always gave the students the option to choose one or the other language, or if they wanted to alternate their prayers in English, and then in Spanish, that depended on them).

As described in the section *Data collection settings* in Chapter III, the church offers two services in Spanish and one in English and Spanish (the bilingual service). Several of the interviewees expressed discontent about having a bilingual service. This service is relatively new in the colonia, since it started in 2009. Before that, the same service was given only in Spanish. When I asked several participants why they were not pleased with that change, the responses varied. One person claimed, “La gente está inconforme....



porque algunos sólo hablan español ... con esta nueva misa hay gente que viene de afuera, y habla puro inglés...”, [People are displeased,...because some only speak Spanish...many people from outside come to this mass and they speak only English....]. Another person, a bilingual teenager, also referring to the bilingual service said, “I do not like it, because he [the priest] says it in English ....and I do not understand what he says... and then he says it in Spanish...” The latter quote demonstrated that, independent of the person’s dominant language (this person chose to be interviewed in English), Spanish is still the preferred language to be used during religious practices.

As a result of hearing several people’s dissatisfaction toward the bilingual mass, I decided to interview one church staff member to ask him about the reasons that had led him offer a bilingual service in a community where 98% of the population speaks Spanish. He gave three main reasons for the creation of this new service. The following is how he explained the first reason,

*Una razón es que para todos los niños y los jóvenes de El Palmar, su primera lengua es el inglés. Entre ellos hablan inglés, cuando hablan con sus papás tratan de hablar en español. En la escuela es inglés, cuando vienen a misa, muchas veces los traen forzados sus papás a misa los domingos, entonces vienen con sus teléfonos y se ponen a ‘textear’, en todo están, menos en misa. Y entonces como es en español, automáticamente les da flojera, hacer un esfuerzo por entender el español, entonces se desconectan durante la misa.*

(One reason is that English is the first language for all El Palmar children and youth. Among them, they speak in English. When they speak to their parents they try to speak in Spanish. In school they speak in English. When they come here, many times they come to church on Sundays obligated by their parents, and thus, they

come with their phones and they start texting. They are everywhere but in the church. And then, if the service is in Spanish, they automatically become lazy. They have to make an effort to understand Spanish and thus, they disconnect during the service).

He then explained a second reason, “varias gentes que viven aquí, en El Palmar, se van a otras iglesias porque dan misa en inglés....Entonces estamos perdiendo a esa gente”, [Several people who live here, in El Palmar, are attending other churches because they offer masses in English...therefore, we are losing people]. Finally, he gave a third reason, “También hay una razón económica y es que dónde más recursos económicos entran, es en la misa de inglés”, [There is also an economical reason and that reason is that a service in English will provide us with more economical resources]. By stating this idea, the church leader could be seeing those who come to El Palmar church service from outside the colonia as people with better English skills and more economical resources, and thus he associates English with more money.

### *Language and Identity*

Several participants linked Spanish language with the expression of cultural identity. Parents commented that speaking Spanish at home guarantees that their children keep their Mexican culture and traditions. For instance, one participating parent commented,

*Desde chiquito hay que decirle al niño que es importante que hable español...La culpa de que los niños pierdan el español no la tiene la escuela, la culpa la tienen los padres... Eso es ignorancia de los padres porque ellos dicen “a él no le hable en español, porque ya no lo entiende” ¿Y cómo se comunican, si es que la madre no habla inglés? Y así también le están quitando la cultura, la música, la comida, el lenguaje, la tradición, todo.*

(We have to tell our children, when they are little, that it is important they speak Spanish...The school is not to blame that children lose their Spanish. The parents are the responsible ones...This is due to the parents' ignorance, because parents are the ones who say "Do not talk to him in Spanish because he does not understand it," and then, how are they communicating since their mother does not speak English? Acting like this, parents are taking away their children culture, the music, food, the language, the traditions, everything).

This participant, who has lived in El Palmar for more than 30 years, but has also lived in Mexico and California, made a statement not heard from other adults in the study. As described in the previous section, *Language Use in Different Domains*, the language mostly spoken by parents to their children is Spanish. Perhaps, in this description, she might be bringing her experiences when she lived in other places in the U.S. Nevertheless, what she is strongly claiming in this quote is that language cannot be separated from culture, which consists, in part, of the values and traditions (Nieto & Bode, 2008) that El Palmar residents brought from Mexico.

Children also mentioned that knowing Spanish allows them to communicate with those family members who live in Mexico. During their visits to Mexico, they feel that they still belong to that culture because they are able to communicate in their heritage language. For instance, a seventh grader commented, "When I go to Mexico I have to talk to my grandpas and cousins in Spanish cause they do not know English...I do not want them to laugh about me because I do not know Spanish and think that I am a *pocho*<sup>2</sup>."

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<sup>2</sup> *Pocho* is a derogatory term used by Mexicans to describe Chicanos who do not speak Spanish or do not speak it properly (Kanellos, Weaver & Fábregat, 1994).

Other participants considered themselves to be bilinguals and also felt comfortable with having two cultures. This is the case of one participant who was born in Mexico, but raised in the U.S. Following is what she expressed about feeling bilingual and bicultural,

*Yo estoy muy feliz con mi cultura y mi cultura es ser bilingüe. Ser bilingüe es saber hablar los dos idiomas correctamente. Mi cultura es única. Yo me siento méjico-americana. Yo nací en México, y viví allá mis primeros ocho años... Pero yo siento que soy de aquí, del Valle... Yo identifico mis raíces con el español, pero estoy viviendo en Estados Unidos, donde la mayoría habla inglés.*

(I am very happy with my culture, and my culture is to be bilingual. Being bilingual is to speak two languages correctly. My culture is unique. I feel Mexican-American. I was born in Mexico, and lived there until I was eight years old...But I feel that I am from here, from the Valley...I identify my roots with Spanish, but I am living in the U.S, where the majority speaks English).

A participant, who is a recent immigrant, offered the following about those residents of El Palmar, who denied their Mexican roots. She said,

*Lo que me da más tristeza es que ya no saben ni lo que son. No tienen una identidad y yo lo veo eso muy triste, que no es bueno para uno, no es bueno, porque no sabes si eres mexicana o si eres americana...Yo he escuchado gente que se casa con americanos y dicen se cambian el apellido al inglés para mejorar su apellido y hasta hay otros que dicen lo hacen para mejorar la raza.*

(What is making me sad is that they do not even know what they are. They do not have an identity. They do not know if they are Mexican or American...I have heard

of people who married Americans and they change their last name to English to improve it, and others say they change their last names to improve their race).

El Palmar residents who moved out of the state or the country provided a different perspective. That is the case of a participant, who left El Palmar to another state at the age of seven and returned to the colonia when he entered high school. He stated, “Cuando me fui de El Palmar de chico, era aceptado que yo tenía que hablar el inglés pues era Colorado; yo soy un caso diferente de los otros jóvenes de aquí, pues yo fui separado de la cultura por un tiempo”, [When I moved from El Palmar as a child, it was expected that I had to speak in English because I was in Colorado; I am a different case from other youth who lived here since, for a while, I was separated from the culture]. For this participant, being immersed in a different ethnic environment meant to be isolated from his heritage language and the Mexican-American culture.

It was also important to hear the perspective from a non-Latino person who was born and raised in a Northern state, but had lived in El Palmar for 12 years when he worked in a community church. When this person was asked about the attitude that El Palmar people had toward Spanish and English, he answered the following:

*Their attitudes toward Spanish are the same as toward Mexico—a matter of deep love of culture, of their home. English is a nuisance that they understand they need to get by, and that their children certainly need. It is also a barrier in terms of being able to fully integrate into the U.S. system.*

Other participants expressed their need to learn English in order to be integrated in the American society. Following are the comments of two El Palmar residents in reference to this issue, “I personally believe that I would rather speak English here because the official language is English, and this country supposes to be Only-English” and,

*Si vives en México el idioma es el español, pero si vives aquí, en Estados Unidos, va a ser el inglés...Tú vienes de México con el morral lleno, pero el otro vacío. Tienes que echarle al morral de inglés también, porque el de español ya está lleno.... Si tú sacas dinero mejicano acá no tiene valor; tu lenguaje tampoco tiene valor acá.*

(If you live in Mexico the language is Spanish, but if you live here, in the United States, English will be the language... You come from Mexico with one bag full, but the other bag empty. You need to fill the English bag too, because the Spanish one is already full.... Your Mexican currency does not have any value here; your language [Spanish] has any value neither).

Changes in language attitudes can be observed in participating children with different ages. One finding in this study that supported this idea was that, while elementary children showed a preference for English, teenagers demonstrated a more positive attitude toward Spanish. For instance, when a participating primary school student was asked about her language of preference, she responded, “I like English better because I learn everything in English and Spanish is boring.” However, participating adolescents demonstrated a more positive perception of Spanish. A young adult participant narrated this change of attitude throughout his lifetime, “As a child, I refused to talk in Spanish...My friends at school laughed about my accent...But now I can see how important is to speak Spanish. I can communicate with my people.”

A reflection made by a staff member participant confirmed this change in the attitude toward Spanish later in life. She told what she has observed throughout the years she worked at the tutorial center,

*Creo, mientras están en ‘elementary’ tienen que hablar más inglés. Pero una vez que entran a ‘middle school’, o ‘high school’, las maestras no están ahí*

*cuidándolos tanto para que no hablen español. Entonces si noto que vuelve más el español, sobretudo por la parte social.*

(I believe that children who attend elementary school have to speak more English.

But once they enter in middle or high school, their teachers do not control too much if they speak Spanish or not. Thus, I notice that children go back to their Spanish, mainly because of their social life).

The last statement can be interpreted as follows. Once they are teenagers, children become more influenced by their peers in determining language usage (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1998). Although English continues to be the predominant language of instruction in school, Spanish is the language that El Palmar youth prefer to use with friends and family members.

#### Summary of the Findings

The analysis of the findings can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Comparative analysis of data provided by the 1990 and 2000 versions of the Census, demonstrated a changing pattern of language use in El Palmar. Even though the percentage of people who spoke Spanish was large by year 2000 (96.9%) and the percentage of people who spoke only English was small (3%), the number of persons who “do not speak English very well” has diminished by 42.5% (persons five to 17 years) and by 20.8% (persons 18 years and over). These data demonstrate that mainly young people have improved their English abilities since 1990 and thus, the English-speaking population in the colonia has grown.
- (2) Although Spanish continues to be the dominant language in El Palmar, its usage varies with the different immigrant generations and in the different domains. The growth of bilingualism was observed mainly among the second immigration

generation, who usually are children or young adults. The level of their English abilities is in relation to the number of years participants had in the U.S. schools. On the other hand, Spanish continues to be the dominant language among first immigrant generation residents. Regarding the language use in different domains, while Spanish was the prevalent language at home, with friends, and in community social events, English was dominant in school related activities (e.g., assistance with homework at the after-school tutorial center). Church services, which usually were only in Spanish since the foundation of El Palmar, have been lately offered also in English.

- (3) Despite the growth of bilingualism, biliteracy development was not so evident in the colonia. On one hand, the analysis of the linguistic landscape demonstrated biliteracy at the community level. Signs and other literacy resources (e.g., fliers and newspapers) were in both languages. On the other hand, the scarcity of books in Spanish was obvious. Moreover, biliteracy at the individual level was barely present. Data from language use surveys, interviews, and observations showed that only those participants who had attended school in Mexico and in the U.S., self-reported biliterates.
- (4) Factors that lead to maintenance or loss of Spanish were also identified. Home, friend influence, and a positive attitude toward their heritage language and culture are the factors that help maintain Spanish in the colonia. On the other hand, schooling, other community institutions, such as church and small businesses, and the scarcity of reading material in Spanish for children contribute to a language shift into English.



(5) Thus, results demonstrated that while the use of Spanish in El Palmar was mainly for communication among family members and friends, English was seen as the language of power and associated with schooling and business. In this study, *language brokering* (Orellana, 2009; Tse, 1996) has been identified as an interface between these two language worlds.

These are the primary results of the study. In the following chapter I will discuss the findings, and will relate them with the previous research and theoretical framework perspectives that guide this dissertation.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

In this chapter I analyze and discuss the findings of this study, which I interpret within the context of existing research and of the theories that frame this study. The theories were described in more details in Chapter I, section *Theoretical Framework*, and consist of New Literacy Studies traditions (Barton, 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2008; Heath, 1983; Street, 2005), funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Smith, 2002), linguistic landscapes (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), and language shift (Fishman, 2001).

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section I elaborate on bilingualism and biliteracy at the community and individual levels. In the second section I analyze and discuss the factors that contribute to maintenance or loss of the Spanish language in El Palmar. In the third section I examine *language brokering* as a bridge between the Spanish and English worlds. In the fourth section I elaborate on the final conclusions.

#### Section I

##### Bilingualism and Biliteracy in El Palmar

This section addresses one of the two main questions of this study: “To which extent have bilingualism and biliteracy developed in El Palmar?” As stated in Chapter IV, a controversy exists in the use of this terminology in the fields of bilingual education and second language acquisition. I adopt the terms *bilingualism* as the ability of a person to speak two languages (Bialystok, 2004), and *biliteracy* as “any or all instances in which communication occurs in two, or more, languages in and around writing” (Hornberger, 2003, p. xii). Bilingualism and biliteracy in El Palmar will be discussed at the community

and individual levels. Since El Palmar is a Latino community in the U.S., the two languages in consideration are Spanish and English.

### *Bilingualism in the Community*

Bilingualism and biliteracy are primary examples of the preservation of a home culture, including language (Portes, 2009). Comparative analysis of data provided by the 1990 and 2000 versions of the U.S. Census, demonstrated that English speaking ability has increased in El Palmar, mainly among youth, with ages ranging between 5 and 17 years old. Even though the analysis of Census data contributed to my understanding of bilingualism in El Palmar, the Census information is limited since it focuses on the ability to speak English and not on the use of non-English languages (Linton, 2003). Census data on residents' abilities to speak Spanish were not available for the colonia. Moreover, the U.S. Census did not provide data on the English speaking abilities in children under the age of 5. Unfortunately, data from 2010 were not available when this dissertation was finished, but as the U.S. Census Bureau releases next version, the potential increase of English speaking ability in the colonia could be further explored.

The language use survey and interview data also showed that English speaking abilities have increased more among youth. Considering that most adults speak only Spanish, and this is the language most spoken at home, more than likely, the bilingual youth population started speaking English once they entered school (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). El Palmar children generally do not have the language support at home, and in the community, to develop bilingual competencies before they enter school, as demonstrated in other Latino communities (Reyes, 2006).

Fishman (2001) argues that the key to the maintenance of a minority language in a community consist of a successful cross-generational transfer of such language. The

analysis of bilingualism in El Palmar indicates that Spanish is being maintained at the community level, despite English being spoken by a greater number of youth during the Census period between 1990 and 2000. The findings of this study also indicate that El Palmar residents of all ages continue speaking Spanish. Older members of the community demonstrated passing the Spanish language to younger generations. However, the language transmission from one generation to the next is not the only factor that helps maintain the Spanish language in El Palmar, as discussed in the section, *Factors that Help Maintain Spanish*. Moreover, the colonia's characteristics, and that of its surroundings, help to maintain their residents' heritage language (Bills, Hernández-Chávez & Hudson, 1993; Martínez, 2003). For example, El Palmar is within the limits of a city where 91.3% are of Latino origin. This demographic characteristic is not so different from the rest of the County, where the Latino population is 84.3% (U.S. Census, 2000).

