A FAMILY’S LINGUISTIC MEMOIRE: PAINTING A MULTIGENERATIONAL FAMILY PORTRAIT OF SPANISH MAINTENANCE AND LOSS

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by

Isabel Acosta

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A FAMILY’S LINGUISTIC MEMOIRE: PAINTING A MULTIGENERATIONAL FAMILY PORTRAIT OF SPANISH MAINTENANCE AND LOSS

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Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract

of

A FAMILY’S LINGUISTIC MEMOIRE: PAINTING A MULTIGENERATIONAL FAMILY PORTRAIT OF SPANISH MAINTENANCE AND LOSS

by

Isabel Acosta

Statement of Problem

Although the United States does not have an official language, English is the dominant language in the country. Some states have gone so far as to adopt the English language as the official language of the state and have implemented educational policies, such as Proposition 227 in California, to assure that English remains the dominant language. In the United States, children enrolled in the educational system who are English learners are placed in classes requiring them to develop proficiency in the dominant language. During this process, some English learner students are losing proficiency in their first language while developing their second language, English. On the other hand, some students are remaining proficient in their first language while developing their second language, English. Language maintenance and loss has been previously studied on individual students or groups of students at the same school site and in the same context. Within that research, multiple factors have been shown to influence the maintenance and loss of those students’ L1. However, in some families, even though Spanish is considered the L1 of each member, not all members have...
maintained the language at the same level of proficiency and, at times, the family members are scattered on the language spectrum of their L1. Not much research has involved families and the language identity of each individual member or the sociocultural factors that influence their language identity individually, causing them to either maintain or lose their L1.

Source of Data

This research is an autoethnographic/ethnographic qualitative study using personal experiences regarding L1 and L2 development, maintenance, and loss. This research also employed in-depth scripted interviews involving at least two interview sessions (approximately 90 minutes) with each person individually. This study used a sociolinguistic framework to study the influence of a family’s sociocultural factors that influenced the loss or maintenance of their L1 while developing their L2 and their current language identity.

Conclusion Reached

If new generation Latino parents, and other non-English speaking families, do not make a concerted effort to foster and encourage home language maintenance, it is very likely that English will become the dominant language of the country within future English learners’ homes. The maintenance of a home language can be a difficult undertaking. Nevertheless, it is clear from this research that maintaining a home language and promoting biliteracy and biculturalism is possible. Bilingual families must
make a conscious and intentional decision (from the birth of their child[ren]) to promote, practice, and nurture home language maintenance.

_________________________________, Committee Chair
José Cintrón, Ph.D.

_________________________________
Date
DEDICATION

I want to dedicate my thesis to my sons, Ismael Isaiah and Isaac Javier. Although you may not understand right now why you learn in Spanish and why I make you speak to me in Spanish, I hope that one day you will not only understand, but be grateful for dad’s and my decision to attempt to help you become bilingual and biliterate. Never be ashamed of our language, it is our identity. I pray and hope that you will keep the language and pass it on to your children; that our language identity continues to live through your children and your children’s children. I love you “Oh so much!”
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Primeramente, quiero agradecerle a Dios por todas sus bendiciones y porque me ha dejado lograr una meta más. Quiero agradecerles a mis padres, hermanas y hermanos por su ánimo, apoyo y amor. Quiero agradecerle a mis suegros, mis cuñadas, a sus esposos y a mi hermana Verónica por todo lo que han hecho por mí. Sin ustedes, yo nunca hubiese alcanzado esta meta. Gracias por amar y cuidar a mis hijos mientras yo estudiaba. Su apoyo y ayuda ha sido una gran bendición para mí.

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Por último, quiero agradecerle a la persona que me ha dado el mayor apoyo, mi esposo Ismael. Gracias por siempre darme ánimo para seguir adelante en mis estudios. Gracias por siempre estar a mi lado y por nunca desanimarme de lo que me encanta hacer, educar. Gracias por aguantar mi horario de maestra y estudiante, sé que no siempre fue fácil. Te amo Melon.

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would have never reached this goal. Thank you for loving and taking care of my sons while I studied. Your support and help has been a great blessing to me.

I would also like to thank Professor, Dr. José Cintrón for his support and guidance. Thanks to you and your class, I was able to discover my interest in bilingualism. Through the class conversations and readings, I was able to identify myself as a bilingual and begin to understand some of my life’s language experiences.

Lastly, I want to thank the person who has given me the most support, my husband Ismael. Thank you for always encouraging me to continue with my studies. Thank you for always being by my side and for never discouraging me to do what I love, educate. Thanks for putting up with my schedule as a teacher and a student; I know it was not always easy. I love you, Melon!
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As a high school Spanish teacher, I encounter many Latino students whose first language (L1) is Spanish and second language (L2) is English in both my non-native classes and my native classes. According to those students, Spanish was the language they were taught since birth; however, once they entered the public school system, some students maintained proficiency in their L1 while developing and maintaining proficiency in their L2 and some did not. Some of my students, over time, had some degree of language loss (Anderson, 1999; Jackson & Hogg, 2010) of their L1 while they were developing and maintaining their L2. When asked, many of my students mentioned different factors that lead to their L1 language maintenance or loss.

My curiosity regarding the influence of multiple factors in a student’s L1 maintenance or loss while developing their L2 in an English-dominant environment caused me to focus on a specific population, siblings. Prior research regarding L1 maintenance and loss has been done on individual students or groups of students at a specific school site in a specific context. I often teach (Latino) siblings, some in the same school year and some subsequent school years. I began to notice that not all the siblings had the same Spanish language abilities in listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Some of the siblings in my Spanish classes were placed in the same course level (Native or Non-Native). Other sets of siblings were not identified alike; some students were placed in my native class while their siblings were placed in my non-native classes. Such
placements (within the courses I taught) made me curious about what sociocultural factors influence the language maintenance or loss of an L1 while developing proficiency in an L2 with children within the same family and whether their language identity would be similar or not.

I began to look closely at my own family, especially in the area of subtractive bilingualism (Lambert, 1981), which is a lack of development of L1 that can lead to language loss. According to Guardado (2002), previous research suggests that language loss does not occur suddenly; it occurs over a period of time and not all language loss is the same. People experience language loss in different degrees and can be placed on a continuum according to their speaking abilities in a language. My L1, as well as my siblings’, is Spanish. Over time, due to different influencing factors, speaking proficiency in our L1 began to diverge as we developed and maintained our L2, eventually leaving us scattered along the bilingual continuum. At one point, the factors influenced some members to the point where one of us had complete language loss (Anderson, 1999; Jackson & Hogg, 2010). Such situations have intrigued me to research what sociocultural factors influence the maintenance or loss of an L1 for members in the same family while they develop their L2 in an English-dominant setting.

**Background**

The United States is known for its population diversity, which has been influenced by the migration of different races and ethnicities; one of the largest migrant populations in the United States is that of Latino ethnicity. Along with race and ethnicity
comes language. In the case of Latinos, Spanish is considered to be the home language. The importance of speaking Spanish, not only for those of Latino descent but also for others in the United States, is due to the constant migration of Latinos, which is continually changing the makeup in areas highly populated with Spanish speakers. Due to the constant migration of first-generation Latinos to the United States, knowing Spanish remains important because the language migrates with its speakers. Every year, numerous students are enrolled in school and a large group of those students are considered to be English learners (ELs). According to the California Department of Education (CDE, 2014), 84% of California’s K-12 English learners identified Spanish as their L1 in the 2013-2014 school year. In the same school year, according to CDE (2014), there are more than one million more Spanish-speaking ELs in the K-12 system in California than ELs of the second most spoken language (Vietnamese) amongst ELs.

Although the United States does not have an official language, English is the dominant language in the country. Some states have gone so far as to adopt the English language as the official state language and have implemented educational policies to assure that English remains the dominant language, thereby suppressing other languages. In the United States, EL children enrolled in the educational system are placed in classes requiring them to develop proficiency in the dominant language. In California, educational policies have been implemented to keep schools and teachers from using the students’ L1 during instruction, which can be used as a bridge to connect one language to
another. Policies such as Proposition 227\(^1\) give a message of nativism in that any
language that is not English is not as important and therefore should not be acknowledged
in a school setting; such policy leads to proficiency loss in L1. However, some students
are able to maintain proficiency in their L1 in their quest for developing the English
language.

**Statement of the Problem**

In the United States, an English-dominant country, some EL students are losing
proficiency in their L1 while they develop their L2 while other students remain proficient
in their L1 while they develop their L2. Language maintenance and loss have been
previously studied on individual students or groups of students at the same school site
and in the same context. Within that research, multiple sociocultural factors have been
shown to influence the maintenance and loss of those students’ L1. However, there are
no research studies on families and the language identity of each individual member. In
some families, even though Spanish is considered the L1 of each member, not all
members remain on the same level of proficiency and are scattered on the proficiency
spectrum of their L1.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study is an autoethnographic/ethnographic qualitative look at a
multigenerational Latino family raised in the same household in a predominantly

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\(^1\) Proposition 227 is a proposition passed in 1998 in California requiring California limited
English proficient students to be taught nearly all in English and attempted to eliminate bilingual
programs.
English-speaking community in northern California. The purpose was to detail how different generational family members identified their language proficiency in their native language (Spanish). It is hoped the results of this study will provide in-depth research regarding the sociocultural factors that influence the development, maintenance, and language loss in bilingual families in an English-dominant community.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study used a sociolinguistic framework to study the influence of a family’s sociocultural environment on the development, maintenance, and loss of L1 while developing English as a second language in an English-dominant setting.

**Limitations of Study**

The participants of this research were my immediate family: my two parents, one sister, three brothers, and me. No inducements were offered. I safeguarded my objectivity as a member of the family by removing any questions that focused on our relationship as siblings. All questions focused exclusively on the participants’ experiences with language. Also, my family was informed that during this study, they should not feel pressured into participating in this study because I am their family member. Their ability to withdraw from the study at any time was clearly communicated verbally and in writing. I used my family and not any other family because my family fit specific criteria that I was looking for:

1. *Multigenerational family*: My family consists of different generations; it has a minimum of three or four generations (might be three or four depending on how each
person identifies themselves). This is because my father, who in reality is my stepfather, is first generation. My mother could consider herself to be second or third, my half-brothers could consider themselves to be second, third, or fourth, depending on if they identify more with my father’s or mother’s side of the family. My sister and I could consider ourselves second, third, or fourth depending on with which parent we identify. It is important to study multigenerational families due to the impact each generation has on language maintenance and loss. It is more than likely that each passing generation will begin to lose their proficiency in their L1 in an English-dominant context if the heads of the family or if each individual does not make a conscious decision to maintain the family’s L1.

2. *Predominately English-speaking community:* My family was raised in a small town in Northern California. During my upbringing, this town was very small and was divided by socioeconomic status. Due to my parents having a business and being socioeconomic stable, my family did not live in the part of town where most Latinos lived. In the neighborhood in which we lived, the majority of the population near us was Caucasian, and English was the dominant language. At school, I rarely saw anyone who had the same ethnic background I did with the exception of my siblings and a few other Latinos I saw on campus but rarely interacted with.

According to the CDE’s (1996) DataQuest database regarding the 1995-1996 school year, in which I was in the sixth grade, my sister was in the fourth, and the oldest of my three half-brothers was in Kindergarten, there were a total of 18 Latino students at
my school of 495 students; therefore, I was part of the 3.6% Latino (White and Non-White) population. Within my grade level (6), there were four Latinos, one male and three females, including me. For my sister’s grade level (4), there were four Latinos, one male and three females, including her. My younger half-brother was the only Latino in his grade level (K) (CDE, 1996).

Though there were other Latinos at my school, I rarely interacted with them. In my sociocultural context (community, school and home), I rarely had the opportunity to speak Spanish because I was raised mostly among English speakers. In my home, my mother spoke fluent English and my stepfather was the only one who spoke Spanish to me. My parents worked often and our family lived three hours away; therefore, we rarely fraternized with other Spanish-speaking Latinos until I was in junior high school. Even though we had minimal opportunities to use our L1, some maintained it to different degrees (included in the results). How was it possible for some of my family members to maintain some level of proficiency in L1 and how did our sociocultural context influence it?

It would be very rare for a researcher to have access to a family that fits the criteria. The school at which I work would not be able to fulfill the criteria because Latinos are the biggest population at the school site.
Definitions of Terms

**Bilingual**

A person who can function orally in two languages

**Biliteracy**

The state of being literate in two languages in speech, reading, and writing

**Code-Switching**

The alternating use of two languages at the word, phrase, clause, or sentence level

(Valdés-Fallis, 1978)

**Dominant Language**

The language that is seen to be superior to all other languages spoken in a community or country

**English Learners**

Anyone whose first language is not English and is in the process of acquiring proficiency in the English language

**Home Language/Native Language/ L1**

The first language acquired due to the need to survive in one’s home context

**Immigrant**

A person who was not born in the country in which they reside

**Language Acquisition/Development**

The process of learning a native or second language
Language Loss
When an individual’s home language begins to diminish or be suppressed due to the natural disappearance of the language or due to the language being a minority language in a dominant language context (Anderson, 1999; Jackson & Hogg, 2010).

Language Maintenance
The proficient usage of a language by people and retaining the use of the language in specific contexts (Baker, 1996)

Latino
A person of either Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, Central American, or South American descent

Linguicism
Prejudice based on a person’s language or manner of speaking

Long-Term English Learner
An English learner who has been in United States schools for more than six years without reaching sufficient English proficiency to be reclassified (Olsen, 2010)

Nativism
The practices or policies in place in order to preserve the dominance and/or interest of the native inhabitants against those of immigrants (Nativism, 2016)

Second Language/L2
The second language in which a person is attempting to acquire proficiency
Organization of the Study

In Chapter 2, through the literature review, I provide a context for my research regarding the different factors that influence a person’s proficiency in their L1 as well as in their L2. I review topics such as the influence of a person’s sociolinguistic context on one’s ethnic and language identity, bilingualism, parent involvement, language maintenance and loss, and English dominance.

Chapter 3 contains an explanation of the study design, including a description of the setting and participants as well as data collection instruments. Discussion includes the steps necessary to analyze the data to provide information about the factors that influence a family’s L1 maintenance and L2 development and maintenance based on the family’s sociocultural context.

Chapter 4 presents the findings regarding the different sociocultural factors that influenced the Spanish language development, maintenance, and loss of each participant. It also presents where the participants are currently placed on the bilingual spectrum and my predictions of their placement in the future.

Chapter 5 presents recommendations as to what parents can do to help their child(ren) maintain their L1 while developing their L2. Chapter 5 also presents my prediction of where each of my family members will be on the bilingual spectrum in the future.
Chapter 2  
LITERATURE REVIEW  

Introduction  

The over-arching topic of this review is what Hymes (as cited in Valdés & Figueroa, 1994) calls *communicative competence/proficiency* (the ability to use the language appropriately) and how its use and a person’s level of competence in more than one language can be affected by the user’s social context, which leads to the configuring of an individual’s social identity. According to Tajfel (1981), *social identity* is a branch of an individual’s personal identity, which stems from that individual’s awareness of pertaining to a group or category and having an emotional attachment to the membership of that particular group or category.

An individual’s awareness of one’s social identity is not always present in the individual’s mind. Hurtado and Gurin (2004) shared the following definition of two aspects of social identity: identification and consciousness.

**Identification**, then, is whether individuals think of themselves as belonging to certain groups based on, ethnicity, gender, and class. **Consciousness** refers to whether individuals are aware that the groups they belong to hold a certain status (either powerful or not powerful) in society and whether they will take action to change this status, not just for themselves but for other members of the group as well (Gurin, Miller, & Gurin, 1980, 143). (p. xvii)
The following articles and literature in this review addresses four main topics that factor in one’s communicative competence/proficiency: The influence of one’s sociolinguistic context in one’s community on ethnicity identification and language use, bilingual self-identification, parental influence on language maintenance and loss, and English dominance. Each of these topics leads to the construct of an individual’s social identity.

**The Influence of One’s Sociolinguistics Context in the Community on Race/Ethnic and Language Identity**

Baker (1996), Feinauer and Whiting (2012), and Zentella (1997) focused on language and how social settings in one’s neighborhood and school context can influence an individual’s race/ethnicity identification and/or preference in language use. Baker (1996) gave insight on how there are multiple language communities that interact with other language communities and influence one another, especially with someone who is bilingual. Interactions amongst languages cause a constant change within a person’s use of either language, therefore causing there to be a majority and minority language depending on the context in which a specific language is needed more than the other (Baker, 1996). Schools can also play a role in whether a child takes interest or feels it is important to speak their first language. Feinauer and Whiting (2012) examined how two predominantly Latino communities in Boston and Chicago influenced the Latino students in their public school systems to identify themselves racially/ethnically as well as which language they preferred to use. Zentella (1997) studied a group of young Puerto Rican
children growing up in a tight-knit neighborhood in New York. Her researched focused on how the community’s beliefs, culture, aspirations, and way of life could be revealed through the language they spoke (Zentella, 1997). The language each child spoke to certain individuals reflected a belief and a practice of its community and also reflected not only how the children identified themselves ethnically/racially and as a bilingual but also how others identified them (Zentella, 1997). All three researchers had different findings based on its context; however, all three found that the sociolinguistic context of a person plays an important role that influences how an individual identifies themselves in race/ethnicity and language.

**Bilingualism: The Process of Self-Identification**

Valdés and Figueroa (1994) focused on bilingualism, from the difficult process of defining what it means to be bilingual to identifying an individual’s level of bilingualism based on an individual’s ability to function in each language. An individual’s level of bilingualism can be determined by when they first encountered each language, and the level of competency in each language does not remain constant in one’s lifespan because some levels of bilingualism can change due to context (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994). One’s level of bilingualism can also be categorized based on one’s reasoning to become a speaker of a specific language and the result of one’s classification based on the individual’s immigration results, such as first generation or second generation, etc. (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994). The process of bilingual language identification is very
complex; Valdés and Figueroa’s research took on the difficult task of attempting to make the identification and categorization of one’s level of bilingualism less complicated.