#### *Bilingualism within Individuals*

Another way to analyze bilingualism is across immigrant generations. Since El Palmar is relatively new and was founded in 1962 by recent immigrants (information retrieved from the Cameron County Court in February, 2009), its population is mainly constituted by either first or second generation residents. Data derived from the Census analysis, and then confirmed by surveyed and interviewed participants, demonstrated an increase of bilingualism among the second immigrant generation. Second generation participants self-reported having English and Spanish speaking abilities. These data followed the same trend in nationwide studies in the Latino population. Surveys conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center among a total of more than 14,000 Latino adults in the last decade demonstrated a dramatic increase in English-language ability from one generation of Latinos to the next. The surveys showed that fewer than one in four (23%) Latino

immigrants are able to speak English very well. However, fully 88% of their U.S.-born adult children report that they speak English very well (Hakimzadeh & Cohn, 2007).

Data provided by the Pew Hispanic Center and Census Bureau, focused only on English language abilities. However, other studies that used large sample surveys and proficiency testing among second generation centered on English and heritage language abilities. For instance, Portes and Hao (1998) and Portes and Schauffler (1994), found that second-generation immigrant children from Latin America showed more probability of preserving their parents' linguistic heritage when compared with other ethnic groups. However, fewer than half of those second generation children were fluent bilinguals, or equally proficient in speaking and understanding both languages (Portes & Hao, 1998).

Other researchers extended their studies on Spanish maintenance to other immigrant generations. Anderson-Mejías (2005) reported maintenance of Spanish into the fifth generation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Since El Palmar is located in this geographical area, and thus, it has similar demographic characteristics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), a comparable trend in the maintenance of Spanish could be predicted for the colonia. A continuous immigration from Mexico and the contact with monolingual Spanish speakers are predictors of Spanish maintenance in El Palmar (e.g., Mora, Villa, & Dávila 2005).

Most sociologists argue that English-language acquisition is part of the process of assimilation (Rong & Preissle, 2009). During the assimilation process immigrants tend to lose their ethnic identity and reconstruct an "all American and English only" immigrant identity (p. 11). For El Palmar residents, bilingualism is more of the process, which Portes and Rumbaut (2001) called people's selective acculturation or an upward assimilation into the host culture while they retain significant elements of the origin culture. Bilingual

participants demonstrated pride of their ethnic identity and culture. I will return to this topic in the section, *Ethnic and Cultural Identity*.

### *Biliteracy in the Community*

Although bilingualism has increased in El Palmar, the development of biliteracy was not so evident. Data obtained from the Census Bureau and other nationwide studies (e.g, Mora, Villa, & Dávila 2005; Portes & Hao, 1998) generally provide information regarding only English speaking ability, and thus reflect oracy and not the reading and writing skills of a community. Biliteracy in different Latino communities in the U.S. has mainly been studied in small population samples and with qualitative methods, such as community observations and interviews with parents and children (e.g., Reese & Goldenberg, 2006; Reyes, 2006; Yanguas, 2009). Several of these studies have demonstrated that the exposure to the majority and minority languages in different contexts of a community promotes children's biliteracy development (Reese & Goldenberg, 2006; Tse, 2001).

### *Linguistic Landscape*

In this study, I analyzed biliteracy at the community level by documenting El Palmar's linguistic landscape, as well as other printed materials found in the colonia. The analysis of linguistic landscape, or the language used in signs present in public places (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), showed that biliteracy is present in the community of El Palmar. Signs located in public places and outside homes were written either in English, in Spanish, or in both languages. The role of linguistic landscape in bilingual settings has been studied in Israel (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, & Trumper-Hetch, 2006), Canada (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), Mexico (Sayer, 2010), and in Latino communities in the U.S. (Yanguas, 2009).

According to Landry and Bourhis (1997), the linguistic landscape in a community represents the language vitality of a group. Focusing on Canada, Landry and Bourhis emphasized the role of linguistic landscape in language maintenance in bilingual (English-French) settings. These authors also demonstrated that the perceived linguistic landscape is an important variable in language attitudes. Across a variety of Canadian provinces, the more French-speaking 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders perceived their linguistic landscapes to be French inclined (e.g., on signs and in advertising), the more they used this language within their social and family networks. In other words, the written language in their neighborhoods influenced their informal communication and attitude toward the minority language.

Taking into account Landry's and Bourhis' relationship between community signs and language vitality, it can be considered that both languages, English and Spanish, have vitality in the community of El Palmar. English and Spanish were visible in the public spaces of the colonia. However, it was not one of the goals of this study to measure the influence that linguistic landscape had on language attitudes, as investigated by Landry and Bourhis in French-English Canadian communities. Moreover, it would be difficult to compare results since the attitude toward French in Canada is different than that toward Spanish in the U.S. French in Canada usually has a more prestigious status, and therefore, the outcomes of a study in El Palmar would not necessarily be the same.

Even though the representation of Spanish in the linguistic landscape was evident, it was surprising how much of the linguistic landscape was in English, if we consider that most of El Palmar residents speak Spanish and a great number are not proficient in English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The fact that most of the English-only signs were mainly related to businesses shows the dominance of English in this particular domain of the

colonia. Thus, the prevalence of English in commercial activities could indicate that this language is perceived as the language of power in the community of El Palmar (Fishman, 2001).

#### *Other Printed Literacy Resources*

Another way to check biliteracy in the community is to examine other printed literacy resources, such as newspapers, bulletins, fliers, and books. The analysis of this type of literacy in El Palmar was based on New Literacy Studies traditions, which see literacy as a social practice in everyday people's life (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) and which focus on underlying social practices.

The findings of this study showed that newspapers, bulletins, and fliers were available in both languages and that they mainly targeted an adult population. On the other hand, the availability of books for children was scarce. In a study that focused on literacy in the community of El Palmar, Díaz and Bussert-Webb (submitted for publication) have demonstrated the lack of access that the colonia children have to books written in English or in Spanish. There are no public libraries in the colonia and the closest one is located within four miles. The lack of transportation among El Palmar families makes the access to these kinds of book sources difficult. In Díaz' and Bussert-Webb's study, most participating children reported that they rarely went to public libraries to check out books. The other book source in the colonia is a small library in the children's after-school tutorial center, but children were not allowed to check out books during the summer; unfortunately, summer reading loss is a primary cause of academic difficulties among children of poverty (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996).

With regard to books in Spanish, the scarcity is even more evident for El Palmar children. Most participants in Díaz' and Bussert-Webb's study reported they had Spanish



reading materials at home, including magazines and newspapers, but few participants mentioned having books. The lack of access to books in Spanish highlights another way in which immigrants, particularly immigrants of a low socio-economic status, are disadvantaged (Reese & Goldenberg, 2006). Furthermore, even though books written in Spanish were available in the community, it would not have guaranteed that children could have read them. Most participating children reported they did not read in Spanish because they have learned to read in English, and thus they lacked the reading abilities in their heritage language.

In terms of access to books written in Spanish, the situation in El Palmar is not different from that in other Latino communities. Access to reading materials in Spanish has proved to be limited in the U.S. public libraries (McQuillan, 1998) and other community settings (Pucci, 1994). Moreover, even in communities where a non-English language is spoken, schools provide little exposure to reading material in those languages (McQuillan, 1998; Pucci, 1994), making literacy development in the heritage language difficult. As noted by these authors, the lack of literacy materials in a particular language can be one of the principal casualties of language shift. Pucci (1994) examined the book collection in nine schools and several public libraries in Los Angeles area, and concluded that Spanish reading materials were far from adequate. Thus, for El Palmar families, and for other minority-language families in the U.S. with incomes below the poverty line, it is unlikely that reading materials in their heritage language exist. Similar results were documented by Neuman and Celano (2001), who studied two lower-class and two middle-class communities, and found that access to reading materials in the latter neighborhoods were 10 times greater than in the high poverty communities.

However, the lack of literacy resources in Spanish is not necessarily limited to a low socio-economic status. Reese and Goldenberg (2006) compared the availability to Spanish literacy resources in two communities with different socio-economic status located in Los Angeles, and found that the lower-income community provided substantially more support for Spanish literacy development. All these findings demonstrated that literacy development has to be placed within a broader socio-cultural context that includes more than school influences (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Although reading and writing in Spanish has its own intrinsic value and importance, actual practice can reveal more about a community's literacy orientation (Pucci, 1994). As I have observed, literacy in Spanish at the community level was tied directly to purposeful life activities (e.g., announcements for social activities) rather than to a formal educational context. This is consistent with New Literacy Studies perspectives, within which literacy is seen as a social practice, highly influenced by social and cultural factors (Street, 2005).

#### *Biliteracy within Individuals*

Findings of this study showed that biliteracy was not well developed at the individual level. Most participants self-reported they wrote and read well either in Spanish or in English, not both languages; only few stated they could write and read proficiently in both languages. Those few participants who self-reported being biliterate had developed their literacy skills in Spanish while they attended school in Mexico for several years. Yet, those who considered themselves biliterate made clear that the type of bilingual education they received in the U.S. schools was not enough to continue developing their proficiency in Spanish. Despite having self-reported as bilinguals, they felt stronger in literate activities in English. This tendency has been observed in other Latino communities. For instance, García and Díaz (1992) surveyed a group of Latino high school students in Miami and

found that, while over 75% of the participants understood English and Spanish equally well, fewer than half (46.7%) claimed to be able to write the two languages with equal proficiency. This lack of literacy development in Spanish may suggest a language shift among El Palmar residents. According to Fishman (2001), children's first languages tend to shift to the dominant language when their mother tongue is not represented in high-power spheres, for instance, formal education.

It is clear that El Palmar children lacked the school support to develop their reading and writing abilities in Spanish. This lack of support becomes more obvious if we consider the tendency to have English-only instruction in the schools and in the after-school tutorial center located in the colonia. However, this situation is not exclusive for El Palmar children. Although numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of implementing bilingual education programs, and in developing a strong academic foundation in students' native language (e.g., Rolstad, Mahoney & Glass, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002), other studies have also shown that emergent bilinguals do not receive much academic literacy support in their first language in many schools nationwide (Zehler et al., 2003).

If that is the actual situation in schools, homes and communities should play an important role in filling the literacy discontinuity in Spanish. However, since most of El Palmar families live with incomes below the poverty line, it is unlikely that resources exist to buy books and other reading materials in their heritage language. How much can be done at home to develop their children's literacy if parents do not have the economic resources, and if schools are pushing for a quick transition to reading and writing in the target language?

The factors that help to develop, or maintain, literacy in the first language of an individual can be varied. In her study with second generation young adults (ages 18 through

24) and whose heritage language was Spanish, Japanese or Cantonese, Tse (2001) found that the conditions to promote the use of biliteracy are influenced by several factors. These factors, crucial to an individual's heritage language vitality, include parental, institutional, and peer support.

Several other studies revealed the importance that out-of-school literacy practices have on children's biliteracy development. In a research with emergent bilinguals from a community of mostly Mexican recent immigrants in Arizona, Reyes (2006), revealed the impact that home and classroom interactions have on children's biliteracy development. Additionally, Burrows-Goodwill (2009) described the positive influence that out-of-school literacy practices had on Mexican-heritage English learners who were high-academic achieving second graders, and whose families' dominant language was Spanish. Burrows-Goodwill found patterns of literacy engagement with local resources during summer vacation. In Burrows-Goodwill's study, higher achieving children were involved in church or bible study community activities that required literacy in Spanish.

However, the practices that take place in El Palmar were not enough to compensate for the deficit of Spanish instruction in schools. Considering that a low socio-economic community should not be an impediment to foster Spanish literacy (Reese & Goldenberg, 2006), what are the obstacles in El Palmar that prevent literacy development in children's heritage language? This study suggested that parents see Spanish as a language with a sentimental function, rather than as an instrument to succeed (Kelman, 1971). Participating parents showed a clear interest in having their children learn English, but only a few parents perceived the benefits of having their children develop their reading and writing abilities in Spanish also. Those few parents who wanted them to be biliterate felt that their children could have better job opportunities. Although several prospective local employers ask for

bilingual applicants in newspaper advertisements, some seek for bilingual and biliterate applicants.

Obviously, the message that parents receive from teachers, and other personnel involved in their children's education, is that their children should receive instruction in Spanish only for a transitional period while they learn English, the target language. Since the schools that El Palmar children attended offered only early transitional programs, parents were not aware of the existence of other bilingual programs in which literacy in Spanish could be promoted, for instance, the two-way dual language program (Thomas & Collier, 2002). In the school district where this study took place, two-way dual language programs are currently implemented in only two out of 36 elementary schools, or less than 6% (BISD, n.d.). Students from El Palmar could attend a dual language program in the school district where these programs are being implemented, even if they are outside of the school's zoning area. However, parents must complete the requisite forms and it is possible participants and their guardians were not aware of this resource. Also, this would mean the parents would have to drive their children to and from school, since both schools are at least six miles from El Palmar.

Still, several out-of-school literacy practices in Spanish occurred in El Palmar. As scholars from New Literacy Studies traditions, I do not focus so much on acquisition of skills, as in dominant approaches, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice (Gee, 2008; Street, 2005). Few participating mothers reported teaching their young children to read in Spanish. These mothers could use their linguistic funds of knowledge (Smith, 2002), which they brought from their own schooling when they lived in Mexico. For instance, a participating mother reported, "Cuando mi hija estaba chiquita yo le enseñé las letras, y también a juntar las sílabas... Así es como aprendió a leer en español", [When

my daughter was little, I taught her the letters and how to put syllables together. This is how she learned to read in Spanish]. Similar literacy practices were described by Bartolomé (2011). Bartolomé narrates her own experiences when she was in first grade. She learned to read in English in school, and in Spanish at home. Her mother, despite her limited schooling, taught her the alphabet and letter-sound correspondences. Once Bartolomé developed those skills, she was able to decode, by herself, those words in Spanish that held meaning for her.

Unfortunately, these literacy practices at El Palmar homes usually end once children enter school. A language and literacy discontinuity between home and school was evident in what the same participant mother stated, “Pues aquí, en la casa, se aprende el español”, [Here, at home, we learn Spanish]. This last quote made transparent that this mother could be assuming that once her children started formal schooling they would learn everything in English. In order to establish continuity between schools and the community, the El Palmar residents’ funds of knowledge and their children’s literacy experiences outside of school should be acknowledged by educators (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Hull & Shultz, 2001; Smith, 2002). From New Literacy Studies perspectives, ignoring a particular literacy could demonstrate which literacy is dominant and which is marginalized (Gee, 2008).

This study suggested that El Palmar does not have the conditions to promote the use of literacy in Spanish. Batibo (2009) discusses the influence that a community has on developing the literacy of a minority language and says that, in order to develop the proficiency of such a language the communities in question must, ideally, “live in an environment which is economically sustainable, socio-politically supportive, and culturally vibrant” (p. 24). Considering the socio-economic status of El Palmar’s residents, with 58.1% families living below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), this community

may lack the conditions to promote literacy in Spanish among its youth residents. However, poverty should not always constitute a barrier for literacy development in a heritage language as demonstrated by Reese and Goldenberg (2006) in a low-income Latino community in Los Angeles. Furthermore, several well-established Latino/a educators grew up in poverty, but managed to become biliterate due to family and community support (González, 2011).