**Parental Influence on Language Maintenance and Language Loss**

*Language Maintenance* is the retention and solidity of a language based on the number of people who speak it and their level of proficiency in the language (Baker, 1996). *Language Loss* is when an individual’s home language begins to diminish or be suppressed due to the natural disappearance of the language or due to the language being a minority language in a language-dominant context (Anderson, 1999; Jackson & Hogg, 2010). Brown (2011); Pacini-Ketchabwa, Bernhard, and Freire (2001); and Wang (2009) researched the struggle families face when they make a conscious decision to maintain their child’s home language in an educational system that ignores minority languages and promotes a dominant language. In all of the research, the parents of children who were learning English felt it was important for their child to maintain their home language. In Wang (2009), parents fought the language discrimination their Chinese-speaking families were facing. For those parents, maintenance of their home language went hand-in-hand with their culture and identity. Parents’ language practices in the home played an important role in the maintenance of the home language (Brown, 2011; Pacini-Ketchabwa et al., 2001). According to Krashen (1998), parents can help maintain a student’s home language by having a strict policy in which the home language can only be spoken at home. Research by Brown (2011), Pacini-Ketchabwa et al. (2001), and Wang (2009) identified that for there not to be a loss of the home language, parents or
individuals must make a conscious decision and establish everyday practices for maintaining their child’s home language.

**English Dominance**

According to Master (1998), English is the most powerful language in the world today because it is the language that is used across the world for business, science, and technology. In the United States’ educational system, English is the dominant language and the rest are considered minority languages. Laws have been put in place to assure that English is the dominant language in the United States. Andrews (2013) challenged the educational system’s English learner curriculum by suggesting that schools use a student’s home language as a bridge to the English, which would cause a student’s affective filter to be lowered and not see the language as a threat to their culture or identity. Merino (as cited in Guardado, 2002) conducted a study regarding the experiences of Spanish-speaking elementary school children growing up bilingual in the United States and found that the majority of her participants experienced a language loss and were not necessarily bilingual. Merino (as cited in Guardado, 2002) found that the government, educators, politicians, and parents were more concerned with the development of English by associating it to success, which then gave the children’s L1 a secondary role and, for some, caused a language loss. The above research validates that for students to maintain their L1, schools, governments, parents, and politicians need to support a student’s L1 while developing their L2 because it is crucial to their identity.
Summary

The articles in this review provided an analysis of the different factors that may lead to the communicative competence/proficiency of one’s home language and the construct of their social identity that is influenced by the following: one’s sociolinguistic context in one’s community on race/ethnicity identification and language use, bilingual self-identification, parental influence on language maintenance and loss, and English dominance. The reviewed research is used to help clarify the research conducted on a family in which their social environment has affected their language competence and social identity.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the participants and settings in which the research took place. It also describes the methods that were used in this study for data collection, the study design, and the methods for data analysis. This study is a qualitative look at a multigenerational Latino family raised in the same household in a predominantly English-speaking community in northern California. The purpose was to detail how different generational family members identify themselves as bilinguals via language proficiency in their native language (Spanish) and proficiency in their second language (English). The study focused on one main question:

1. How does a bilingual family’s sociocultural context (city, community, school) influence their first language (L1) development, maintenance of their L1, and ethnic identity while developing a second language in an English-dominant community?

Research Design

This research is an autoethnographic/ethnographic qualitative study using personal experiences regarding L1 and L2 development, maintenance, and loss. This research employed in-depth scripted interviews involving at least two interview sessions (approximately 90 minutes) with each person individually. This study used a sociolinguistic framework to study the influence of a family’s sociocultural factors that
influenced the loss or maintenance of their L1 while they developed their L2 and their current language identity.

**Participants and Context**

The participants of this research were members of my immediate family. There were a total of seven participants in this study: my two parents, one sister, three half-brothers, and me. All participants are of Latino descent and their L1 is Spanish while L2 is English. The research was conducted at my parents’ home in Northern California. I did not offer any inducements. All participants signed a consent form that informed them of the study and their rights (see Appendix A).

**Data Collection Procedures**

Interviews were conducted and recorded by the researcher. Interviews were in English with all participants except with my stepfather who was interviewed in Spanish. During the interviews, participants:

1. Were asked questions (see Appendix B) pertaining to their L1 maintenance and L2 development.

2. Used Valdés and Figueroa’s Table 1.2, Types of Immigrant Bilinguals (see Appendix C), as a resource to identify their Type, Stage, and Language Use.

Interviews were transcribed. I looked for and found similarities and differences in participants’ L1 development, maintenance, and loss based on different influencing factors (home, school, etc.). I kept all data including recordings and interview
transcriptions on my laptop with a single-person password. All data will be destroyed once the analysis is complete.
Chapter 4
DATA ANALYSIS

Setting the Language Foundation of a MultiGenerational Family

Leticia

In 1983, my 17-year-old mother Leticia dropped out of high school three months before graduation, married my biological predominantly Spanish-speaking father, and nine months later, I was born in Victoria, Texas. My mother, the 9th of 11 children, was born and raised in La Feria, Texas to Pentecostal monolingual Spanish-speaking migrant workers. My maternal grandparents, despite having lived in Texas for most of their lives, never felt the need to learn the English language; it was not necessary to speak English in order to survive as migrant farm workers. My mother developed her first language, Spanish, at home; her parents, siblings, extended family, and church family influenced the development and maintenance of her home language. For my mother to survive, it was necessary for her to develop and maintain the Spanish language. At the age of five, my mother entered the public school system in Texas and began developing English as a second language. My mother made friends with monolingual English speakers and received a formal education in the English language, which influenced the development and maintenance of her English. My mother grew up speaking both languages and, by the age of 17, my mother was bilingual and biliterate. When conversing, she was aware of which language was appropriate to use depending on whom she was conversing with and the context of the conversation. As an adult, once out of her monolingual Spanish-
speaking home, my mother continued to maintain her Spanish-speaking proficiency in order to communicate to her new predominantly Spanish-speaking husband, my father.

**My Biological Father, Santos**

My mother and father met at church in Victoria, Texas when my mother was 16 years old. My father Santos was three and one-half years older than my mother. He was a predominantly Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrant who was the child of monolingual Spanish-speaking immigrant migrant workers. My father was born in San Luis Potosí, Mexico and had received a sixth-grade education there. He immigrated to the United States at the age of 14 along with his parents and siblings in search of work.

Although my father arrived in the United States as a monolingual Spanish speaker, at first he did not develop the English language because he was never enrolled in the local educational system; he immediately went to the work field and did not need the language to do his daily tasks. By the time my father met my mother, he had acquired a small vocabulary in conversational English that allowed him to perform his job as a cattleman at a ranch for a wealthy family in Victoria, Texas. Due to his position as the ranch foreman, he had to acquire a specific basic English vocabulary to perform his job. According to my mother, my father only spoke English at work because it was necessary; at home and in any other context, he only spoke Spanish. The need for my sister and me to develop and maintain the Spanish language from birth to the age of three and five was heavily influenced by our predominantly Spanish-speaking father. Despite my mother being bilingual and biliterate and fully capable of teaching us the English language, my
mother made the conscious decision to teach us Spanish first because it would allow us to communicate with our father. In 1985, my parents decided to move from Victoria, Texas to Modesto, California, where my sister Roseanna was born when I was one and a half years old.

My Stepfather, Javier

In 1983 at the age of 17, Javier Morales arrived in Santa Ana, California as a monolingual Spanish-speaking undocumented immigrant. Javier migrated to the United States from a small Ranchito\(^2\) known as El Encinal Durango, Mexico, a small farming town 50 miles away from the nearest city, where he was raised by his two monolingual Spanish-speaking parents. In El Encinal, the farmers milked their cows and worked their land for survival. The wives tended to their children and home, and their children attended the local elementary school until they were old enough to work alongside their parents. Javier, the middle child of five, developed Spanish as his first language; Spanish was the only language spoken at home, school, and with friends and family. Once Javier entered school, he continued to maintain and strengthen his speaking and literacy abilities in his first language. Javier received a fifth-grade formal public education in Spanish and at the age of 10, he entered the work field alongside his father and older brother. Javier was unable to continue his formal education because El Encinal did not offer public education after the fifth grade; secondary education was only offered in the city and required a tuition fee that his family was not able to afford.

\(^2\) Ranchito: a small ranch style town. Usually limited in power and stores.
As a teenager, Javier would hear family speak about *el Norte*³ where the people spoke English, life was “easier,” and there was an abundance of money; Javier decided it was necessary to migrate to *el Norte*, the land of opportunity. Within a couple of days of arriving in Santa Ana, Javier obtained a job as a landscaper without needing to speak the dominant language, English. As the months went by, Javier did not feel the urgency to acquire speaking skills in the English language; his roommates (cousins) were monolingual Spanish speakers, his co-workers were monolingual Spanish speakers, and he did his everyday tasks and errands at Spanish-speaking businesses. Everything about Javier’s life had changed: country, work field, community, and peers; yet, the one thing that remained familiar in his new world was his home language of Spanish.

In 1985, after being deported and re-entering the country, Javier decided that he would move up north to Modesto to work for his sister and her husband who owned taco trucks. His sister Yolanda and her husband Adelmo lived next-door to my father and mother, my grandparents, my newborn sister, and me. My father, who was then a foreman for the Blue Diamond Almond Company in Modesto, California, became best friends with his neighbor Adelmo, Javier’s brother-in-law. Adelmo and my father were such good friends that when Javier arrived in northern California, my parents traveled with Yolanda and Adelmo to pick up Javier from the Sacramento airport. Javier moved in with his sister Yolanda and Adelmo and helped them run their taco truck business.