In conclusion, while bilingualism has increased, biliteracy was not evident in El Palmar. Even though many examples of biliteracy could be observed in the linguistic landscape of the community, the ability to read and write in Spanish was not evident at the individual level, based on self-reports. From these results, and taking into account Fishman's theoretical perspectives on language maintenance and language revitalization (2001), should we be able to state that there is a language shift in El Palmar?

Several findings suggest that El Palmar could be in the process of a language shift: 1- the presence of English in the linguistic landscape of the colonia, mainly in high-power spheres such as business (Fishman, 2001); 2- limited availability of books written in Spanish for children; 3-out-of-school literacy practices in Spanish that do not continue when children start formal schooling; and 4- an English-only instruction in schools and the after- school tutorial center. In the following section, the analysis and discussion of the factors that influence the Spanish vitality in El Palmar will help to further understand the development of bilingualism and biliteracy, and a possible language shift in the colonia.

## Section II

### Factors that Affect Spanish language Use in the Colonia

In this section, I return to the other main question of this study, "What are the factors that lead to maintenance or loss of Spanish in El Palmar?" A number of factors

coexisted to foster the maintenance of Spanish in the colonia. These factors are: family and home support, presence of mothers, peer influence, and ethnic, cultural, and religious identity. On the other hand, schooling, participation in an after-school program, and the implementation of bilingual services, versus Spanish-only services, in the community church, are factors that influence a language shift into English. In the following two sections, I discuss the factors that help to maintain Spanish and those that lead to a shift into English.

### *Factors that Help Maintain Spanish*

#### *Family and Home Support*

Spanish is the predominant language used among family members in El Palmar. This is the language that participating parents and children reported they used to communicate orally among family members mainly. Communication in Spanish was mostly reported, and observed, between children-adults and among adults, while communication among siblings was in both languages. Participants also expressed their need to maintain Spanish in order to communicate with their family members living in Mexico. The presence of grandparents and other adult relatives, who speak only Spanish, may represent a vital link for El Palmar children to maintain their heritage language. Similarly, in their study of bilingualism in a New York Puerto Rican community, García, Morín and Rivera (2001) demonstrated that youth used primarily Spanish for communication with older generations. Moreover, Mora, Villa, and Dávila (2005) found that older Spanish-speakers generations show a greater tendency to pass the language to their children than other non-English language groups.

Alba, Logan, Lutz, and Stults (2002) and Fishman (2001) argue that communication in a native language is usually confined to the most intimate social spheres,



such as home. Thus, the home language and family contexts are important domains to consider when attempting understanding patterns of minority language use (Arriagada, 2005). The role that home plays in maintaining a first language was also observed in Dominican (García, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla, & Paulino, 1988), Cuban (García, 2008), and Mexican (Tse, 2001) immigrant Latino communities. A larger quantitative study based on nationwide databases that included Latinos from different nationalities (Arriagada, 2005), concluded, as well, that family context strongly influences Spanish maintenance among children.

Although El Palmar families showed a certain stability in the use of Spanish at home, another study, based on a larger sample, demonstrated that patterns of language use in the home of minority language students are dynamic (Mancilla-Martínez & Kieffer, 2010). Based on the analysis of 1,538 kindergarten through eighth grade students whose parents spoke a language other than English at home, Mancilla-Martínez and Kieffer found that 50% of the children's patterns of home language use shifted toward more English use. This study's results were based on the frequency a language was spoken by the mother to the participating child, and by the child to the mother. In the study conducted in El Palmar, this pattern was not observed. The parent-children communication was more stable, and was almost always in Spanish. Indeed, it is difficult to compare two studies of a different nature. While in the present study, almost all parents were recent immigrants and spoke only Spanish, in Mancilla-Martínez' and Kieffer's research, about 40% were born in the U.S. However, it could be predicted that the pattern described by Mancilla-Martínez and Kieffer would be also observed among El Palmar family members in the near future. Because illegal immigration regulations have become stricter after the events of September 11, 2001 (Austin & Franklin, 2002), it is possible that, in the near future, the El Palmar

population will be composed mainly of second generation immigrants and up, versus mostly first generation immigrants.

Even though Spanish was the language mostly spoken in participants' homes, findings showed that their homes did not constitute a domain that promoted literacy practices in this language. Barton (2007) reinforces the importance of home in the development of children's literacy in their first language by stating, "The home is a particularly important domain in that it is the site for a wide range of activities and it is where children typically first encounter literacy events" (p. 39). Similarly, based on three case studies of four-year-old Mexican-background children, Reyes (2006) reinforced the importance of the home context in the development of emergent bilinguals' biliteracy.

Most children's literacy practices at home took place in English. As the instruction that participants received in school was generally in English, homework was also in the target language. Other evidence that showed literacy practices at home were limited was that most El Palmar families did not have books written in Spanish at home (Díaz & Bussert-Webb, submitted for publication). However, most participating children in the present study reported having few literacy practices in Spanish at home. Among those practices were "texting" and "emailing" friends and siblings in Spanish. Literacy practices in Spanish also occurred because a few mothers taught their young children how to read; however, this teaching-learning interaction in Spanish generally was interrupted when children enter school. I will return to the discussion of this topic in the next section,

#### *Presence of Mothers.*

In her ethnographic study in the south-eastern U.S., Heath (1983) provides detailed descriptions of people's uses of reading and writing in the home and in the community. Heath argues that there is a mismatch between school and home literacy practices, even in

mainstream and middle-class communities. In the particular case of El Palmar, children who enter school face a discontinuity, not only in literacy practices at home, but in the language they had used at home. Barton (2007) uses an ecological metaphor to point out that literacy learning is a dynamic process which can undergo change, because of changing relationships between individuals, groups and their social contexts. In this metaphor, Barton describes family as an ecological niche in which literacy is maintained. Taking into account the importance of literacy practices at home, and the mismatch at school, it is crucial to establish a more solid connection between home and school, as I will elaborate in the *Implications* section.

Limited literacy in Spanish could be a factor that promotes a language shift in El Palmar. According to García, Morín and Rivera (2001), the use of Spanish only for oral communication indicates erosion of this language. García et al. studied the same Puerto Rican community that Zentella (1997) had analyzed 20 years before, and concluded that certain literacy practices in Spanish tended to disappear. Since data are not available on literacy practices in Spanish years earlier in El Palmar, I cannot refer to the same type of phenomenon noted by García et al. Moreover, Zentella's and García et al.'s studies took place before the passage of NCLB Act of 2001, after which, instructions in heritage languages tended to diminish nationwide.

Differences in literacy practices and biliteracy development in various Latino communities can be explained partly by socio-economic factors. As noted by Arriagada (2005), even though family context plays an important role in the native-language use of Latino children, there are other predictive factors of language vitality; one is a family's socio-economic status. One might expect that a high socio-economic status guarantees bilingualism and biliteracy among community residents. However, several studies have

found that parents with more education and higher incomes are less likely to be fluent in a non-English language and their children experience a rapid loss of knowledge of their parents' native tongue (Mora, Villa, & Dávila, 2005; Portes & Schauffler, 1994; Stevens, 1992). Taking into account that the opposite would be also true, that immigrants with low incomes would have more probabilities of preserving their native-language, El Palmar residents are more likely to maintain their Spanish. This study confirmed that Spanish is maintained to keep an oral communication with their family members; however, literacy in Spanish at home was not so evident.

### *Presence of Mothers*

Within the home/family domain, mothers play a unique role in maintaining their children's first language. I used the tradition of New Literacy Studies to capture events involving mothers and children in their natural settings. These observations showed that, in certain circumstances, children changed their conversation from English into Spanish in the presence of their mothers. One clear example was observed at the after-school tutorial center. The tutorial center can be considered as an extension of the school agenda, including rapid transition to English-only schooling as it will be discussed in the section *Participation in After-School Programs and Implementation of Bilingual Church Services*. Despite being in a domain where English is the dominant language, children were able to switch their conversation with their peers and staff member into Spanish if their mothers, who were volunteering at the center, were present. These findings demonstrated that mothers could be more powerful in children language choices than the formal and stricter environments such as school, or in this case, the after-school tutorial center.

Another shift into Spanish occurred while bilingual children were "texting" at home. As any other type of electronic literacy, "texting" usually takes place in English. As

stated by Warschauer (2002), these literacies are important in many languages, but they are especially critical in English. Even several years ago more than 50% of the world's online content was estimated to take place in English (Cyberspeech, 1997). In this case, it was the idea of “sentirse más cómodo”, [feeling more comfortable], that made this particular participant to text in Spanish from home to someone who was bilingual as well. Even though in this case the presence of mothers may not seem related to the participant's choice to “text” in Spanish, there were other examples of technology use in which mothers could have influenced language use. For instance, children reported that they generally watched television in English with their siblings and in Spanish with their parents.

As described in the previous section, *Family and Home Support*, mothers also played an important role in certain literacy practices. Reese and Gallimore (2000) focused on Latino immigrant families, and found that practices such as reading aloud to children in the preschool years, were associated with parents' own schooling and literacy experiences in the countries where they were raised and educated. In this study, those mothers who reported having different literacy practices in Spanish with their young children, (e.g., teaching the alphabet and reading aloud), had several years of formal education in Mexico. Generally, these activities ended when their children entered school. This could be showing the parents' belief that once their children start school it is only the teacher's responsibility to instruct them (Haberman, 1991). Alternatively, it could demonstrate the Latino/a parents' lack of confidence to interact with teachers in a culture different than their own (Bermúdez & Márquez, 1996). El Palmar mothers were using the *linguistic funds of knowledge* (Smith, 2002) that they brought from Mexico to teach their children how to read in Spanish. These funds of knowledge could eventually be brought into the classroom when children entered

school. However, all this prior knowledge in Spanish is generally not appreciated by a school system where biliteracy is subtracted (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

Considering New Literacy Studies perspectives (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 2005), the literacy practices in which mothers engaged included not only those activities involving use of text, but also the cultural values, attitudes, and feelings that shaped and gave meaning to those events. A clear example was when mothers reported inventing stories because they were not able to read the books in English that their children were bringing from school. The act of “reading” a book to their children in a language that these mothers did not know emphasized the importance of using other linguistic resources in order to “socialize” (Gee, 2008). These results demonstrated that literacy at home is not only tied to academic activities, but also to social practices.

#### *Peer Influence*

Another factor that positively influenced Spanish vitality in El Palmar was peer influence. Most participating youth commented on the importance of communicating with their friends in Spanish. Even though this group of participants considered themselves bilinguals, and thus felt comfortable speaking in either language, Spanish was the language of choice to speak with their friends. Research on this topic showed that the power of group membership in determining language usage is strong (e.g., Tse, 2001; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 1998). In a study that focuses on youth attitudes toward Spanish, Paris (2010) discussed that, when interacting with friends who speak the same home language, bilingual youth may prefer their native language for comfort and because they see language as a type of code that they share with their peers.

When I asked participants what triggered them to decide on choosing Spanish rather than English to communicate with their friends, most of them perceived this decision

as natural and did not show awareness of a particular reason. However, the setting seemed to influence the language they used with peers. Children demonstrated to be more comfortable to communicate in Spanish with their friends when they were at home or in other informal settings. One finding in the present study that clearly supports this idea is the remark made by one tutorial staff member. She observed that when students attending the after-school program left the center (instructional environment) and went outside to play sports (informal environment) the children changed their language of communication from English into Spanish. An alternative interpretation was that the children were not around the tutorial director, who tended to enforce an English-only environment.

However, the literature on this topic shows that under certain circumstances, minority language students prefer to talk to their peers in the majority language. For instance, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998) demonstrated the important role of peers in determining the type of language one person uses; they found that children tend to choose the language of their peers, rather than that of their parents. Giles and Johnson (1987) mentioned that when a minority-language group has lower status than the majority, minority-language speakers may want to disassociate themselves from that group membership in favor of another that is more prestigious, such as an English-speaking group.

Focusing on Latino youth, Portes (1995) argues that Mexicans are more vulnerable to peer pressure than other Latino youths because of their history of racism in the U.S., and the way that they have migrated, usually as labor migrants. Portes states that the long-term negative psychological effects on this group might influence their decisions on speaking the majority language with their peers. Perhaps, El Palmar youth might not feel such peer pressure because of the particular language environment in this colonia, where almost

everybody knows spoken Spanish and share the same ethnicity (U.S. Census, 2000). This language and ethnic homogeneity may help them to develop a positive attitude toward their heritage language (Tse, 2001) and thus feel connected with their cultures and identities (Valdés, 1996).

### *Ethnic and Cultural Identity*

According to Mercado, “language is a powerful marker of identity” (2001, p.170). Participants in this study associated Spanish language maintenance with keeping their culture and ethnic identity. However, the attitude toward Spanish was not the same across all the participants. A positive attitude was consistent among participating adults, but the children reported different opinions. While middle school and high school students seemed to develop positive attitudes toward Spanish, most elementary school children showed ambivalent or negative feelings about knowing and using their heritage language.

Elementary school participants demonstrated perceiving English as a better language than Spanish. This phenomenon can be explained by the influence that school, and in particular teachers, have on young students. A quote that supports this idea, is that from a first grade student who said, “Mi maestra me dijo que de ahora en más me tenía que olvidar de el español”, [My teacher told me that from now on I need to forget the Spanish]. On the other hand, as students entered middle school, peer influence seemed to be stronger than that of other adults, such as teachers (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Most adolescent participants expressed their need to communicate with their friends and family in their heritage language.

This shift from a negative or neutral opinion of Spanish in early years to positive feelings toward this language later in life is consistent with research on the developmental nature of identity formation among some minority groups in the U.S. (Phinney, Romero,



Nava, & Huang, 2001; Tse, 2001). These authors stated that during their adolescence, minority language children develop a positive attitude toward their heritage language, which can become an important way to explore their heritage and culture. Focusing just on Latino youth, Mercado (2001) states that particularly among adolescent learners, Spanish plays an important role in developing someone's identity; this may explain the resilience of Spanish among Latino/a youth even when it is not the official language of instruction.

Differences in culture and language attitudes were not observed across first and second immigrant generations in the present study. Likewise, Mejías and Anderson-Mejías (2003) focusing on a large sample of surveys in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas, showed that positive attitudes toward Spanish use remained in the first and second generations. These authors also demonstrated that even though this attitude could be observed up to fourth and fifth generations, it became more instrumental and less sentimental in those individuals whose families have lived in the U.S. for many generations. If I compare Mejías' and Anderson-Mejías' findings with what I have observed in El Palmar, I could conclude that this pattern occurs along the south Texas border and that, more than likely, a more instrumental attitude toward Spanish will be observed in future generations of Latinos/as born in the U.S. However, due to differences in the nature of the studies, a generalization is not possible. Beside the difference in sample sizes, Mejías' and Anderson-Mejías' participants were all college students and thus, a different academic background could have influenced on how participants viewed their heritage language.