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³ El Norte: Up North, referring to the United States (being North of Mexico).
**My Parents**

In 1988, my mother of 21 years divorced my father after five years of marriage. My mother, sister, and I moved into a small one-bedroom house and my mother worked three jobs to support the three of us; one of her jobs was working for Yolanda and Adelmo preparing the food for the taco trucks every morning. My maternal grandparents and our new babysitter continued to influence the maintenance of my sister’s and my first language after my biological, monolingual Spanish-speaking father stopped attending his weekly visits with my sister and me. In 1988, I was enrolled in preschool and introduced to “academic” English at the age of four. Prior to preschool, my sister and I were introduced to English via cartoons, conversations with my cousins, and the occasional slipup from my mother. Once in preschool, I began to acquire vocabulary in the English language, which influenced Roseanna’s vocabulary as well; I would speak to her using the language I was learning. At the end of 1988, Javier began to romantically pursue my mother and, in 1989, Javier convinced my mother to move with him to the city of Chico, California to open a taco truck business. My mother agreed and Javier became my stepfather.

My stepfather, mother, sister, and I moved to Chico, California at the end of 1989. Chico was a small growing town located in Northern California. According to the Butte County Association of Governments (1990), Chico had a population of 40,079 people in 1990: 35,858 White, 731 Black, 439 American Indian and Alaskan Native, and 1,602 Asian and Pacific Islanders. Of the 40,079 people, 3,484 were of Hispanic origin (of any
race). According to my mother, when they moved to Chico, there was one Mexican Restaurant, Tacos Cortez, and my stepfather wanted to be the first taco truck in Chico. My stepfather was still a dominant Spanish speaker and had not developed enough of the English language to be able to run a business in a predominantly monolingual English-speaking community. My mother, who was both bilingual and biliterate in English and Spanish, became the contact person for the business; my stepfather became very dependent on my mother’s bilingual and biliterate skills for his business. Despite starting a new business in an English-dominant speaking community, my stepfather did not feel the urgency to acquire the dominant language, English, for his business.

**siblings: our birth order**

I have four siblings; three of them are my half-siblings. For my siblings and me, our birth order is a factor in the maintenance and loss of our first language, Spanish. I am the oldest of the five children, and my biological sister Roseanna is one and one-half years younger. When my parents moved to Chico, my mother became pregnant and gave birth to the oldest of my half-brothers Javier “Tito” in 1990 who is six and a half years younger than me. My parents waited another six years before having another child. My half-brother Omar was born in 1996 and is 12 and one-half years younger than me. My youngest half-brother, Vicente, was born in 1999 and he is 15 and one-half years younger than me. Although our age difference is broad, we were all identified by our mother as English-as-a-second-language learners when we entered the Chico public school system. One of the biggest factors in the maintenance and loss of our first language was my
stepfather in conjunction with our birth order; as the years went by, my stepfather’s
development of the English language increased and it affected the maintenance or loss of
the Spanish language of each child.

**Spanish Maintenance and Loss: Home/School Factors (Past)**

All my family members identify Spanish as our first language, the language we
developed from birth. According to my mother, Spanish was the primary language she
spoke to us from birth until we entered the local public school system; once in elementary
school, the English language became my siblings’ and my primary language because my
mother did not continue to reinforce the Spanish language in the home. For my siblings
and me, as children, there were two sociolinguistic contexts, home and school, in which
Spanish was either lost or maintained depending upon each individual. The home context
had three factors that influenced each individual’s maintenance or loss of the Spanish
language: monolingual Spanish-speaking parent, extended family members and
employees, and TV/radio/literacies in the home. The multiple school factors played a
bigger role in each individual’s Spanish language loss than in our Spanish maintenance.
The school context had two factors that influenced each individual’s maintenance or loss
of the Spanish language: English learner education and school social context.

**Home: Monolingual Spanish-Speaking Parent**

For all five children, our mother was the main factor in the development of
Spanish as our first language. She had made a conscious decision to speak to us only in
Spanish until we entered the public school system. Although my mother was bilingual
and biliterate and could have spoken to us in English, she knew that if we were going to have a relationship with our fathers, we needed to speak their dominant language; therefore, she taught us Spanish.

When my mother married my stepfather, he was a monolingual Spanish speaker. Fortunately for my sister Roseanna and me, we had already developed Spanish as our first language; however, speaking Spanish was still necessary for us to communicate with our stepfather, which allowed us to build a relationship with him. Roseanna and I, due to how close we are in age, had a mostly similar experience when it came to Spanish development and maintenance. According to Roseanna, speaking English to our stepfather was not an option as a child. Her desire to build a relationship with our stepfather influenced her decision to continue maintaining her Spanish at a basic speaking level.

When my brother Tito was born, my stepfather was still a monolingual Spanish speaker; my stepfather only spoke Spanish to him until Tito entered the local school system. By the time Tito was in Kindergarten, my stepfather was in the early stages of developing the English language. My stepfather’s newly acquired ability to understand basic English along with Tito’s need to develop the English language diminished Tito’s need to maintain his Spanish-speaking abilities; Tito’s only link to the Spanish language was his father; therefore, he no longer needed to maintain it. Although Tito did not speak the language, he continued understanding the language due to it being present in the home.
Although my stepfather had acquired basic English speaking skills, my mother Roseanna and I continued to speak to my stepfather in Spanish, with the occasional code-switching (Valdés-Fallis, 1978). Due to Tito being able to understand the Spanish language, he became a non-reciprocal bilingual (Gal as cited in Zentella, 1997), in which conversations would consist of my stepfather speaking in Spanish to Tito and Tito answering back in English.

When Omar was born, my stepfather was still developing a basic register in the English language. My mother continued to ensure that Spanish would be Omar’s first language. My stepfather worked a great deal and was only home in the late evening; therefore, he did not influence the development or the maintenance of Omar’s first language as he had with Roseanna, Tito, and me. Omar, like Tito, also became a non-reciprocal bilingual (Gal as cited in Zentella, 1997). However, Omar was only able to understand basic Spanish conversations.

When Vicente was born, my mother also ensured that he, too, would develop Spanish as his first language. My stepfather continued to work, and by the time Vicente entered Kindergarten, my stepfather was able to speak enough English to hold a conversation using basic English, and he was no longer a monolingual Spanish speaker. After developing his second language, he no longer attempted to speak to his sons in Spanish; he began to respond to them only in English, contributing to all three of his sons having a partial language loss (Anderson, 1999; Jackson & Hogg, 2010). Vicente’s partial loss eventually led to him having a complete language loss by the time he was in
the third grade. Although the boys did not maintain their Spanish to communicate with my stepfather, Roseanna and I still used Spanish to communicate with our stepfather because we were older by the time my stepfather had become a bilingual. Our stepfather’s development of the English language did influence Roseanna and her maintenance of the Spanish language. She no longer had to use only Spanish to communicate to him. She began to code-switch (Valdés-Fallis, 1978) and use Spanglish (Zentella, 1997) with my stepfather, and I continued to speak to my stepfather only in Spanish.

**Home: Extended Family Members**

Although our mother’s decision to teach us Spanish was the main factor in our development and maintenance of the Spanish language, our maternal grandparents also played a big role in Roseanna’s and my Spanish development and maintenance. When Roseanna and I were born, our family lived with our maternal monolingual Spanish-speaking grandparents. Even after we moved to Chico and our grandparents moved back to Texas, our close relationship was intact and the need to communicate in Spanish to my grandparents over the phone, when they came to California or on our vacations to their home, were factors that influenced my sister and me in maintaining our Spanish-speaking abilities. Unlike my sister and me, my brothers did not have the same bond with our maternal grandparents. By the time they were born, we only saw our maternal grandparents when they visited California or when we traveled to Texas; hence, they were never able to build the type of close relationship my sister and I had with them our
maternal grandparents while living with them. According to Vicente, his Spanish language loss (Anderson, 1999; Jackson & Hogg, 2010) influenced his inability to build a close relationship with my grandmother (our grandfather passed away four months before Vicente was born) because he did not have the necessary Spanish-language skills to speak to her.

Another factor that influenced Roseanna’s, Tito’s, and my Spanish maintenance was my parents’ employees. Once my stepfather’s business began to grow and he expanded from one taco truck to four and a restaurant, my stepfather hired employees from Modesto to move to Chico and assist with the family business. These employees were mostly single men who were family or friends of the family. Typically three to four employees lived in our home for about two to three years when we were young children. The employees were monolingual Spanish speakers and constantly interacted with us children like uncles. They ate dinner, watched TVNovelas, and played games with our family; when they married, their wives also became a part of our family. Their wives were also monolingual Spanish speakers and when they had children, they spoke to them only in Spanish. Most of the employees moved out of our house once they had children, but they continued to work for my father and came over often to spend time; we were still family to them. While they lived with us, if any of the employees wanted a hamburger or had a doctor’s appointment, my mother, Roseanna, or I would accompany them as their designated interpreter. My mother and I would also assist in translating letters or filling out paperwork for them. For Roseanna, Tito, and me to be able to interact and
communicate with our parents’ employees and their wives, we had to maintain the
Spanish language. Eventually, most of my parents’ employees ventured out and began
their own taco truck business, becoming my parents’ business competitors. My parents
eventually downsized their business from four taco trucks and a restaurant to one taco
truck.