Findings from other studies conducted also in Latino communities on the U.S.-Mexico border, demonstrated that language attitudes change with other factors. Achugar and Pessoa (2009) and Velázquez (2009) found that, in the border city of El Paso, attitudes toward Spanish vary in different contexts and with the community social-economic status.

Achugar and Pessoa explored the role of Spanish in an academic community and found that participants, Spanish-dominant graduate students, valued Spanish and bilingualism in the academic context, but showed negative attitudes toward non-standard varieties of Spanish. Velázquez demonstrated that those homes where mothers supported that their children learn Spanish in school and that they perceived both Spanish and bilingual/biethnic identity as desirable for her children's future, were those homes where more opportunities for linguistic development in Spanish were present.

### *Religion Identity*

Finally, when referring to culture and identity, it is important to mention religion. Particularly among immigrant Latinos, religion is an important component in their culture and language identity (Ek, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2008). As in previous studies in different Latino communities (e.g., Baquedano-López, 2004; Burrows-Goodwill, 2009; Ek, 2009; Farr & Guerra, 1995), Spanish has been regarded by El Palmar residents as the language of their religious and cultural legacy. Religious practices at home, and community events organized by the church, demonstrated that Spanish is the preferred language to be used during religious activities in the colonia. However, as I will discuss in the section entitled *Participation in After-School Programs and Implementation of Bilingual Church Services*, English has gained territory in other contexts within the religious domain of the colonia.

As mentioned in Chapter IV, understanding language use in a religious context was not an original goal in this study. No questions in the employed data collection instruments addressed language use in this domain. However, themes that related language to religion arouse spontaneously and repetitively in the interviews and language logs, demonstrating that religion is an important component in El Palmar residents' everyday lives.

Participating children usually orally pray in Spanish at home. Children also reported that

learning the prayers from their mothers and grandmothers as an oral tradition. Similar results were found by other authors among Mexican immigrant families living in Los Angeles and Chicago (Baquedano-López, 2004; Farr & Guerra, 1995). Like in those studies, religion was attached to the Spanish language and also cultural traditions that are brought from Mexico. These findings reflect Gee's (2008) ideas of oral language transmission as a social practice where participating children make sense of their religious practices, which have a long and rich history.

Although I did not focus on religious literacy practices in other contexts besides home, I was aware that these practices took place during catechism (*doctrina*) classes. These classes are offered either in English or Spanish and it is the parents' decision to choose the language of instruction. When I interviewed a former catechism teacher, she stated that twenty years ago *doctrina* classes in El Palmar were all in Spanish. This change of language use during religious instruction is consistent with data that have shown an increase in English use in the colonia. To my knowledge, there are few studies (e.g., Baquedano-López, 2004) that focus on bilingual (English-Spanish) literacy practices in the domain of catechism classes. Ek (2009), and Farr and Guerra (1995) studied religious literacy practices in Spanish with recent immigrant children who had a strong foundation in their mother language. Similarly, Burrow-Goodwill (2009) focused on literacy practices in Spanish during church summer activities with high achieving children of Mexican descent.

#### *Factors that Lead to a Shift into English*

Even though Spanish is mostly maintained among family members and friends, there are other contexts in El Palmar where a language shift into English was evident. Factors such as schooling and language practices at the tutorial center and at church, contribute to a language shift in the colonia. The factors that lead to a language shift relate

to high-power spheres where English is generally seen as the language of power (Fishman, 2001). Conversely, the factors that help maintain Spanish are associated with non-power spheres (e.g., home).

### *Schooling*

Findings were consistent in revealing that English is the predominant language used in schools and thus, schooling does not contribute to the biliteracy development of El Palmar children. One of the obstacles to building Spanish literacy constitutes the nature of bilingual programs El Palmar children receive at school. To serve students whose parents speak a language other than English, the school district uses the early transitional bilingual program model in most pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade schools, and English as a Second Language (ESL) in grades sixth through twelfth. The three elementary schools that serve El Palmar children have an English language learner (ELL) population that ranges between 49% and 56 %. These percentages are not so different from other elementary schools in the same school district. The ELL population for all grade levels in the whole district represents 36% (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

The goal of early transitional programs is to increase the use of the target language in the classroom while decreasing that of the home language (Villarreal, 1999). These students are taught briefly through their home language until they are proficient enough in English (Cummins, 1980). As stated by García (2009), transitional bilingual education “supports and values monolingualism and permits bilingualism only as a temporary measure” (p. 124). With the passage of the NCLB Act of 2001 and the consequent focus on high-stake testing, the monolingualism in the schools has increased nationwide (Rong & Preissle, 2009). In the bilingual classrooms nationwide, English is the dominant language of testing, and consequently of instruction (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Zehler et al.,

2003). This phenomenon has been particularly studied in Texas by Palmer and Lynch (2008). These authors showed that the pressure to succeed in high-stakes testing imposes a monolingual policy in this state's bilingual classrooms, where English is the dominant language of testing, and consequently of instruction. Even though eligible Texas public school children do not take the TAKS exam until third grade, the gear up for this exam begins as early as kindergarten, pushing for a quick transition to reading and writing in the target language. This monolingual policy was also observed in El Palmar's after-school tutorial center, as it will be further discussed in the next section, *Participation in After-School Programs and Implementation of Bilingual Church Services*.

The prevalence of English-only instruction in El Palmar schools hinders the development of biliteracy. A lack of biliteracy was more evident among those participants who had most of their schooling in the U.S., many of whom are long-term ELLs or Generation 1.5 because, even though they have developed their conversational English, they struggle with academic literacy in their first and second languages (Forrest, 2006). Research on language use in different immigrant generations has demonstrated that age at migration and length of residence in the U.S. are important factors in the maintenance of the heritage language (Grenier, 1984; Portes & Schauffler, 1994; Veltman, 1988). Grenier (1984) found that the younger a person is when arriving in the U.S., the less likely that individual is to be fluent in Spanish. Portes and Schauffler (1994) and Veltman (1988) further demonstrated that the longer an individual has resided in the U.S., the more extensive is his or her adoption of English as the primary or dominant language of communication. Because of the geographical and demographic characteristics of El Palmar, children were able to maintain their speaking abilities in Spanish, independently of the age they had migrated to the U.S. However, as discussed in the section *Biliteracy within*

*Individuals*, the degree of literacy in Spanish would depend on the years they attended school in Mexico.

Other researchers have reported that language shift not only occurs over generations, but can also take place within a lifetime, with ability in and use of the home language starting to diminish in early childhood. The language shift at the individual level has been detected as early as preschool (Wong-Fillmore, 1991) and through the elementary grades (Pease-Alvarez & Winsler, 1994). This shift away from the heritage language also may continue through secondary school; in their work with over 300 second-generation Spanish-English bilinguals of Mexican descent Hakuta & D'Andrea (1992) demonstrated a marked language shift from Spanish to English from elementary school to high school in a predominantly agricultural community on the central coast of California.

Perhaps, this language shift is not as evident in the lifespan of an El Palmar child. Due to demographic and geographic characteristics (Martínez, 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), the probability that El Palmar participating children maintain their oral communication in Spanish is high. However, findings demonstrated that children have low chances of developing literacy in Spanish. This idea was well supported by the responses of 28 participating children, ages six to 14. Most of these participants found reading in English easier because this is the language they were taught to read in school. These findings showed that for most of the 28 participating children, U.S public education did not help maintain the heritage language. This subtractive practice is prevalent throughout the nation in schools and its proponents emphasize English-only instruction, rapid Americanization, and a monocultural approach to assimilation (Rong & Preissle, 2009).

Findings previously discussed in the section, *Family and Home Support*, revealed the role played by the family in maintaining Spanish. Tse (2001) has shown that parents

who speak a heritage language and encourage its development, are important factors to support the vitality of this language. However, in this study, parents have demonstrated reinforcing the maintenance of Spanish only for communicative purposes, but did not express their willingness to have their children develop literacy in this language. Parents established a demarcated separation, in terms of language use, between home and school. This idea was clearly stated in the following quote by a participating father, “El español debe ser en la casa, y el inglés, la educación, eso lo vas a agarrar en la escuela”, [Spanish should be at home; English, the education, that is going to be get in school].

According to the latter quote, it seems that parents supported their children to learn only English at school, and they did not take into account that Spanish had to be learned with sustainable proficiency. By stating, “El español debe ser en la casa...”, [Spanish should be at home...], this parent might believe that his children would learn to read and write in Spanish at home. This compartmentalization of languages was explained by Martínez (2009). He claimed that in Texas, Spanish speaker parents are sometimes the most obvious opponents to bilingual education, since they usually argue that schools should focus only on English instruction while parents are in charge of teaching Spanish at home.

#### *Participation in After-School Programs and Bilingual Church Services*

An additional obstacle to maintaining Spanish in El Palmar were certain practices that took place in institutions, such as the after-school tutorial center and at church. The tutorial program, a non-profit organization housed on the property of a church, extended the practices that occur in school. Because the main purpose of this center is to assist children with homework and projects that they bring from school, the program staff and volunteers help them primarily in English. Parent participants viewed this center as an extension of school, where their children not only completed their homework, but where they could

improve their English skills. Moreover, the direction of the after-school tutorial program supported an English-only instruction. The director strongly believed that El Palmar children would have a successful future if they master the English language. The environmental print (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) at the center also demonstrated this tendency toward an English-only instruction. The bulletin board and posters with TAKS strategies are in English. A relatively small proportion of the tutorial library books, less than 10%, are written in Spanish, which was also observed in other Latino communities (Pucci, 1994; Reese & Goldenberg, 2006).

A similar trend in language use could be observed in certain religious practices at the community church. Even though Spanish is the language most used in religious practices at home and church, still, it could be observed certain forces lead to a language shift into English in the domain of religion. This shift became evident with the implementation of bilingual services by a new church administrator about a year ago. Before that change, all the services were in Spanish. A similar situation was reported by Baquedano-López (2004) in a Catholic church in Los Angeles, where an English-Only policy was imposed in the *doctrina* classes attended by immigrant Mexican children. Like in Baquedano-López' case, some El Palmar residents demonstrated disagreement against having religious services in English, and clearly stated their desire to maintain Spanish as the language used in their religious traditions.

The church leaders' reasons to implement bilingual services were varied, but had in common the idea of introducing more English into the church domain as a way to progress economically. According to one church leader, El Palmar youth have to dominate English in order to succeed. Moreover, with the implementation of services in English, he said he intended to bring more people from outside the colonia, who according to him, knew more



English and therefore had more money. Obviously, for this church leader, a particular way through which El Palmar residents can get out of the poverty is by having more English in the colonia.

The phenomena observed in the after-school tutorial program and church had several commonalities. Firstly, the persons who run those institutions work in the colonia, but were never residents, and thus, they obviously had the vision of outsiders. Secondly, they had an academic background and socio-economic status different from the majority of El Palmar residents. Thirdly, the church and tutorial directors are usually seen as leaders in the community and share the idea that in order to have a successful future, El Palmar youth should be immersed in English, the language of power (Fishman, 2001). These two persons, and the institutions behind them, could be perceived by El Palmar residents as a bridge that would allow them cross from a world of communication and poverty (in Spanish) to a world of economic success in the public and business spheres (in English); building on Fishman's language shift perspectives (2001), they could lead people from non-power to high-power spheres. Previous research in the colonia demonstrated the impact that church has on residents' lives. García, Smith, Díaz, Parson, and Aguilar-Crandall (2010), showed the positive influence that church, and in particular its leaders, have on the community by using two *participatory action research* instruments, such as photovoice and oral history. By using the photovoice method, in which participants photographed their environments, discussed the relevance of their photographs, and selected those pieces that best described their lives, youth included pictures of religious images and church buildings in their photo collections. For instance, one remarkable photo was of a rose petal with the Virgen of Guadalupe printed on it. Through oral history interviews, El Palmar elders stated

their gratitude to the church leaders for all the help that they had provided to the community.

### Section III

#### Language Brokering: A Bridge between the World of Communication and the World of Power

How do El Palmar residents integrate these two different language worlds when sometimes they dominate only one language? El Palmar residents live between two language worlds: a world in Spanish, which allows them to keep a communication with their family members and friends, and a world in English, which mainly takes place in public domains. Yet, most El Palmar adult population speaks only Spanish (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). How do these adults negotiate then, when they need to enter into public spheres where English is the prevalent language?

El Palmar bilingual youth represent a critical piece in this language transition by acting as *language brokers*. They use their knowledge of the English language as a bridge between their homes and the outside world (Orellana, 2009). Participating children were language brokers for their parents at home, and in different public places where English was the dominant language. Children developed and used a wide range of funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) as engaged in different translation tasks.

The mediated role played by the participants in this study is very similar to those documented in other studies on the phenomenon of language brokering ( Morales & Hanson, 2005; Orellana, 2001, 2009; Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003; Tse, 1996; Weisskirch, 2005). Previous research on language brokering focused on children as the main actors during this activity. As Zelizer (1985) has stated, it has been in the twentieth century of the Western world that children have been measured by their sentimental value

rather than by their physical and economic contributions to households. Moreover, these children come into contact with American culture sooner and more intimately than their parents do (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001), acting then as *cultural brokers* in which they use their knowledge of U.S. cultural traditions to speak for others in order to accomplish social goals (Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003). Language brokering as a social contribution is further discussed by Orellana (2009). Orellana states that children serve their families as “societal institutions” by providing services that should be provided by the state or other public institutions, for instance, mediating a conversation between their families and the court personnel (p. 66).

Language brokering also has educational and language developmental implications for children. Language brokers have bilingual abilities, but language brokering is not only related to bilingualism. Whereas bilingualism refers to the ability to speak two languages (Bialystok, 2004), language brokering deals with “the practices of translating and interpreting” (Morales & Hanson, 2005, p. 473). Morales and Hanson make the distinction between these two practices. Translation is usually associated with written work and where the translator has the skill to translate documents and other type of print material. On the other hand, interpretation refers to the verbal communication abilities of an individual. Rubenstein-Avila (2003) gives an account of Miguel, an eighth grade boy who struggled with academic literacy, but who was able to help his mother to translate court-related documents.

Similar to Miguel, children in this study acted as translators while reading documents in English and then orally translating them into Spanish, and as interpreters mainly during parent-teacher interaction. One might think that those who benefit with language brokering are the parents while children “work” in between people who are in

different language worlds. However, children also benefit from these experiences. Research has shown that such language brokering practices for their monolingual family members enhance students' English skills (Morales & Hanson, 2005).

Children play an important role in connecting families and schools, also (Orellana, 2009). This study demonstrated that El Palmar children mediate interactions between their parents and teachers during parent-teacher conferences and "open houses." In this context, it is important to recognize the role that knowing Spanish plays during these practices. Smith (2002) argues that *linguistic funds of knowledge*, or minority language resources, should be appreciated by educators. Thus, those language brokering activities may be a great opportunity during which educators value their students' language needs and help reduce the language distance between educators and El Palmar families.

However, these duties are not exclusive of children. In this study, parents demonstrated feeling useful in helping their own children, or the children of others, in circumstances when Spanish skills were needed. This was the example of a participating mother who helped their neighbors with homework in Spanish. The role of parents as language brokers was evident at home and during their visits to relatives in Mexico. Both children and parents reported that they liked being, and were proud to serve as, language brokers. Furthermore, language brokering often begins during the acculturation process (Orellana, 2001). Acculturation is an indicator of how well an individual is adjusting and adapting to living in a new cultural environment, the formation of biculturalism (Linton, 2003). Thus, the presence of language brokering as an everyday activity, might be an indicator of acculturation and bilingualism in El Palmar.

## Section IV

### Conclusions

To my knowledge, this is the first study that has focused on language use in a colonia community. This research has demonstrated that although Spanish continues to be the dominant language in El Palmar, its use varies with immigrant generations and in different domains. Moreover, whereas bilingualism has increased, biliteracy has not developed. The factors that lead to maintenance or loss of Spanish were also identified. This study also made clear the existence of two language worlds, the world of informal communication and feelings, where Spanish is the dominant language, and the world of education and business, where English is the language of power. Bilingual children play an important role in integrating these two language worlds.

The analysis of language use in different domains and contexts demonstrated that English and Spanish accomplish different functions. By stating the importance of keeping oral communication in their heritage language with family members and friends, at home and in the community, participants demonstrated they considered Spanish as a private (Tse, 2001) and sentimental language (Kelman, 1971). On the other hand, since English represented participants' needs and interests and was mostly used in school and in the larger society, this language was perceived as a public language (Tse, 2001) and for an instrumental use (Kelman, 1971). By analyzing this language compartmentalization with Fishman's theoretical lens, Spanish is restricted to non-power spheres, such as the home, while English is dominant in high-power spheres, such as employment, formal education, and government (Fishman, 2001).

El Palmar participants made clear the importance of keeping oral communication with their family members and friends in Spanish. Conversely, in regard to literacy,

participants demonstrated being more interested in developing their reading and writing skills in English. Achieving proficiency in Spanish literacy was not a goal for most participants. Only a few reinforced the idea of continuing reading in Spanish, as a way to maintain a link to their roots and identity (González, 2001; Hull & Schultz, 2001; Pucci, 2000). However, these participants did not manifest an awareness that the ability to speak and write two or more languages would result in more opportunities in a globalized world (García & Mason, 2009; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Differences in bilingualism and biliteracy can be explained by the socio-economic status of the colonia. Most El Palmar residents live in extreme poverty (U.S. Census, 2000). Usually, while Spanish is characterized as the language of immigrants, and as a language of poverty, (García & Mason, 2009), English is considered a language of power (Fishman, 2001). As discussed by Batibo (2009) in his study of communities in Africa, the dominant language facilitates access to material resources and power for people. The situation described by Batibo in African communities is similar to that of El Palmar, in which there is a high need to improve their economic situations. For many in these colonia residents, learning English is a pathway to get out of poverty. Following is what a community leader said about the need of El Palmar residents to learn English. He said, “English was needed for dealing with authorities and others from outside of the community, and for speaking ‘business’ . . . . No one learned English to appreciate the movies, for instance, or to be able to read the papers.” This quote supports the language compartmentalization observed in this study, where Spanish is used for communication at home, but English is needed to “speak business.”

It is clear that English proficiency is necessary for academic success in U.S. schools (e.g., Tienda & Mitchell, 2006) and in Friedman’s “flat world” where technology and

collaborative economics have created entirely a new playing field (Friedman, 2006); however, is unlikely that gaining English proficiency needs to be an equivalent with heritage language loss (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). El Palmar has increased its bilingualism but not its biliteracy. Bilingualism without biliteracy augments the likelihood of language loss, at the same time that it decreases the status of that language (García, Morín & Rivera, 2001). Considering the ideas discussed, the findings of this study suggest a language shift into English in El Palmar.

Since poverty is a crucial factor in language shift (Batibo, 2009), and as speakers of any language tend to identify themselves with the most socio-economically prestigious language (Batibo, 2009; Fishman, 2001), English might be seen as the language of power in El Palmar. This idea was portrayed by a community leader participant as follow, “[In El Palmar], English would be used for business, school, commercial, state-related affairs....while Spanish would be a barrier in terms of being able to fully integrate into the U.S. system.” For most El Palmar residents, the compartmentalization of languages is clear. While English is considered as the tool that would allow them to succeed in the public spheres, Spanish is the language used to maintain families’ ties, their cultural roots, and identity. According to Fishman (2001), language transmission at home is fundamental for minority language maintenance, but this minority language tends to shift to the dominant language when it is restricted to home.

Having both languages accomplish different functions (sentimental vs. instrumental) (Kelman, 1971) in different domains (e.g., home vs. school and other public spheres) creates a breach between two language worlds. Teachers can tap into the role of bilingual youth as language and cultural brokers (Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003; Orellana, 2009), and honor the different funds of knowledge that children bring to school (González, Moll,

& Amanti, 2005; Smith, 2002) are crucial in integrating these two language worlds. As this study has demonstrated, English use has increased in the colonia, and more than likely will continue growing, mainly among youth. Therefore, these youth is the key in building a bridge between the English and Spanish worlds.

Moreover, it becomes increasingly important to understand the linguistic dynamics in El Palmar, if we consider the major demographic changes in the U.S. society, where the Latino population is the fastest growing minority group (Colombi & Roca, 2003). This case study revealed the ways Spanish works to solidify ties to family and peers, and the factors that guide to a language shift into English in the Latino community of El Palmar. In the following chapter I discuss the limitations and the implications for practice and research derived from this study.



## CHAPTER VI

### LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter is organized in two sections. In the first section I examine the limitations of this study. In the second section I discuss the implications for practice and research.

#### Section I

##### Limitations

Several limitations came to light during this study. These limitations were the following:

##### *Difficulties to Get Data in the Colonia*

El Palmar, as other border colonias, offered some difficulties to collect data (Campbell, 2003). Unpaved streets, fences around houses and no bells, guard dogs, and unnoticeable marked addresses were some of the barriers that I sometimes faced while trying to contact participants. Another frequent difficulty was the high mobility of residents, who sometimes returned to Mexico, or moved to other parts of the U.S. in search for better job opportunities. To avoid losing participants in my study, I selected established families in the colonia. The fact that I had a previous experience in the research site helped me in a better selection of participants.

##### *My Position as an Outsider*

Another barrier that I faced while collecting data in El Palmar was my position as an outsider. Usually, as researchers enter to investigate a new community “their ways of being do not appear natural to the members of such community” (Janks, 2010, p. 55). As researchers, in order to understand how insiders make sense of their own world, we need to engage with participants as human beings (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). However, it was not

easy to negotiate an entrée and establish rapport with the insiders. Even though it is a relatively new colonia and founded in 1962 (information retrieved from the Cameron County Court in February, 2009), El Palmar constitutes a community where neighbors know and help each other (Díaz, García, & Smith, 2009), which makes the research site bounded and therefore, more difficult to be approached by an outsider.

To seek an insider's position, and be accepted into the community, I spent considerable time at the research site. Before I started collecting data, I worked as a volunteer at the tutorial center, and as a research assistant in different university projects. During the stage of data collection I worked as a substitute teacher in the local elementary school, and attended community social events. However, despite the extra time spent in the colonia, I never became an insider. Participants always saw me as an individual coming from the local university. In addition, I am not Mexican descent and this might have caused a disconnection between me and the participants. I was born and raised in Uruguay and my Spanish dialect is different from the one spoken in El Palmar and its vicinities. Participants might have seen me also as someone with a higher socio-economic status.

On the other hand, by being an outsider, I had the advantage of observing and analyzing data with objectivity and “to make visible the invisible” (Anderson-Levitt, 2006, p. 285). As discussed by Bogdan and Bilken (2007) subjectivity is considered a problem in qualitative research since researchers' opinions, prejudices, and other biases can have an effect on the data, and one of the biggest challenges of a researcher is to make the familiar “strange” (Anderson-Levitt, 2006).

#### *Limited U.S. Census Versions for El Palmar*

Although El Palmar was founded in 1962, census data on language ability were available only from 1990 and 2000 versions. The first records for El Palmar were in 1980

but they were based on estimations. This could be because most El Palmar roads were not paved and no street lighting existed until much later (Balli, 2003). Census data from 2010 were not available at the time this dissertation was finished. Ten years later, language patterns may have changed, but these changes cannot be assessed until the Census Bureau releases block counts from the 2010 census. The availability of more census versions could have provided a more complete idea of the changes in bilingualism over a longer period of time in the colonia.

Also, questions on census forms only address the ability to speak in English and do not provide data on the other three language abilities: understanding a language, reading, and writing. Thus, the census evaluates oracy, but not literacy. Moreover, data on participants' perceived language abilities in other languages, including Spanish, are not collected by the Census Bureau. Finally, census data are based on self-reports, typically provided by one adult household member who reports for all other members of the household. Census report data of persons over age five, and no language-related information is given for younger children.

#### *Lack of Access to School District Data*

In order to further understand the profile of El Palmar population, I requested de-identified students' records from the Department of Assessment/Research at the local school district. The requested data included: zoning of El Palmar students, the Home Language Survey, participation in bilingual/ESL programs, mobility (how often El Palmar students change schools), socio-economic status, attendance rates, dropout rates, TAKS scores, Language Assessment Scales (LAS) and other bilingual tests (e.g., Reading Proficiency Test in English, RPTE), the number of students taking AP classes and AP tests, and the number of students in Special Education and in Gifted and Talented programs. Data

from the school district was requested in a project format, and approved by the school district. Even though I made multiple efforts to contact the personnel in charge, I was not able to obtain the requested records. These data could have provided information that helped further understanding bilingualism and biliteracy among El Palmar youth.

#### *Small Sample of Language Use Surveys and Language Logs*

Another limitation was the small number of participants who completed the language use surveys and language logs, which prevents generalizability. Seventeen surveys and six language logs were completed and used for data analysis. More participation in the surveys and language logs could have provided more data to reinforce (or disconfirm) the language use trends observed in the surveyed sample. Due to the small size of the sample, the findings reported in this study are not intended to be generalized to the entire colonia. This study is also limited because of the self-reporting nature of the survey. A way to ensure the credibility of data obtained with surveys was by employing more deliberate and in-depth instruments, such as observation of participants' language skills and interviews. The inclusion of a comment section at the end of the surveys, or asking participants to write language experience essays, could have provided with more data.

#### *Difficulties Conducting Interviews*

Interviews were sometimes difficult to schedule. The participants had various everyday demands. On a few occasions my visits to participants' homes were cancelled upon arrival or cancelled in advance with little notice, due to a participant's duties or family emergencies. Interviews with children were particularly difficult to schedule. Due to their obligations at school and varied extra-curricular activities, participating children were difficult to interview. To minimize this difficulty, I conducted a short interview with

children who were participating in another university project, which I assisted in as a research assistant.

The places where interviews were conducted sometimes became a limitation. Interviews with staff members took place usually at their work places. In these cases interviews were interrupted several times by phone calls or people stepping into their offices. These kind of unexpected events usually happen during an interview and as Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) state, “with greater participation in some local social world, the ethnographer becomes more sensitive to the concerns and perspectives of those in the setting” (p.30). To avoid those interruptions I sometimes set the interviews in other places (e.g., coffee shop).

Another limitation while conducting interviews was the tendency of participants to either agree with items in order to give the response they believe is desired by the researcher (acquiescence bias) or the possibility that respondents choose the responses that appear to be most socially desirable (social-desirability bias) (Garret, Coupland, & Williams, 2003). Some of the participants, in particular staff, knew I was pursuing a doctoral in the field of bilingual education, and that I supported instruction in the schools in English and Spanish. Because of their educational background, participating staff understood the philosophy behind those who support bilingualism in the schools. Thus, the participants’ background could have conditioned them in their responses. Matching of responses could have happened also among participating children. Some of the participants knew me from working with them in other university research projects. Others saw me at their school where I worked as a substitute teacher. My presence either as someone from the university, or a school teacher, could have biased them in their responses.

Finally, interviewing children in presence of siblings or peers might have reduced the researcher's power, since the presence of peers typically has priority over the presence of the researchers (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). Long interviews with children were conducted individually; however, since these interviews took place at home sometimes their siblings were around. This limitation was even more evident when I conducted short interviews. These types of interviews occurred in the context of another university research project, as I explained in the *Data Collection* section, in Chapter III. Due to the limited amount of time to conduct this project, and the considerably larger sample (28 children), participants were interviewed in pairs. Interviewing by pairs may have influenced the children's responses. Participating children may have copied information or agreed with the other interviewee so as not to appear as strange or different.

## Section II

### Implications

One of the findings from this study was that even though Spanish was the most spoken language in El Palmar, literacy in Spanish is not developed among youth. The lack of literacy in children's heritage language can be explained by several reasons. Firstly, as in other immigrant communities with low socio-economic status (U.S. Census, 2000), the minority language may be seen as the language of poverty (García & Mason, 2009). Consequently, residents may perceive Spanish with a sentimental function (Kellman, 1971) rather than with an instrumental value that would help them succeed. Secondly, teachers and the school system put a huge emphasis on learning English; therefore, reading and writing abilities in Spanish are not taught in the schools (Zehler et al., 2003). Thirdly, the availability and access to books in Spanish are limited in the community (Díaz & Bussert-Webb, submitted for publication). Finally, the compartmentalization of languages, for

instance Spanish at home and English at school, might be halting fluidity between these two domains; this may impede educators from thoroughly understanding the linguistic needs of minority language children. Following are the implications for practice and research that have derived from this study.

### *Implications for Practice*

Based on the findings of this study, I would like to see the following changes in practices in El Palmar.

#### *An Awareness of the Value of Spanish as an Instrumental Language*

Social stereotypes have long shown U.S. Latinos as underpaid, poorly educated, marginalized workers who occupy the lowest strata of the socio-economic pyramid (Villa, 2000). Yet, at the same time, there is no question that as a group, Latinos are a growing presence in the U.S. economy (García & Mason, 2009; Mercado, 2001). Participants in this study demonstrated they value Spanish as a sentimental language (Kelman, 1971), but failed to see it as a language with certain prestige that could help them succeed in the current globalized world. However, most participants see only English as the language with an instrumental function.

The lack of instrumental value that parents have toward Spanish becomes evident when we consider that participating parents did not manifest any particular interest in having their children learn their heritage language at school. The power of Spanish as a language has not been valued by the school system (García & Mason, 2009). Many of El Palmar children are now labeled as ELLs in the American educational system, but they are not receiving instruction in their mother language (Palmer & Lynch, 2008; Zehler et al., 2003).

Thus, it is important to create a culture among El Palmar residents that promotes the value of Spanish, not only as a way of communication and reinforcement of ethnic identity (Tse, 2001), but also as a tool to succeed in the economic market of a globalized world. Although the use of native tongues has been rarely passed down to the third generation (e.g., Veltman, 1988), it has been demonstrated that bilingualism can be a key to academic and economic success in the U. S. (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). The community of El Palmar should also be aware of the consequences of a language shift into English. The current bilingual youth will be the parents of the next generation. More than likely, these children will communicate with their children in English. Therefore, will they feel the need to keep communication in Spanish at home? The loss of a minority language at home may lead to an inevitable language shift (Fishman, 2001).