**Home: Taco Trucks and Restaurants**

Once I was in junior high at the age of 12, my parents expected my sister and me
to work in the family businesses. During the summer, my sister and I would take shifts at
the taco truck or the restaurant. Being the oldest, I would work the taco truck and my
sister would work at the restaurant with my mother. Every day during my summer
vacations, I would go to the taco truck to work with my stepfather during the lunch hour
rush. I would work the window, speaking to the customers with my informal colloquial
Spanish, taking their orders, and collecting the money. Throughout the year, I, along
with an older cousin, was given a two-hour evening shift in the taco truck so my
stepfather could go home to rest or go to the restaurant to check up on it.

Once I was in high school, my sister and I worked in the taco truck; my parents
closed the restaurant due to it not being cost effective or profitable. My sister and I, ages
13 and 15, would work a four- to five-hour evening shift at the taco truck with our cousin
who was 18. We continued to work throughout high school on a regular basis and when
we had jobs outside our parents’ business, we were asked to take shifts at the taco truck
on our days off. Once in college, I worked a regular job at a carwash and continued to
work in the taco truck until I got married and moved out at the age of 21. By having my sister and me work in the businesses, my stepfather did not have to worry about using his broken basic English communication skills. My sister’s and my proficiency in the Spanish language was the main factor my stepfather had us work in the family businesses. Our proficiency in both languages, English and Spanish, allowed us to communicate to our monolingual Spanish-speaking clients as well as to monolingual English-speaking clients. When my brothers entered junior high, they were not expected nor asked to work in the family business. My brothers, unlike my sister and me, did not speak the Spanish language, and by the time they were in junior high, they had lost the ability to speak basic conversational Spanish. My brothers had never acquired the language at the proficiency level my sister and I had at junior high school age. Therefore, they were never required to work in the taco truck because they were not able to communicate to our monolingual Spanish-speaking clientele.

**Home: TV/Music/Literacies**

Television, radio, and literacies played a role in the maintenance of Roseanna’s and my Spanish. Every morning, my stepfather would watch the Spanish channel morning news, and when we returned from school we watched *Gorda y La Flaca*, the Spanish gossip/news show. When I was little, my parents were fans of TVNovelas (Spanish soap operas). As small children, my sister and I used to sit in front of the TV from 7:00 to 10:00 at night watching TVNovelas with my parents and employees every single weeknight. We all found our spot in the living room; laid in front of the television
or on the couch; and cried, yelled, and criticized the stupidity of the girls we were watching on the screen. Depending on the TVNovela, sometimes we only watched one while at times we watched all three of the evening shows. The plot of the TVNovela is what sparked much of our conversations at the dinner table and would be the subject of conversation when my mother spoke to her comadre about what was going on in the plot line. Not only did watching the Spanish news and TVNovelas influence the maintenance of our Spanish, it also broadened our vocabulary. I learned academic vocabulary I would never have learned in my home context. Moreover, I especially would not have learned the derogatory terms used to insult enemies and divide social class such as maldita, insensata, desgraciada, naco, y criado. By the time my brothers were old enough to sit and watch the TVNovelas with us, my parents had purchased a second television on which my brothers would watch shows in English.

If the television was not on, music would be playing, not only at home but at our parents’ business. My stepfather and his employees constantly played Mexican music such as that of Ramon Ayala, Vicente Fernandez, and Banda Machos; my mother played the likes of Selena, Christian Castro, and Maricela. When I was in fifth grade until I was a freshmen in high school, approximately once a month, my stepfather would be contracted to sell food at dances and jaripeos that took place at the fairgrounds in Chico.

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4 Comadre: a women who is either your child’s Godmother, or you are the Godmother of their child
5 Maldita, Insensata, Desgraciada, Naco y Criado: (adj.) Wicked, dumb, miserable, peasant, and servant.
6 Jaripeos: Small rodeo that would then turn into a big dance with famous artists playing.
and its surrounding towns where famous musical bands and romantic balladeer groups performed. Roseanna and I were also required to work at these events; we would work the windows to take orders and handle the register because we were proficient in both English and Spanish. Once our shift was over, my sister and I would attend the dance of that night at which a famous band or group would be performing. Due to these events, my sister and I became exposed to the Spanish music world, which lead us to want to listen to these groups on a regular basis. My sister and I began to listen to the music of Banda Machos, Banda El Recodo, Banda Los Lagos, Los Tucanes, Intocable, Los Tigres del Norte, etc. Learning their songs exposed us to a vocabulary that was not presented in our home context. As my brothers got older, the events did not occur as much as they had previously. Even when the taco truck was contracted to work these events, my brothers did not attend because they were not required to work them since they did not speak the Spanish language. Due to the events not occurring as frequently and them not being required to attend this event, my brothers were not exposed to the Spanish music world or its vocabulary. Spanish music influenced my sister and me to continue maintaining our Spanish proficiency; it also connected us to a part of the culture about which we did not know much.

Television and music influenced Roseanna’s and my Spanish in the speaking context; however, my stepfather’s fascination with reading Mexican Novelas, also known as historietas (Bartolomé, 2011), thick novel-length comic book stories about crime, romance, and western stories, influenced my development and maintenance of Spanish
literacy. Every week, my stepfather, sister, and I would go to the Video Azteca, our local Latino shop that rented Spanish VHS movies and sold cassettes, CDs, calling cards, Mexican fruit popsicles, and magazines/books. Roseanna and I would come home with a Popsicle and our stepfather with a little black plastic bag with the weekly gossip magazine for my mother and the weekly historietas for him. His favorite historietas were El Vaquero (The Cowboy) and la Novela Policiaca (Crime Soaps). In them, a semi-erotic love story took place in a western/cowboy or crime setting. The comics displayed beautiful women with voluptuous bodies who were at times naked. My stepfather would hide them in the cupboard above the sink in the master bathroom, not to keep it as a secret but to make sure I would not take them before he had the chance to finish reading them. I can recall sneaking into my parents’ bathroom around the age of six; I climbed on top of the sink to get the historietas and sit on the toilet to look at the pictures. By the time I was seven, I was able to read them phonetically and comprehend some of the content. Roseanna recalled doing the exact same thing; however, it was mainly for the pictures.

At times, Roseanna would stay near my mother while she finished reading her weekly gossip magazine and would take it right away before I got a chance to see it. In those magazines, we would look at pictures of the Mexican female artists Lucero and Thalia. I would also read about their personal lives or small announcements on what was going to happen the following week in the TVNovelas. When I was a child, my family lived across the street from the public library. As I became a proficient reader, I began to
spend many hours at the library reading as much as I possibly could. Due to the
historietas my father would read, my interest in Spanish literature grew. I would go to
the library and read the little supply of Spanish books that were in the public library. In
1996, the summer between sixth and seventh grades, I read my very first 600-page
narrative in Spanish, *Lluvia de Oro (Rain of Gold)* by Victor Villaseñor. I went on to
purchase the book in both English and Spanish and had read each version twice by the
time I was a freshman in high school. My brothers did not have the same experiences my
sister and I had with television, music, and literacies. Their inexperience with these
sources only led them to continue to have a Spanish language loss whereas my sister and
I maintained and advanced our Spanish language and literacy proficiency.

**School: Curriculum and Social Context**

All five of us, my siblings and I, were designated by our mother as English
language learners (ELs) when we entered the public educational system. In the public
educational system, our Spanish was not maintained. Our educational learning focused
on our development of the English language. Due to the low number of EL students at
our school, when Roseanna and I entered elementary school, our development was
fostered by pullout activities and testing. We acquired the English language fairly
quickly and were redesignated, moved out of the EL focus program, around the second
grade; once in school, English became our primary language but did not influence the
loss of our Spanish. Out of the five siblings, Roseanna and I were the only ones who
maintained our Spanish and were redesignated at a young age.
Tito, although he experienced a language loss and English had become his primary language, he was a long-term English language learner. He was not removed from EL focus courses until he was a 16-year-old sophomore and had moved to Sacramento to live with my husband and me as his guardian. I was then able to waive his EL rights and place him in a mainstream course. Omar was reclassified in the second grade, and Vicente, my monolingual English-speaking sibling, who at the time of this study is a freshman in high school and is a long-term English language learner taking English language development (ELD) courses. According to Omar, school influenced the loss of his Spanish because English was the only option in elementary school; learning a second language as a foreign language was never an option until high school. According to Vicente, his ELD courses influenced a (personal) language death (Baker, 1996) in Spanish because the ELD curriculum did not contribute to his maintenance of Spanish and the teachers discouraged speaking any language other than English. For all my brothers, school and their EL classification influenced the loss of their Spanish.

When my family moved to Chico, we first lived in the socioeconomically disadvantaged area of Chico. Roseanna and I attended school with other children who looked like us (Latinos) and spoke Spanish like us. As our stepfather’s business experienced success, we moved out of our rented home and my parents purchased a home in the middle class neighborhood of the Avenues of Chico. When my sister and I entered the third and fourth grade, respectively, we no longer went to school with other children who looked or spoke like us. I remember getting to know two other Latinos in my grade
level who were not in my class. All our friends, teachers, and neighbors were White; we were the only Latino children on our block. Tito and Omar had similar experiences: White teachers and White friends. Roseanna, Tito, Omar, and I did not make friends of our same ethnicity until junior high school. Vicente was able to attend elementary school with students who looked like him once he was in the fifth grade; by then, English was his dominant and only language. In elementary school, our social context did not maintain our Spanish; it solidified English as our primary language. Roseanna and I only spoke Spanish at home with our stepfather and Tito, Omar, and Vicente did not speak Spanish at all.

Once we were in junior high, Roseanna and I attended school with a higher population of Latinos than we had experienced in elementary school. Although our childhood friends attended the same junior high, Roseanna and I gravitated toward our Latina classmates and made friends very quickly. Some of my Latino classmates made it a point to question how “Latina” I could possibly be due to my social status; to some of them, I was a “White-washed girl from the Avenues.” My first experience with my soon-to-be new Latina friends was their assessment of my Spanish-speaking skills. Fortunately, I was able to speak basic Spanish, with an “Americanized” accent, and was accepted into the group. My sister and I also began to acquire the necessary skills for code-switching and became familiar with Spanglish vocabulary. Speaking my Spanish and Spanglish was encouraged within my new group of friends. I had found my place in my social context; I was no longer an outsider. Not only did my new friends and their
parents speak the same language, they looked like my family, too. My desire to want to “fit in” and identify myself with my ethnicity was a factor in the maintenance of my Spanish.

**Maintaining and Reclaiming Our Spanish: Friends and Family, Career, Church (Present)**

Roseanna, Tito, Omar, and I experienced a change in two contexts—friends and family and career and personal interest—in which Spanish was maintained, developed academically, or reclaimed depending on the individual.

**Family and Friends**

A current factor in Roseanna’s and my maintenance of the Spanish language is the family of the men to whom we committed our lives. Roseanna’s in-laws are dominant Spanish speakers who have acquired the basic English language. My in-laws are monolingual Spanish speakers. For us to communicate and establish a profound relationship with them, we need to speak their dominant language, Spanish. According to Roseanna, speaking in Spanish to her dominant Spanish-speaking in-laws is currently helping her increase her fluency and vocabulary in the language. However, Roseanna recognizes that she has a limited proficiency in the Spanish language. Roseanna, when speaking to my stepfather or her in-laws, starts off in Spanish and code-switches into English while using Spanglish vocabulary to get her message across. I speak to my in-laws only in Spanish; speaking to my in-laws has also allowed me to learn regionalisms that were not a part of my register. For me, my stepfather was a big factor in why I
became bilingual and biliterate. Although my stepfather is now bilingual, his preferred language is Spanish; therefore, I only speak to him in Spanish.

When it comes to friends, Roseanna and Tito mainly speak to their friends in English even though their friends are bilingual speakers. Vicente and Omar only speak to their friends in English; the majority of their friends are monolingual English speakers. I would be considered what Valdés and Figueroa (1994) call a circumstantial bilingual. Depending on my context, I will use English, Spanglish, or Spanish depending on whom I am with. My registers in both English and Spanish will also vary from colloquial to academic English or Spanish based on the register being used by my friends or family members.

**Career and Personal Interests**

For Roseanna and me, our career choices played a factor in our maintenance of the Spanish language. My curiosity regarding the Spanish language led me to pursue a degree in the language, and I eventually majored in Spanish. Not only did I have to maintain the Spanish language, I had to master it. My career as a Spanish teacher gives me the opportunity to maintain my academic Spanish register. For Roseanna, acquiring a basic register of medical terms was necessary for her to be able to expand the company’s horizon with the Spanish-speaking community.

Tito, as an adult, reclaimed (Zentella, 1997) the Spanish language due to career and personal interests. When Tito turned 20 years old, he took over the management aspects of my parents’ taco truck to help my stepfather. Taking an administrative role in
the business was a factor in his reclaiming of the Spanish language. For Tito to speak with the customers and some of the monolingual Spanish-speaking vendors such as the tortillero and carnicero\(^7\), he needed to be able to communicate in the Spanish language. A second factor in the reclaiming of the Spanish language for Tito was church. Tito attends a bilingual church in which he is a sound technician. Tito must be able to understand the preachings in both English and Spanish to do his job effectively. He also has to be able to communicate to the other members of the church when giving instructions or answering questions from a monolingual Spanish speaker. Tito’s current Spanish speaking skills are based on his need to perform his job at work and church. Although he has reclaimed the language, Tito and his father continue to speak to each other as non-reciprocal bilinguals (Gal as cited in Zentella, 1997).

**Bilinguals: Current Language Identification**

When it comes to bilingualism, researchers have labeled different bilingual classifications in order to categorize and measure one’s “bilingual-ness” based on the circumstances and the context in which the second language is acquired. According to Valdés and Figueroa (1994), researchers have labeled two fundamental categories in bilingualism: elective and circumstantial bilinguals. Becoming *elective bilinguals* is the result of making a conscious decision to seek a formal education to acquire the language (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994). On the other hand, *circumstantial bilinguals* are bilinguals as a result of their immigration circumstances and context, which causes them to acquire the

\(^7\) Tortillero and Carnicero: The men who deliver tortillas and meat to businesses.
language to survive (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994). My family falls under the category of circumstantial bilinguals because our bilingualism is a result of our circumstances due to immigration, which influences our functional ability in each language (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994).

Although most of the members in my family are categorized as circumstantial bilinguals, each member finds themselves in a different location along the bilingual spectrum. To obtain a clear understanding of what it means to be a bilingual based on each individual’s immigration circumstances, each member was asked to self-identify themselves as a bilingual. Valdés and Figueroa’s Table 1.2 (1994; see Appendix C) is a sample of some, but not all, different possible types of immigrant bilinguals that are categorized and influenced by one’s generational level, proficiency, and exposure and functional ability in each language. Each member was asked to self-identify, using the generational level and the table’s three categories, Type (proficiency in each language), Stage, and Language Use (exposure and function ability), that best identified them as a bilingual at particular moments in life. Prior to the identification process, each member was notified that they were not required to use the stage and language use available in each member’s generational category and that they could adapt the stage and language from any other generational category if it best described their personal identification.

The results of each self-identification determined that there were some similarities amongst some member’s identification in individual categories; however, there were no exact matches across all three categories. In the generational level category, there was
one first generation identification, my stepfather; two second generation identifications, my mother and Tito; and four third generational identifications, Roseanna, Omar, Vicente, and me. In the Type category, there was one identification of Ab, my stepfather; one identification of B, Vicente; two identifications of AB, my mother and me; and three identifications of aB, Roseanna, Tito, and Omar. In the Stage and Language Use category, there were no similarities.

Using Valdés and Figueroa’s 1.2 Table (1994, p. 16), my stepfather Javier identified himself as First Generation Ab Type 1. First generation is based on his migration to the United States as a teenager. Ab is because he is proficient in his first language (A) but is aware of his limitation in his second language (b). Type 1 because, as stated in Valdés and Figueroa’s (1994) Table 1.2, he “speaks enough English to take care of his everyday essential needs.”

My mother identified herself as Second Generation AB Adulthood Type 2. Second generation because, according to my mother, her Mexican mother migrated to the United States and she was born in the United States, making her second generation. The AB is due to her proficiency in both languages and Adulthood Type 2 identifies her as being fluent in both languages, even though she mainly uses English (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994). According to my mother, although English has become her dominant language, she remains fluent in Spanish because she uses it to communicate to two of the most important people in her life, her husband and her mother.
Roseanna identified herself as *Third Generation aB School Age*. According to Roseanna, she chose *third generation* because our grandmother migrated to the United States, our mother was born in the United States; therefore, she is third generation. She chose *aB* because although Spanish is her first language, she speaks Spanish with limitations and is dominant in English. She identified with *school age* because English is her dominant language and she only uses Spanish when absolutely necessary (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994). According to Roseanna, she is well aware of her limitations in the Spanish language, especially with pronunciation and choice of vocabulary.

Tito identified himself as a *Second Generation aB Adult Type 2*. According to Tito, he identifies himself with his father, my stepfather; therefore, he considers himself *second generation*. He also chose *aB* because he is a dominant English speaker who only uses Spanish in his work or church context, if necessary. He identified himself with *Adult Type 2* because he is dominant in the English language and only uses Spanish to interact with those who are unable to interact with him in his dominant language (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994).

Omar identified himself as *Third Generation aB Adulthood*. Omar identified his generation based on our mother being second generation. According to Omar, he is closer to our mother than to his father; therefore, unlike Tito, he identifies himself as a *third generation*. He also identified himself as *aB* because he can speak a limited amount of Spanish and is a dominant English speaker. He identified himself in *adulthood*
because he exclusively uses the English language and still understands Spanish even though he rarely speaks it.

Vicente identified himself as third generation B and adopted adulthood (from fourth generation). Like Omar, he chose third generation due to our mother being a second generation bilingual. Vicente stated that his choice was based on the emotional connection that he has with our mother. “I can’t explain it. I think I chose it (third generation) because I feel more connected to mom.” He chose B and adulthood (fourth generation) because he is completely monolingual and does not speak nor understand his first language.