Parents should be empowered to create a culture that reflects the importance of not only being bilingual, but also being biliterate. Parents should be informed about the advantages of maintaining and developing their bilingualism and biliteracy; they should then transmit this knowledge to their children. Parents should understand the benefits that could be translated into the real-world results of better school achievement and higher earning power (Tse, 2001). Educators and researchers specialized in the field of bilingual education could be good resources to inform parents and children, either by visiting their houses or through different non-profit organizations that already exist in the colonia (e.g., the after-school tutorial center).

The importance of maintaining bilingualism, and developing reading and writing abilities in Spanish, needs to be addressed with community leaders of El Palmar, also. Certain individuals, such as staff members at after-school tutorial programs, community centers, and churches, have a strong influence over the community of El Palmar. As



demonstrated in this study, one factor leading to a language shift in the colonia were practices implemented by those community leaders who believed and advocated for the idea that knowing English is a synonymous to wealth and power. Creating awareness among community leaders about the importance of maintaining the Spanish language will help to avoid a language shift in the colonia.

#### *Better School-Home-Community Connections*

The findings of this study made evident a compartmentalization of languages that sometimes generates a breach between home and school. This breach impedes fluent communication between parents and educators. In this case, I am not referring to a language barrier, since most educators in this geographical region are able to speak English and Spanish. Instead, I am pointing out the poor information that parents generally receive about the bilingual education that their children should have at school. Most participating parents did not know the educational rights that children coming from a minority-language home have. Neither do they know the benefits that a well implemented bilingual program could bring to their children.

Similarly, educators should know, and acknowledge, the language needs of their students. Because “schools are the mirrors of society” (Mercado, 2001, p. 182), attention to Spanish language use in out-of-school settings has implications for the use of Spanish in schools. An awareness of these outside-of-school language practices should influence educators in the classroom and administrators in school-wide decisions, such as planning a curriculum and implementing bilingual programs (Zentella, 2005). An important resource of information would be community leaders. During field observations and conversations with community leaders, I recognized the potential for educators gaining insights into how El Palmar children use their bilingual abilities outside school. I would recommend inviting

some of these community leaders to meet with teachers and administrators to enter into a constructive dialogue that would support minority language students.

Cummins (1986) stated, in his interactive empowerment theory, that minority languages will have more chances to succeed if their languages and cultures are incorporated into school programs, to the extent that parents and communities are included as an integral component of their education. Moreover, in their extensive review of out-of-school literacy practices, Hull and Schultz (2001) address the importance of solid connections between schools and homes. By building upon the description of out-of-school literacy practices developed within New Literacy Studies traditions (e.g., Gee, 2008), Hull and Schultz analyze the positive outcomes when educators understand children's emerging experiences with literacy in their own homes.

Thus, educators and researchers need to understand the vital connection among students' languages, cultures, and ethnic identities. Home-school collaborations may be enhanced to the extent that educators take those needs into account and work with families who are trying to maintain linguistic and cultural continuity, while they ensure that their children achieve school success. The *language brokering* that takes place during parent-teacher conferences or 'open houses' constitutes an instance during which educators can perceive the language and cultural needs of the community. In El Palmar, because most of the elementary schools have bilingual personnel, children do not often act as *language brokers* to facilitate the dialogue between home and school. Thus, since most teachers and school personnel speak Spanish, language should not be a barrier. However, as recent immigrants from Mexico, most El Palmar parents do not know the U.S. school system well, nor their rights as parents. Parents do not feel confident to question the instruction that their

children are receiving at school. Thus, how can educators be aware of their students' cultural and linguistic needs?

Home-school-community collaboration must rely on theoretical perspectives that value where students are coming from and that view their languages and cultures as a resource (Ruiz, 1984). These ideas permeate the *funds of knowledge* work of González, Moll, and Amanti (2005), who advocate for teachers to build on the knowledge and experiences that students bring from their own community and households. Like in González', Moll's, and Amanti's work, teachers who serve El Palmar children should visit their homes in order to build *confianza* [trust] and establish relationships of support (Vygotsky, 1978). Then, those funds of knowledge should be acknowledged in schools and incorporated into the curriculum.

#### *An Improved Access to Literacy in Spanish*

As demonstrated by Díaz and Bussert-Webb (submitted for publication), the access to books in Spanish is limited in El Palmar. Many families do not have transportation to the city's public libraries, and the buses do not have a direct route from the colonia. Moreover, the only access to Spanish books is a small library at the tutorial center which has very few books in Spanish. This difficulty of gaining access to print materials in Spanish has serious implications for the future of the Spanish language in the U.S. (Pucci, 2000). Biliteracy is important for the language maintenance of a community (Reese & Goldenberg, 2006; Tse, 2001); however, it is difficult for an emergent bilingual to become biliterate if materials in one's first language are scarce.

Access to books in the community could be facilitated by providing new bus routes between public libraries and El Palmar. Also, a mobile library in the colonia and a year-round lending library at the agency tutorial center are important changes that could help to

develop biliteracy among El Palmar children. School leaders, in particular librarians, should also promote the acquisition of books written in Spanish at the school library. Contrary to what a participating first grader was advised by her teacher, “Mi maestra me dijo que me tenía que olvidar de el español...”, [My teacher told me that I had to forget Spanish....], teachers need to create an environment in which emergent bilinguals could feel that reading in their heritage language is welcome at school. Teachers should establish a “literacy continuum” (McCarty & Watahomigie, 2001, p. 493) between home and school. According to this concept, teachers can draw on the events and practices from home and use them as a base for new learning when children come to school. El Palmar children’s teachers should acknowledge, and use, what those children had learned with their mothers at home before they started school.

A previous study in El Palmar (Díaz and Bussert-Webb, submitted for publication) and other low-income communities (Mraz & Rasinski, 2007) found that children of poverty barely read during the summer, and that this can potentially cause a cumulative loss of 1.5 years between 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996). In their meta-analysis of 13 studies of about 40,000 students, Cooper et al. found summer reading loss impacted low-income students, who have fewer libraries and bookstores nearby, as well as no money to buy books. School libraries are typically the largest and nearest book accesses for low-income students, but for El Palmar, there is no access to school libraries during summer vacations (Díaz and Bussert-Webb, submitted for publication). I would recommend that schools could create programs that routinely send students home for the summer with a collection of self-selected books (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2008). Additionally, school libraries could be open for limited times

during summer school, and the government could promote book access in high poverty areas (Krashen, 2009, 2011).

### *Empowered Mothers to Develop Literacy in Spanish*

This study showed how the presence of mothers can condition their bilingual children to use Spanish, even in settings where English is the dominant language (e.g., using technology and at the after-school tutorial program). Mothers could balance the influence that teachers have on their students, particularly in elementary school (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). El Palmar mothers demonstrated a clear interest in helping their children in academics. For instance, mothers expressed that one of their main reasons to learn English was to help their children with homework. Mothers also reported inventing stories when they could not read those books in English that their children were bringing from school. Many mothers also volunteered at the after-school tutorial agency. In other cases, they also taught their children the alphabet in Spanish before they entered into school.

Considering the potential role that mothers have in maintaining their children's Spanish literacy skills, educators who are willing to work in communities should implement activities that empower mothers to develop those skills. Programs that involve parents in literacy activities with their children can encourage the culture of reading for pleasure at home. Recently, a non-profit family literacy program, *Apasionados por la lectura* (Passionate for Reading), has started offering reading workshops to mothers in Spanish at the Cultural Center of El Palmar; the goal of the program is to develop parents' literacy skills in their first language. A similar type of program could be implemented at the after-school tutorial center or at other similar places where out-of-school literacy practices take place.

At this time in the U.S., English-only laws in some states restrict teachers' options for providing optimal teaching to emergent bilingual at school (e.g., Palmer & Lynch, 2008); thus, educators must make a constant effort to create these opportunities outside the classroom context. Moreover, educators, and researchers must continue to listen to El Palmar residents' voices. When a participating mother was asked, *¿Qué se puede hacer para mantener el idioma español en esta comunidad?* [What can be done to maintain the Spanish language in this community?], she responded in the following manner:

*Más gente de afuera, gente como tú, tiene que venir a fomentarlo. Hay que fomentárselos a los niños desde chiquitos, pero también a las madres. Hay que fomentarles que son importantes por lo que son, ya sea un salvadoreño, portorriqueño, del país que venga, pero que son importantes porque son hispanos y hablan el español. Y hay que decirles que el español es algo muy bello. ¿Y sabes porqué no ha resultado algo muy bello? Porque se está perdiendo mucho la cultura. Pues ahí se incluye todo, música, canto, baile, lenguaje, tradición, comida, todo, y si sacas una, y luego otra, va quedando nada. Entonces, ¿porqué privar a un niño de algo tan hermoso?*

(More people from outside, people like you, should come here to foster the Spanish language. It has to be promoted among young children, but also among mothers. Children need to be told that they are important because of what they are, without taking into consideration if they are Salvadorians, Puerto Ricans, or from another country, but they have to know that they are important because they are Hispanics and speak Spanish. They have to be told that Spanish is a beautiful language. Do you know why this did not result in something beautiful? Because we are losing our culture, which includes everything: music, dance, language, traditions, food,

everything, and if you take one thing away, and then another, nothing will remain. Thus, why should we deprive a child of something so beautiful?).

Like this mother, other parents can become receptive to the presence of educators and researchers in the colonia, who could help its residents to be aware of the benefits of maintaining the Spanish language in the community. In her quote, this mother clearly states that “gente de afuera” [people from outside] are needed to save the Spanish language in El Palmar. She also has a broad view of culture that embraces language, traditions and shared beliefs (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

### *Implications for Research*

In this section I offer recommendations for further research in El Palmar, and other Latino immigrant communities.

#### *Research in the Colonia of El Palmar*

Language shift has been studied in different Latino immigrant communities throughout the U.S. (e.g., Portes & Schaufli, 1994; Potowski, 2004) and in particular in communities located along the U.S-Mexico border (e.g., Anderson-Mejías, 2005; Martínez, 2003). However, this phenomenon has not been explored in a particular type of Latino community: the U.S.-Mexico border colonias. To my knowledge, this is the first study that has focused on language use in a colonia, and thus, El Palmar constitutes a fertile ground for further research in this area.

This study has demonstrated that bilingualism has increased, but biliteracy has not developed among El Palmar youth, which suggest that the colonia could be in the first steps of a language shift. However, this trend could be reversed in the near future. Changes in the nature of immigration have been observed lately. For instance, due to violence that has been increasing in Mexico lately, more wealthy people are migrating to the U.S., in

particular to border cities (López, 2011). Immigrants with a higher socio-economic status might perceive Spanish as a language with prestige, or in other words as a language that can help their children succeed economically and academically. This new wave of immigrants, and their positive attitude toward Spanish, might lead to a situation in which effective bilingual programs, e.g., dual language programs, could be revitalized in all district schools. If this is true, the status of Spanish could also change in El Palmar schools.

A longitudinal study, which compares the findings of the present case study with those of a similar study conducted several years into the future, could answer questions such as: What will happen to bilingualism and biliteracy in El Palmar? Will the participating bilingual children teach Spanish to their children at home as their parents did with them? Will biliteracy continue undeveloped? Will changes in our current society that are leading to a more globalized world show Spanish as a more prestigious language? Will the attitudes toward English and Spanish remain the same or will they change with recent changes in immigration among the wealthy from Mexico?

#### *Research in Other Latino Immigrant Communities*

The goal of this study was to explore language use in a border colonia community, to see what was there, without the intention of comparisons to the situations and expectations of schooling. The findings reported here represent a small sample of low-income Latino recent immigrants around the border region of Southern Texas. The small size of the participating sample, and the descriptive nature of this study, precludes drawing conclusions from which to generalize. However, the conclusions drawn from this study could have implications that can be used to uncover language use within demographically consistent groups and in similar settings.



Although New Literacy Studies researchers have contributed enormously to righting a balance between studies of school and out- of- school literacy practices (Barton, 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2008; Heath, 1983; Street, 2005), there is a need for further, in-depth investigation into literacy uses within Latino communities, and the effects of literacy acquisition at the individual and community levels. For instance, this study demonstrated the importance of religious practices within the daily lives of El Palmar residents in the context of family and community interactions. One recommendation for research would be to focus on literacy practices during catechism (*doctrina*) classes. Even though El Palmar children are receiving English-only instruction in at school, they have learned, and have practiced, the prayers in Spanish through oral transmission with their parents and grandparents. Now some of the children are being taught catechism in English. Thus, due to a language discontinuity in religious practices, catechism teachers may face important challenges to integrate the *linguistic funds of knowledge* (Smith, 2002) that these children bring from home.

This study also raises questions of interest to researchers in terms of conducting studies that focus on literacy practices at home. Few mothers in this study demonstrated their effort to teach their young children how to read before they begin attending school. Implied in New Literacy Studies traditions is the notion that there are other “literacies” that may not be as visible, and do not have value within a mainstream context. One important finding in this study was the influence that context, in particular mothers, have on the language bilingual children choose to use. A clear example was that of a participating bilingual child who chose to ‘text’ in Spanish from home when English is the main language used in technology (Cyberspeech, 1997). Research that further analyzes language used during these types of activities can help people to understand this phenomenon; this,

in turn, could have important implications in the development of biliteracy in Latino communities such as El Palmar, where literacy in Spanish needs to be promoted.

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APPENDIX A

LANGUAGE LOGS

**Lista de lenguajes/Language Log**

**Idioma que usas durante el día/Language That You Use During the Day**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Por favor, escribe las diferentes actividades que haces durante el día mientras lees, escribes, hablas o escuchas. Explica con quien realizas la actividad y que idioma utilizas. *Please, write the different activities that you do during a day while you read, write, speak, or listen. Explain with whom you do the activity and specify which language you use.*

**1. En tu casa/At home**

<b>Actividad/Activity</b>	<b>Español/Inglés Spanish/English</b>	<b>Con quien/With whom</b>
Cuando haces la tarea/When you do your homework		

**2. En la escuela/At school**

<b>Actividad/Activity</b>	<b>Español/Inglés Spanish/English</b>	<b>Con quien/With whom</b>
Cuando hablas con tu maestra/ When you talk to your teacher		

**3. En el centro de tutorías/ At the tutorial center**

<b>Actividad/Activity</b>	<b>Español/Inglés Spanish/English</b>	<b>Con quien/With whom</b>
Mientras haces deportes/ <i>While doing sports</i>		

**4. Usando tecnología/ Using Technology**

<b>Actividad/ Activity</b>	<b>Español/Inglés Spanish/English</b>	<b>Con quien/With whom</b>
Cuando envías mensajes de texto/ <i>When you text-message</i>		

**5. Otros lugares o actividades/ Other places or activities**

<b>Actividad/Activity</b>	<b>Español/Inglés Spanish/English</b>	<b>Con quien/With whom</b>
Cuando vas a la tienda/ <i>When you to the store</i>		



How well do you **read** English?

1= Not at all      2= A little      3= Well      4= Very well

How well do you **write** English?

1= Not at all      2= A little      3= Well      4= Very well

How well do you **understand** Spanish?

1= Not at all      2= A little      3= Well      4= Very well

How well do you **speak** Spanish?

1= Not at all      2= A little      3= Well      4= Very well

How well do you **read** Spanish?

1= Not at all      2= A little      3= Well      4= Very well

How well do you **write** Spanish?

1= Not at all      2= A little      3= Well      4= Very well

## Encuesta del uso de lenguaje

Nombre:

Fecha de la encuesta:

Número de teléfono:

¿Dónde ha nacido?

¿En cuántas ciudades diferentes ha vivido ud. en los Estados Unidos?

¿Cuál es su etnicidad/nacionalidad?

- Anglo
- Latino/a
- Otra

Especificar \_\_\_\_\_

Especificar \_\_\_\_\_

¿Cuál es la lengua que más se habla en su casa?

- Inglés
- Español
- Inglés y español
- Otro

Especifique cual lenguaje \_\_\_\_\_

En las siguientes preguntas, circule la mejor respuesta **1= Nada, 2= Poco, 3= Bien,**

**4= Muy bien**

¿Qué bien **habla** usted el inglés?

1= Nada, 2= Poco, 3= Bien, 4= Muy bien

¿Qué bien **entiende** usted el inglés?

1= Nada, 2= Poco, 3= Bien, 4= Muy bien

¿Qué bien **lee** usted el inglés?

1= Nada, 2= Poco, 3= Bien, 4= Muy bien

¿Qué bien **escribe** usted el inglés?

1= Nada, 2= Poco, 3= Bien, 4= Muy bien

¿Qué bien **habla** usted el español?

1= Nada, 2= Poco, 3= Bien, 4= Muy bien

¿Qué bien **entiende** usted el español?

1= Nada, 2= Poco, 3= Bien, 4= Muy bien

¿Qué bien **lee** usted el español?

1= Nada, 2= Poco, 3= Bien, 4= Muy bien

¿Qué bien **escribe** usted el español?

1= Nada, 2= Poco, 3= Bien, 4= Muy bien



## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEWS

#### A- Children Interview Questions

##### **Personal/background**

Age:

Grade level:

Tell me something about yourself. If no answer, prompt: school that you are attending, about your family, your hobbies, etc.

What do you feel you do well?

Have you always lived in El palmar? If not, where have you lived before?

Do you feel more comfortable talking in Spanish or in English, or in both? Do you feel more comfortable reading in Spanish or in English, or in both? Do you feel more comfortable writing in Spanish or in English, or in both?

##### **Language use at school**

Which is your favorite subject? Which is your least favorite subject?

What are some things you wish your teacher at your school knew about you?

By showing a map of a school that labels a classroom, the cafeteria, the playground and a school bus, the interviewer will ask, by pointing each of these places “what language do you mostly speak when you are here?” ; “what language do most of your classmates speak when you are in each of these places? Does anybody say anything to them or is it okay to use any language you want?

Does your teacher prefer that you speak in Spanish or in English? Tell me about what she/he says about the use of the two languages. Who is the kid in your class that speaks Spanish the most? What does the teacher say when \_\_\_\_\_ speaks Spanish in class? What happens when kids speak in English in class?

What about the grownups at school? Does the teacher ever speak Spanish? What about the principal, secretary, janitors, bus drivers, people who serve food in the cafeteria and P.E. coaches?

Is there anybody that comes to your classroom to help your teachers? Does this person talk in Spanish? If so, do you remember any situation in which she/he uses her Spanish?

Do you have any subject that is taught in Spanish? If so, do you enjoy learning things in Spanish? Why?

Do you have a small library in your classroom? Are there lots of books in your classroom? If so, tell me about the kind of books that are in that library. Are there books written in Spanish?

When you go to the school library, tell me about some of the books you have borrowed/checked out. What kind of books do you like to borrow from the library? Do you have any preference of checking out books in English or in Spanish? Does your teacher advise you about the kind of book that you have to choose when you go to the library?

If a new classmate is coming to your class and he/she does not English, which language would you use with him/her? Why?

### **Language use at home**

Tell me something about your family. If no answer, prompt: who do you live with, how many siblings do you have, what are some things your family is good at?

What language do you hear the most at home? Tell me about the language(s) that the different members of your family use. Who uses the most English in your family? Who uses the most Spanish? Who uses both languages?

What about you? What language do you usually speak with your parents, grandparents and siblings? Or do you use both languages about the same? Why?

Do you help your parents, or other adults, to translate from English into Spanish? If so, tell me in which situations (or places) you help them to translate. When was the last time you helped a grownup translate or read something in English? How did you feel when you did this?

Are there situations in which someone helps you to translate from English into Spanish or vice-versa? If so, explain those situations?

Tell me about your favorite shows (or programs) on T.V.

Who is your favorite singer? What's your favorite song right now? If your radio could only get one station, would you prefer to listen to music in English or Spanish? Why?

If you need to write a letter to a friend, would you use English or Spanish? What about a letter to your teacher, and to your parents or grandparents?

Do you "text-message"? If so, do you do it in English or Spanish or both? What language do you friends mostly write to you in? Is it easier for you to text in English or in Spanish?

Would you prefer to receive "text-messages" in a specific language? If your cell phone could only receive texts in one language, would you pick Spanish or English? Why?

## **Language use at the after- school tutorial center and in the community**

How long ago did you start coming to the “center”?

At the center, which language do you use the most? Explain which languages you use while being helped with your homework, doing sports, eating snacks, talking to your friends.

Do the teachers at the center prefer that you speak English or Spanish, or are they happy that you know both languages? If so, tell me situations when this happens.

After you finish your homework, usually the teachers at the center ask you to read a book from the library. What can you tell me about those books? Which kind of book do you prefer to choose? Do you have any preference in reading books in English or in Spanish?

Do you go to church? If so, what language do you speak at church? Is the mass that you attend in English or in Spanish? Do you prefer to pray in English or in Spanish? Why?

If a person in El palmar speaks fluently both English and Spanish, which language would you prefer to speak with him/ her if you met him or her on the street? What about at the community center?

What about knowing both languages? Was there ever a time when being bilingual help you communicate with people in the neighborhood?

### **Closing questions**

Do you think that is important to learn English? Why?

What happens if someone forgets how to speak Spanish? Would that be good or bad for them? Why?

Do you think that is important to keep your Spanish and continue learning it? Why?

What about for mixing both languages when you talk?

Is there something else that I should have asked you and I did not?

Is there something that you want to ask me?

## A- Preguntas para la entrevista de los niños

### Historia Personal

Edad:

Grado:

Cuéntame algo acerca de ti, por ejemplo, ¿a qué escuela vas, dime algo de tu familia, qué te gusta hacer?

¿Siempre has vivido en El palmar? Si la respuesta es negativa, ¿dónde haz vivido antes?

¿En qué idioma te sientes más cómodo cuando hablas, en inglés, en español, o en los dos?

¿En qué idioma te sientes más cómodo cuando lees, en inglés, en español, o en los dos?

¿En qué idioma te sientes más cómodo cuando escribes, en inglés, en español, o en los dos?

### El uso del lenguaje en la escuela

¿Cuál es tu materia preferida? ¿Cuál es la materia que menos te gusta?

¿Cuáles son algunas de las cosas que te gustaría tu maestra supiera acerca de ti?

El entrevistador mostrará un mapa de una escuela que muestra un salón de clase, la cafetería, un autobús y la zona de juegos y preguntará al niño/a, señalando cada uno de estos lugares: ¿Qué lenguaje hablas cuando estás aquí?, ¿Qué lenguaje la mayoría de tus compañeros de clase hablan en cada uno de estos lugares? ¿Alguien les dice algo o está bien usar el lenguaje que tú quieras en cada uno de los diferentes sitios?

¿Tu maestro/o prefiere que hables en español o en inglés? Cuéntame que dice ella/él acerca del uso de los dos lenguajes. ¿Quién es el niño que habla más español en tu clase? ¿Qué dice la maestro/o cuando \_\_\_\_\_ habla en español en clase? ¿Y qué pasa cuando los niños hablan en inglés en clase?

¿Y qué pasa con los adultos de tu escuela? ¿La maestra/o habla español? ¿Y los demás adultos: la directora, secretaria, los limpiadores, los choferes del autobús, los que sirven la comida en la cafetería y los maestros de educación física?

¿Hay alguien que viene a tu clase a ayudar a tu maestro/a? ¿Esta persona habla en español? Si es así, ¿recuerdas alguna situación en la que ella/el use el español en clase?

¿Tienes alguna materia que la enseñen en español? Si es así, ¿te gusta aprender cosas en español? ¿Porqué?

¿Hay una pequeña biblioteca en tu salón de clases? ¿Hay muchos libros en tu clase? Si es así, cuéntame el tipo de libros que hay en la biblioteca de tu clase. ¿Hay libros escritos en español?

Cuando vas a la biblioteca de la escuela, cuéntame de los libros que sacas. ¿Qué tipos de libros prefieres pedir prestados? ¿Tienes alguna preferencia por pedir prestados libros en inglés o en español? ¿Tu maestro/o les aconseja qué tipo de libro deben de elegir cuando van a la biblioteca?

Si viene un niño/a nuevo a tu clase y él/ella no sabe inglés, ¿en qué idioma le hablas tú? ¿Porqué?

### **El uso del lenguaje en la casa**

Cuéntame algo de tu familia por ejemplo, ¿Con quién vives, cuántos hermanos tienes, cuáles son algunas cosas que tu familia sabe hacer bien?

¿Cuál es el lenguaje que escuchas más en tu casa? Cuéntame acerca de el o los lenguajes que los diferentes integrantes de tu familia hablan. ¿Quién usa más inglés en tu familia? ¿Quién usa más español? ¿Quién usa los dos lenguajes?

¿Y tú? ¿Qué lenguaje usas cuando hablas con tus padres, abuelos o hermanos? ¿O usas ambos lenguajes por igual? ¿Porqué?

¿Alguna vez ayudas a tus padres, u otros adultos, a traducir del inglés al español? Si eso es cierto, dime en que situaciones (y lugares) ayudas a traducir. ¿Cuándo fue la última vez en que haz ayudado a traducir o a leer a un adulto en inglés? Cómo te sentistes cuando hicistes ésto?

¿Hay situaciones en las que alguien te ayuda a traducir del inglés al español y vice-versa? Si es así, explícame sobre esas situaciones.

Cuéntame acerca de tus programas favoritos en la televisión.

¿Quién es tu cantante favorito? En este momento, ¿cuál es tu canción favorita? Si tu radio tuviera una sola estación, ¿preferirías escuchar música en inglés o en español? ¿Porqué?

Si tienes que escribir una carta a un amigo, ¿Lo harías en inglés o en español? ¿Y una carta a tu maestro/o, padres o abuelos?

¿Envías mensajes de texto? Si es así, ¿lo haces en inglés o en español, o en ambos? ¿En qué idioma tus amigos te escriben a ti? Y para ti, ¿es más fácil enviarlos en inglés o en español?

¿Prefieres recibir mensajes en un determinado idioma? Supongamos que tu teléfono celular puede recibir textos en un solo idioma, ¿elegirías inglés o español? ¿Porqué?

## **Uso del lenguaje en el programa de tutoría después de escuela y en la comunidad**

¿Hace cuánto tiempo comenzaste a venir al centro de tutorías?

En el centro, ¿cuál es el lenguaje que usas más? Explica cuáles es/son el/los lenguajes que usas cuando te ayudan con la tarea, cuando hacen deportes, mientras comes la merienda, cuando hablas con tus amigos.

Las maestros/os que trabajan en el centro de tutorías, ¿prefieren que tú hables en inglés o en español o están contentos que hables los dos? Si es así, cuéntame algunas situaciones en que eso pasa.

Usualmente, cuando los niños en el “centro” terminan con la tarea, los maestros les piden que escojan y lean un libro de la biblioteca. Puedes contarme un poco del tipo de libros que tiene el centro. ¿Cuál libro prefieres leer? ¿Tienes alguna preferencia por leer libros en inglés o en español?

¿Vas a la iglesia? Si es así, ¿qué lenguaje hablas cuando vas a la iglesia? La misa que tu asistes, ¿se da en inglés o en español? ¿Tú prefieres rezar en inglés o en español? ¿Porqué?

Si una persona en El palmar habla fluídamente inglés y español, ¿en qué lenguaje prefieres hablar con él/ella si te lo encuentras en la calle? ¿Y si te lo encuentras en el “centro”?

¿Qué piensas tú de usar los dos lenguajes? ¿Recuerdas alguna situación en la que ser bilingüe te ha ayudado a comunicarte con la gente que vive en tu colonia?

### **Preguntas de cierre**

¿Tú piensas que es importante aprender inglés? ¿Porqué?

¿Qué piensas tú si alguien se olvidara de cómo hablar en español? ¿Sería algo bueno algo para ellos? ¿Porqué?

¿Qué piensas tú, es importante mantener y continuar aprendiendo el español? ¿Porqué?

¿Y qué piensas tú de hablar mezclando los dos dos lenguajes?

¿Hay algo más que debería haber preguntado y no lo he hecho?

¿Hay algo que quieras preguntarme?

## **B- Parents/Other Adult Family Member Interview Questions**

### **Personal/ background**

Tell me something about yourself. If no answer, prompt: how many children do you have?  
Tell me about your hobbies, etc.

What do you feel you do well?

Do you feel more comfortable talking in Spanish or in English, or in both? Do you feel more comfortable reading in Spanish or in English, or in both? Do you feel more comfortable writing in Spanish or in English, or in both?

### **Language use at home**

What language do you hear the most at home? Tell me about the language(s) that the different members of your family use. Who uses the most English in your family? Who uses the most Spanish? Who uses both languages?

What language(s) do you frequently speak with your children? Why?

What language(s) do you speak with other adults of your family? Why?

Tell me about your favorite programs in T.V. Do you prefer to watch programs in English or in Spanish? Why?

Who is your favorite singer? What's your favorite song right now? If your radio could only get one station, would you prefer to listen to music in English or Spanish? Why?

Do you "text-message"? If so, do you do it in English or Spanish or both? What language do you friends mostly write to you in? Is it easier for you to text in English or in Spanish?

Would you prefer to receive "text-messages" in a specific language? If your cell phone could only receive texts in one language, would you pick Spanish or English? Why?

Do you read books to your children (or grandchildren)? If so, do you read them in English or in Spanish? Do your children (or children family members) ask you to read to them in a particular language?

### **Language use in the community**

If a person speaks fluently both English and Spanish, which language would you prefer to speak with him/her?

What language do you frequently speak with your neighbors? Why?

What language do you frequently speak with your friends? Why?

What language do you frequently speak when you go shopping? Why?

What language do you speak at church? Is the mass that you attend in English or in Spanish? Do you pray in English or in Spanish? Why?

What language do you speak when you come to the “center” (after-school tutoring program)?

What language do you use when you speak to other parents, children and teachers at the center?

In which occasions would you prefer to speak in Spanish? And in which occasions would you prefer to speak in English?

Can you tell me a story in which knowing Spanish has helped you in El palmar?

Can you tell me a story in which knowing English has helped you in El palmar?

What about knowing both languages? Was there ever a time when being bilingual help you communicate with people in the neighborhood?

Do you help other adults to translate from English into Spanish or vice-versa? If so, tell me in which situations (or places) you help them to translate.

Are there situations in which someone helps you to translate from English into Spanish or vice-versa? If so, explain those situations.

### **Language use of their children (or other children family member)**

What language do you think your child prefer to use when he/she is talking? What language do you think your child prefer to use when he/she is reading and writing?