Like Vicente, I have adopted my stage and language use from another generation. I identify myself as Third Generation AB with an adopted Adulthood Type 1 (second generation). I identified myself as Third Generation because I only identify myself with my mother who is second generation. I identified the type AB because I am academically proficient in both languages. I adopted the Adulthood Type 1 from the second-generation section because I use the language that is appropriate for the context I am in. I would remove the part where it states “Senses greater functional ease in his first language in spite of frequent use of second (Valdés & Figueroa, 1994)” because I feel I am proficient in both languages and have the ease to use either language in both academic and non-academic settings.
The Cause and Effect of the Development, Maintenance, Loss, and Death of Our First Language

For my siblings and me, our mother’s decision for us to learn Spanish was the primary factor in our development of the Spanish language. Although our mother was bilingual and biliterate, she consciously made the decision to teach us Spanish so we could communicate with our fathers in order to build a relationship with them. My mother’s bilingualism provided her with a choice; should she have been a monolingual Spanish speaker, the choice would have never been available for her to make in the first place. Although our mother’s decision for us to be able to speak to our fathers was the primary factor in the development, maintenance, loss, reclaiming, and death of our first language, there are other influencing factors whose outcomes shaped and molded our Spanish language proficiency and who we are today.

Our Desire to Have a Father-Daughter Relationship

When I was five and my sister was three and one-half years old, our biological father abandoned us. After the divorce, my father was given the opportunity to continue to have a role in my sister’s and my lives. He was given days and times he was allowed to come by and take us out to eat or hang out. However, my father did not participate in our lives; he no longer showed up to our visits and never called or looked for us. We heard about him from other family members every once in a while; however, up until his death in 2014, my father never looked for us. My sister and I did not understand the reason for our abandonment; we wanted and needed a father. When my stepfather came
into the picture, we emotionally latched onto him; he was everything we wanted in our own father. Our desire to have a father caused us to want to get to know him and to build a relationship with him. We wanted to be loved by him; for that to happen, we needed to communicate with him. He was the primary factor in why my sister and I maintained the Spanish language after my father had abandoned us. By the time my stepfather had become a part of my life, I had already entered the public school system and had begun developing the English language. Seeing that my mother was proficient in the language, there was no real need for me to maintain the Spanish language; the primary factor in the development of the Spanish language was no longer present in my life. However, I wanted a dad, not a stepfather; therefore, I did everything to make sure that happened. Speaking Spanish was the vehicle that established and maintained that relationship. My sister and I watched television, listened to music, read in Spanish, and worked with my stepfather in the taco truck because it was what brought us together with him.

My half-brothers did not have to maintain the Spanish language like my sister and I did in order to have a “dad.” They already had the privilege of having their biological father in the home. They did not have to work for their father’s love; it came to them automatically, as they were his children. My half-brothers never had to question whether their father truly loved them or if he pretended to love them in order to win over our mother. The Spanish language played a role in the establishment and maintenance of my relationship with my stepfather; without the language, the relationship might have never been a possibility.
The Power of a Language in Relationships

Throughout the years, as my stepfather developed the English language, it became easier for all the children to communicate with him in English. Once my brothers began to develop English as their second language, they no longer found it necessary to speak Spanish to communicate with my stepfather. As children, their conversations with my father required basic English, and my father had the necessary vocabulary to hold those conversations with them. As the years went by, and my brothers got older, they experienced a language loss in Spanish. Conversations with my stepfather remained basic, using basic English. The depth of their conversations were never more than basic communicative conversations needed to do everyday things such as greet each other, ask for a ride or money, and hold basic question-and-answer conversations. For Tito and Omar, it was not an entire language loss, as they were able to hold basic non-reciprocal bilingual conversations with my stepfather (Gal as cited in Zentella, 1997). Tito eventually reclaimed the language, and his ability to communicate to my father in Spanish changed the depth of their conversations. For Vicente, the personal language death did away with any opportunity to understand even the slightest bit of information my father attempted to communicate in Spanish. According to Omar and Vicente, the fact that they experienced a language loss/personal language death affected their emotional relationship with my stepfather. According to Omar, he felt he was less (in comparison to our mother) emotionally connected to his father because he did not speak Spanish. Omar believes he would have a “better relationship” with my stepfather if he
knew how to speak my stepfather’s first language. According to Omar, he feels more connected to our mother because she speaks English. Vicente, like Omar, also feels less emotionally connected to my stepfather. “I feel less emotionally connected to Papi because he speaks Spanish the most and better. It’s hard to speak to him in English because he doesn’t understand everything I am trying to say. It’s easier to just go to Mami.”

As for myself, I feel that because I can speak Spanish proficiently, I have a closer relationship to my stepfather than my half-brothers do. Due to my ability to speak Spanish fluently, I hold in-depth conversations with my stepfather that allow us to continue to build a deeper relationship.

**My Mother’s Choices: Her Role in My Language Development**

My mother was the primary factor in my siblings’ and my language development. It was her initial decision to have us develop the Spanish language that paved our way in language. Although my mother was bilingual and biliterate, she consciously decided that my siblings and I would develop Spanish as our first language. According to my mother, she chose Spanish because our fathers were dominant/monolingual Spanish speakers and she wanted us to be able to communicate with them. Although our mother consciously made the decision for us to learn the language, she never thought that most of my siblings would experience a language loss or even a language death.

I remember using my Spanish-language skills in elementary school to translate for my mother during my parent-teacher conferences. I never understood why the school
thought my mom only spoke Spanish or why my mother played along. I remember sitting in the parent-teacher conferences and looking at my mom and telling my mom, while pretending to translate, that she knew what the teacher was saying. During the interviews, I questioned my mother regarding her reasoning behind her pretending to not speak English, and she replied:

Because I wasn’t able to help you in your math and homework. When you know English, and they know you know English, they expect more from you, to help your children, than if you didn’t know. So by me telling them that I didn’t know, I knew that they were going to give you extra help. They were going to do everything possible to give you the help that I couldn’t give you, plus more.

My mother, being bilingual and biliterate, having been born and raised in the United States, felt she was not prepared to help my siblings and me with our schoolwork. My mother’s insecurities about her own preparation caused her to make a decision that affected my education.

My Mother’s Choices: Her Role in Our Language Development

My mother’s decision for us to develop Spanish as our first language affected the type of education my siblings and I received. With Spanish being our first language, my mother notified the school via a Home Language Survey that we were English learners. The Home Language Survey consists of four questions asking about the languages spoken at home by the student and parents, the first language of the student, and the language used for communication between the student and parent(s). Being English
learners meant that my siblings and I were going to receive an English learner education. For Roseanna, Omar, and I, reclassification occurred in our elementary years. I can recall being pulled out of class and sometimes being asked to read aloud and answer questions regarding a passage to demonstrate comprehension that I had read or someone had read to me.

For my brothers Tito and Vicente, reclassification never occurred on its own; they were long-term English learners in high school. Tito, as a freshmen in high school, became very ill and was put on Home Hospital Schooling. Due to the amount of schooling he missed, after recovering from his sickness, Tito moved to Sacramento to move in with my husband and me so he could attend home school while I watched over him and he recovered credits. During Tito’s California English Language Development Test (CELDT) assessment at the Home School facility, he was categorized as a Level 3 English learner. Tito, during this time, had already experienced a language loss, did not speak any Spanish, and only spoke English. For Tito to be able to attend the Home School facility, I waived his English learner rights and removed him from the English learner program.

Vicente, my monolingual English-speaking brother, is still considered an English learner and is currently taking intermediate ELD courses at his local high school. Vicente is a long-term English learner and, based on the CELDT, is currently classified as a Level 3 English learner. Although Vicente is considered advanced in speaking and listening, his writing and reading skills are intermediate and early intermediate, which do
not meet the necessary requirements for reclassification. Vicente has also been diagnosed with a learning disability and has an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). His being both an EL and a student with a learning disability makes it difficult to clarify whether his inability to score higher in reading and writing on the CELDT is due to his limitations in his second (Primary) language or a learning disability. Unless my mother decides to waive his English learner rights, Vicente will most likely remain an English learner.

**My Mother’s Choices: The Effect on My Choices**

My mother’s choice regarding my first language development and maintenance has affected the choices I, too, have made when it comes to my Spanish language development. My mother consciously made the decision to have my siblings and me develop Spanish as our first language; however, she did not make the conscious decision to have us maintain it. According to my mother:

> We never thought you guys were going to lose the Spanish language. Once you guys started school, you guys started talking more in English. We never thought it was going to happen. We never thought of it like that.

Although my mother did not make a conscious decision to have my siblings and me maintain our first language, I took matters into my own hands to assure that I would maintain the language. As a high school student, I made important decisions about my future. First, I made the conscious decision to take Spanish courses to maintain and develop an academic register in my first language. Through those courses, I found my
passion in the language; it lead me to pursue a degree in Spanish and eventually become a Spanish teacher, which led me to become more proficient in both languages than both of my parents.