Is your child using different languages when he/she is talking to you (or other members of the family)? What about when he/she is talking to a friend?

When did your child start speaking in English? Did he/she start before or after he entered school?

Did your child attend pre-school? If so, did he/she go to a BISD school or did he attend a Head Start program?

How do you think that the school has influenced on your child’s learning of English? How has it influenced on the maintenance of his/her Spanish? Do you think that your child is fluent in both languages?



What language do you think he/she is mostly using at school? Is he/she currently receiving instruction in English or Spanish?

How is the after school tutorial program at the “center” helping your child?

What language do you think he/she is mostly using at the center? Which is the language most used by the teachers that work at the center?

Do you think that his/her English has improved by attending the after school classes at the center? And, what about his/her Spanish?

### **Closing questions**

More than likely, your children (or other children family member) will learn English at school. Would you like that they also maintain and improve their Spanish? Why?

Do you think that is important to learn English? Why?

Do you think that is important to keep and continue learning your Spanish? Why?

What do you think about mixing the two languages? Why?

Is there something else that I should have asked you and I did not?

Is there something that you want to ask me?

## **B-Preguntas para la entrevista de padres y otros miembros adultos de la familia**

### **Historia Personal**

Cuénteme algo acerca de usted, por ejemplo, ¿cuántos hijos tiene, que le gusta hacer?

¿En qué idioma se siente más cómodo cuando habla, en inglés, en español, o en los dos?

¿En qué idioma se siente más cómodo cuando lee, en inglés, en español, o en los dos? ¿En qué idioma se siente más cómodo cuando escribe, en inglés, en español, o en los dos?

### **El uso del lenguaje en la casa**

¿Cuál es el lenguaje que escucha más en su casa? Cuénteme acerca del o los lenguajes que los diferentes integrantes de su familia hablan. ¿Quién usa más inglés en su familia? ¿Quién usa más español? ¿Quién usa los dos lenguajes?

¿Y usted? ¿Qué lenguaje usa cuando habla con sus hijos, o con otros adultos de la familia?

¿O usa ambos lenguajes por igual? ¿Porqué?

Cuénteme acerca de tus programas favoritos en la televisión. Prefiere ver la televisión ¿en inglés, o en español? ¿Porqué?

¿Quién es su cantante favorito? En este momento, ¿cuál es su canción favorita? Si su radio tuviera una sola estación, preferiría escuchar música ¿en inglés o en español? ¿Porqué?

¿Usted envía mensajes de texto? Si es así, ¿lo hace en inglés o en español, o en ambos? ¿En qué idioma sus amigos/familia le escriben a usted? Y para usted, ¿es más fácil enviarlos en inglés o en español?

¿Prefiere recibir mensajes en un determinado idioma? Supongamos que su teléfono celular puede recibir textos en un solo idioma, ¿elegiría inglés o español? ¿Porqué?

¿Usted le lee libros a sus hijos (u otros niños de su familia)? Si es así, ¿se los lee en inglés o en español? Sus hijos (o niños de su familia) le piden que se los lean en un idioma en particular?

### **Uso del lenguaje en la comunidad**

Si una persona en El palmar habla fluídamente inglés y español, ¿en qué lenguaje prefiere hablar con él/ella si se lo encuentra en la calle? Y si se lo encuentra en el “centro”?

¿Qué lenguaje habla usted frecuentemente con los vecinos? ¿Porqué?

¿Qué lenguaje habla usted frecuentemente con sus amigos? ¿Porqué?

¿Qué lenguaje habla usted frecuentemente cuando va de compras? ¿Porqué?

En “el centro” (programa de tutoría después de escuela), ¿cuál es el lenguaje que usa más?

¿Qué lenguaje usa más cuando habla con otros padres, niños y maestros en “el centro”?

¿En qué ocasiones prefiere usted hablar en español? ¿Y en qué ocasiones prefiere usted hablar en inglés?

¿Me podría contar una historia en la cual saber el español lo/la ayudó en El palmar?

¿Me podría contar una historia en la cual saber el inglés lo/la ayudó en El palmar?

¿Y qué me podría decir de ser bilingüe? ¿Hubo alguna vez que el hecho de ser bilingüe lo ayudó a comunicarse con la gente de su comunidad?

¿Va a la iglesia? Si es así, qué lenguaje habla cuando va a la iglesia? La misa que usted asiste, se da en inglés o en español? Usted ¿prefiere rezar en inglés o en español? ¿Porqué?

¿Hay situaciones en las que alguien le ha ayudado a traducir de el inglés al español y vice-versa? Si es así, explíqueme sobre esas situaciones.

### **Lenguaje utilizado por sus hijos (nietos)**

¿Qué lenguaje prefiere hablar su hijo (u otro niño de la familia) cuando habla? ¿Y qué lenguaje piensa usted él/ella prefiere cuando está leyendo o escribiendo?

Su hijo/u otro niño integrante de la familia, ¿usa diferentes lenguajes cuando habla con usted u otros miembros de la familia? ¿Y qué pasa cuando está hablando con sus amigos?

¿Cuándo comenzó su hijo (u otro niño de la familia) a hablar en inglés? ¿Comenzó antes o después de haber entrado a la escuela? Él/ella, ¿asistió a la escuela pre-escolar? Si fue así, ¿asistió a una escuela de BISD o de “Head Start”?

¿Cómo piensa usted que la escuela ha influenciado en el aprendizaje de inglés de su hijo? Y ¿Cómo ha influenciado el mantenimiento de su español? ¿Usted piensa que su hijo habla fluídamente los dos lenguajes?

¿Qué lenguaje piensa usted su hijo (u otro niño integrante de la familia) utiliza más en la escuela? En este momento, él/ella ¿está recibiendo instrucción en inglés o en español?

¿Cómo ayuda el programa de tutorías de después de escuela a su hijo (u otro niño integrante de la familia)? ¿Qué lenguajes piensa usted su hijo use más cuando viene al centro de tutorías? ¿Cuál es el lenguaje más usado por las maestras/os que trabajan en el centro?

¿Usted piensa que el inglés de su hijo (u otro niño integrante de la familia) ha mejorado desde que comenzó a venir a los programas de tutorías? ¿Y qué piensa usted de su español?

### **Preguntas de cierre**

Es muy probable que su hijo (u otro niño integrante de la familia) aprenda bien el inglés en la escuela. A usted le gustaría que también mantenga y mejore su español? ¿Porqué?

¿Qué piensa usted, es importante aprender el inglés? ¿Porqué?

Y, ¿es importante mantener y continuar aprendiendo el español? ¿Porqué?

Y ¿qué piensa usted de hablar mezclando los dos dos lenguajes?

¿Hay algo más que debería haber preguntado y no lo he hecho?

¿Hay algo que quiera preguntarme?

## **C- Staff Interview Questions**

### **Personal/ language use background**

Where were you born? If the nation of origin is other than United States, for how long were you living in this country?

For how long were you living in Brownsville (or other city of the Rio Grande Valley)?  
Where did you live before?

Do you consider yourself bilingual?

Which is your first language? Or, what language did your family spoke when you were a child?

At what age did you start learning your second language?

What language do you currently speak at home? Do you speak the same language when you speak to the different members of your family?

What language do you speak at work? (You can refer to other jobs, not only working in the center).

In which language do you feel more comfortable? For instance, would you prefer to read a novel in English or in Spanish?

Tell me about your favorite shows (or programs) on T.V.

Who is your favorite singer? What's your favorite song right now? If your radio could only get one station, would you prefer to listen to music in English or Spanish? Why?

If you need to write a letter to a friend, would you use English or Spanish? What about a letter to your teacher, and to your parents or grandparents?

Do you "text-message"? If so, do you do it in English or Spanish or both? What language do you friends mostly write to you in? Is it easier for you to text in English or in Spanish?

Would you prefer to receive "text-messages" in a specific language? If your cell phone could only receive texts in one language, would you pick Spanish or English? Why?

If you are talking to a person who understands and speaks fluently both languages, which language would you use with that person?

Has anyone ever scolded you for speaking Spanish?

Has anyone ever scolded you for speaking English?

### **Language use at work**

Tell me about your job history. Do you work (or volunteer) in another place besides working in the center? Where have you worked (or volunteered) before working here?

Did you study? Tell me about the degree(s) that you have obtained.

Did you study in the U.S. or abroad? Tell me about the schools and universities that you have attended.

Have you studied to be a bilingual teacher? If so, in your experience, did you receive enough training (or information) on bilingual education in the courses that you took during your preparation to become a bilingual teacher?

Have you ever worked in a school? If so, what was your job?

Have you worked as a teacher? If so, which language of instruction did you use?

What is your impression about how language is used in a bilingual classroom? Did you notice differences in the use of languages (English/Spanish) in the different contexts (e.g., in the classroom, in the playground, in the cafeteria)?

### **At the after school tutorial center**

For how long were you working in the “center” (after school tutorial program)?

What is the purpose of this program?

Tell me about your job at the center. What activities do you do to help the students that attend the after school tutorial program?

What language do you regularly use when you help students with their homework?

What language do you regularly use when you talk to the students in other contexts? For instance, which language do you use while they are participating in the sport activities during a field trip or while talking to them about personal issues?

Which language do you notice that the students use to interact among them at the center?

In general, which is the language that the students feel more comfortable with? Do you notice a difference in the preference of language in the different ages, grade levels or genders?

What language do you regularly use when you communicate with the parents (or grandparents) of the students that attend the center?

In your experience at the center, do you notice that parents show a preference in the language of instruction for their children?

Did you hear any comments from the parents stating that they want their children to learn English? Did you hear that they want their children to develop an academic Spanish?

Did you notice that parents appreciate having their children developed both languages (English and Spanish)?

What language(s) do you regularly use when you communicate with other staff members at the center?

At the center, do you think that there is a tendency in using one language (English or Spanish) more than the other?

Is there something else that you would like to say about how the two languages (English and Spanish) are used at the center?

### **Closing questions**

More than likely children will learn English at school. What do you think of the maintenance and academic development of their Spanish? What happens if someone forgets how to speak Spanish? Would that be good or bad for them? Why?

Do you think that is important to learn English? Why? What happens if someone doesn't learn English? Would that be good or bad for them? Why?

Is there something else that I should have asked you and I did not?

Is there something that you want to ask me?

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

### **ACADEMICAL EDUCATION**

- 2011- Doctor of education (Doctoral Program in Curriculum and Instruction, Specialization in Bilingual Studies, University of Texas at Brownsville).
- 2004 Master of Education/ Bilingual Education (University of Texas at Brownsville).
- 2003 Texas State Certification School Teacher (1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>) (University of Texas at Brownsville).
- 1986 Licenciante in Biological Sciences (School of Science, University of Uruguay, Montevideo, Uruguay).
- 1984 Technician in Pathology (School of Medicine, University of Uruguay, Montevideo, Uruguay).

### **FELLOWSHIPS/ AWARDS**

- 1992 Fellowship of CONYCIT, Montevideo, Uruguay
- 1991 Fellowship of Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, Montevideo, Uruguay

### **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

- 2001-2008 Elementary school teacher at Putegnat and El Jardin Elementary, BISD, Brownsville, Texas.
- 1991 – 1993 Teaching Associate. Comparative Neuroanatomy Department, Faculty of Sciences, University of Uruguay, Montevideo, Uruguay.
- 1990 – 1992 Teaching Assistant. Histology Department, Faculty of Medicine, University of Uruguay, Montevideo, Uruguay. Contest of opposition.
- 1987 – 1991 Teaching Assistant, Cell Biology Department, Faculty of Sciences, University of University, Montevideo, Uruguay.



## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- 2008- 2010    Research Assistant. Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education. University of Texas at Brownsville. Brownsville, Texas.
- 1997- 2000    Research Assistant. Dr Jeffrey Noebels' laboratory. Department of Neurology. Baylor College of Medicine. Houston, Texas.
- 1994 - 1997    Research Assistant. Dr Luis Colom's laboratory. Department of Neurology. Baylor College of Medicine. Houston, Texas.
- 1992 - 1993    Research Associate. Dr Elba Serrano's laboratory. Department of Biology. New Mexico State University. Las Cruces, New Mexico.
- 1992            Visiting Scientist. Department of Morphology, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel.
- 1991 – 1992    Fellow of the Ministerio de Educación y Cultura at the Comparative Neuroanatomy Division, Montevideo, Uruguay.
- 1987 – 1991    Honorary Assistant. Comparative Neuroanatomy Division at the Instituto de Investigaciones Biológicas Clemente Estable, Montevideo, Uruguay.

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2. Bussert-Webb, K. & **Díaz, M. E.** Community service learning: Impact on tutees. *AERA*, Denver, CO, April 30-May 4, 2010.
3. Bussert-Webb, K. & **Díaz, M. E.** Gardening justice, year 4: How tutoring and gardening impacted preservice teachers. *AERA*, Denver, CO, April 30-May 4, 2010.
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8. **Díaz, M. E.**, Garcia, J. & Smith, P. Oral history as a tool to address the needs of a south Texas colonia. *First Triennial CLASE Conference, Latino Students and Immigration Integration*, Athens, GA, 26-28 October, 2009.
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## CONFERENCES

- 46th Annual Texas AEYC Conference, Austin, TX, September 30-October 2, 2010.
- Understanding Complex Ecologies in a Changing World. American Educational Research Association (AERA), Denver, CO, April 30-May 4, 2010.
- First Triennial CLASE Conference, Latino Students and Immigration Integration, Athens, GA, 26-28 October, 2009.
- Teaching, Learning and Service Conference. The University of Texas at Brownsville, March, 2009.
- XV Encuentro Binacional de Educación "Educación integral para la vida". Matamoros, Tamaulipas, México, Noviembre, 2008.
- ISCAR (International Society for Cultural and Activity Research). Ecologies of Diversities. San Diego, CA, September, 2008.

- Symposium: “Current Issues in Education.” School of Education, University of Texas at Brownsville, February, 2007.
- Strategies to Close the Achievement Gap. Fifth Annual Celebrate Our Rising Stars. Summit V OELA (Office of English Language Acquisition) *Promising Strategies for Developing Literacy and Content Knowledge in Second-Language Learners*. Presenters: August, D., Hagan, E., Sherris, A. & **Díaz, M. E.** Washington, DC, October 2006.
- The 12th Annual Bi-national Conference of Education, Brownsville, Texas, October 2005.
- Seminar “Effective Second Language Acquisition.” Presenter: Stephen Krashen, El Paso, Texas, Junio 2005.
- The 34th Annual International Bilingual/Multicultural Education Conference (NABE), San Antonio, Texas, February 2005.
- Society for Neuroscience National Meeting, Miami, FL, November 1994.
- Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), Chicago, IL, March 1994.
- Society for Neuroscience National Meeting, Washington D.C., November 1993.

### **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES**

- Participation in the Success through Academic Interventions in Language and Literacy (SAILL) Project as a treatment teacher during the school year 2005-2006.
- As part of this project my class was selected to be observed by Dr. K Leos, Assistant Deputy U.S. Secretary of Education (May, 2006) and assisted with the production of teacher training videotapes.

### **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

2011- present LRA (Literacy Research Association)

2009 - present AERA (American Educational Research Association)

2010- present TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages)

2008- present The National Scholars Honor Society (Magna Cum Laude)