Secondly, I made the conscious social-political decision, which may be perceived as linguicism, to only date bilingual Latino men. After many years of building a relationship with my monolingual stepfather, I wanted the man that I would eventually marry to be able to communicate with my stepfather in his primary language, Spanish. I knew I never wanted the conversations between my husband and my stepfather to be awkward or based on basic English conversation. The ability to speak easily to each other would allow for the opportunity of depth in their relationship. I also knew I wanted my future children to speak Spanish fluently; they, too, needed to be able to hold a proficient Spanish-speaking conversation with my stepfather. I knew the likelihood of that happening would increase by having a spouse who was also proficient in the Spanish language. At the age of 17, my boyfriend asked my stepfather for permission to date me and at the age of 20, my boyfriend asked for my hand in marriage. Both emotional conversations were done in my stepfather’s primary language, Spanish. In 2005, I married my bilingual Mexican husband, Ismael.

As a parent, my mother’s unconscious decision to not ensure that my siblings and I retained our first language made me realize I had to make a conscious decision about my children’s language development and maintenance of the Spanish language. Having my children become bilingual and biliterate was and is important to me. Since birth, my
children have been taught to speak both languages and I read to them in both languages. At home, my husband and I made the decision that each parent would model a language: I would speak (mostly) to my children in Spanish and my husband would speak to them in English. We also made the decision that when speaking to our children during a family conversation, Spanish would only be used with the occasional code-switching when necessary. We made that decision because my husband did not have formal academic education in his first language and felt more capable to model the English language. My monolingual Spanish-speaking mother-in-law, who received a sixth-grade education in Mexico, has been and is my primary childcare provider; under her care, my children have been exposed to the Spanish language since birth through television, everyday conversations, and the memorization of bible verses. Although my children are exposed to the Spanish language at home, they are also exposed to English through the media. To be certain my children develop and maintain the Spanish language and become both bilingual and biliterate, I enrolled my oldest son and will enroll my youngest into a dual immersion program. My children will learn both languages academically and, as a result, attain mastery in both languages.
In the late 1920s and 1930s, bilingualism was viewed negatively. McLaughlin (1978) noted that previous research considered bilingualism to be a handicap, an academic and intellectual interference, and a mental burden that caused confusion in bilingual children. Such views only fueled English dominance/nativism, which also influenced anti-bilingual educational laws such as Proposition 227 in the state of California, Proposition 223\(^8\) in the state of Arizona, and the 2002 Question 2\(^9\) in Massachusetts. However, current research regarding bilingualism has concluded that there are multiple intellectual advantages with being bilingual versus being monolingual. Scientists have concluded that being bilingual has positive intellectual (cognitive) effects such as enhanced mental development, greater critical thinking skills, and delayed onset of dementia when compared to their monolingual counterparts (Bialystok, 2011; Zelasko & Antunez, 2000).

**Parents, Schools, and Policies: Their Role in Bilingualism**

Exposure (at home and/or at school) to second language acquisition in early childhood years has great benefits for brain structuring and cognitive thinking, and mastery in both languages enhances abstract thinking process (Zelasko & Antunez, 2000).

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\(^8\) Proposition 223: Arizona ballot proposition that limited the type of instruction English learners could receive with the goal of replacing bilingual education with full English immersion.

\(^9\) Question 2: Massachusetts 2002 ballot initiative requiring all public schools to teach English learners completely in English in all subjects.
For a child to begin the process of becoming bilingual and biliterate, a decision to expose the child to all areas of literacy, speaking, reading, writing, and listening must be made. Parents/Guardians, educational institutions, and policies and laws in a child’s life play an important role in the process of becoming bilingual and biliterate. To assure mastery in both languages, parents must decide the level of exposure to language in their daily living at home. Parents must also make a decision as to which school their child will attend, an English-only school or a dual immersion school, to maintain their first language while developing their second.

To assist with the academic mastery of both languages, schools need to affirm a child’s first language and provide programs that maintain first language proficiency, for example, dual immersion educational programs. Policies and laws must begin to promote dual immersion instruction that foster the development of 21st-century skills.

**Parents: Their Role at Home in Bilingualism and Biliteracy**

Parents play the biggest role in a child’s life. In early childhood, children are not (yet) capable of making important life choices, such as becoming bilingual and biliterate. Parents must make a conscious decision to want to expose their child to a second language with the intention of acquiring that second language while maintaining their first language. Some parents want to their child to learn both their home language and English because they believe there are better opportunities for their child in the workforce (Lee, Shergiri, Barina, Tilitski, & Flores, 2015). According to Lee et al. (2015), some Spanish-speaking parents want their children to maintain their native language because
“it is a way to preserve their heritage and to connect with older family members. By not speaking Spanish, Children cannot understand cultural norms, and may be perceived as lacking positive Mexican Values” (p. 511). Moreover, research is clear that the loss of L1 can lead to issues of identity. In the same research, Lee et al. (2015) linked language loss to identity, “several parents stated that some children who do not speak Spanish are ashamed of their parents and culture” (p. 511).

There are different methods for teaching bilingualism and illiteracy to a child at home. In Lee et al. (2015), Spanish-speaking parents provided their own opinions as to which methods should be used to teach bilingualism. Some believed they (the parents) should be the teachers of the first language and English would be taught at school. Other parents believed both languages should be spoken at home, starting with Spanish from birth and then speaking English once the child is about to start attending school. One of the dominant approaches to teaching bilingualism and biliteracy is the one-parent-one-language (OPOL) approach in which the parents decide which language each parent will model at all times with their child (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004). The approach gives the child the opportunity to develop both languages, in the four areas of literacy, reading, writing, and speaking and listening, at the same time without too much confusion or mixing of the languages. Parents should also make an agreement as to which language will be used in situations such as family conversations. Arnberg and Baker (as cited in Barron-Hauwaert, 2004) both recommend that in situations where parents interact with each other and as a family, parents should model the minority language to increase the
exposure to the minority language. Arnberg (as cited in Barron-Hauwaert, 2004) also recommends that when implementing the OPOL approach, both parents must be “absolutely consistent” in modeling their assigned language; lack of consistency can cause an inferiority perception of a certain language, which the child will recognize and not be motivated to model that specific language.

Enrolling children in dual immersion programs is another conscious decision parents can make to have a higher probability that their child(ren) will become both bilingual and biliterate. From the late 1970s to current date (2016), research has shed a new and positive perspective on bilingualism and biliteracy in the educational realm, which has moved away from the negative perspectives and anti-bilingualism educational laws that came about during the late 1970s and early 1980s. In California alone, there are currently 201 dual immersion schools in Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, and Spanish (CDE, 2015). This trend indicates a renewed interest in promoting bilingualism and biliteracy for future generations and in connecting this skill to 21st-century opportunities.

**Educational Institutions and Legislature: Their Role in Bilingualism and Biliteracy**

With current research (Bialystok, 2015; Zelasko & Antunez, 2000) identifying that bilingual children demonstrate multiple intellectual traits their monolingual counterparts do not have, educational programs and policies and laws should begin to offer and fund more dual language programs. Although educational institutions have made strides in the bilingual educational realm, some states, such as California, still have
educational laws and policies, such as proposition 227, eliminating the practice of using a students’ first language as a bridge to acquire a second language. The legislature must start by repealing laws that project nativism. Currently, California has begun the process of repealing proposition 227 through Senator Lara’s SB 1174, which will be on the 2016 ballot. Both educational institutions and Legislature must shy away from nativism and affirm a student’s first language by providing programs that continue to develop and maintain a child’s first language while developing a second.

Epilogue

My family: Current Situation and Predictions

During the time of this research, my family made one of the biggest decisions of our lives. In September 2015, my parents sold our family business of 26 years, the taco truck, and moved back to Victoria, Texas where I was born. My mother, stepfather, and two youngest brothers went to live in the city my mother left 30 years ago with my biological father in their quest for a better future. The original plan was for them to purchase a home and enjoy early retirement with my mother working as a private caregiver. Surprisingly, over the course of two months, the plans have changed. My parents have decided to return to the taco truck business by purchasing a custom-made taco truck for lunchtime-only operation. Vicente and I will most likely remain the same on the bilingual spectrum. I expect Roseanna, Tito, and Omar, will change their location

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10 SB 1174: Senator Lara’s Senate Bill to be on the 2016 California Ballot, which would amend and repeal various provisions of Proposition 227.
on the bilingual spectrum. As for my sons, they will most likely attain proficiency and mastery in both languages.

**Remain the Same on the Bilingual Spectrum**

My stepfather does not have a need to acquire an academic register in English; he has developed and will continue to maintain his English-speaking abilities to the point where he is able to hold basic English conversations with his clients and his sons. The relationship between my stepfather and my brothers Omar and Vicente will more than likely remain the same due to their language-speaking abilities. Their common speaking register is basic English; therefore, should my stepfather choose to not expand his basic English-speaking abilities or my brothers choose to develop the Spanish language, the interactions will continue to be basic conversations. My stepfather’s relationship with Roseanna and me will continue to have a greater emotional connection due to our ability to communicate with each other in Spanish using a register that allows us to communicate on more than just a basic conversational level. Although the current speaking interactions between my stepfather and Tito are scarce (they no longer live nor work with each other), the little they do speak with each other will continue to be non-reciprocal conversation (Gal as cited in Zentella, 1997). Spanish will continue to be my stepfather’s preferred language, and he will continue to use it to communicate to everyone else besides his monolingual English-speaking clients and his two younger sons.
My mother will continue to maintain her current English and Spanish proficiency. She will continue to use English for her everyday tasks and for her job. She will also continue to use Spanish to communicate with her family and relatives, especially with her husband and mother. Due to my mother’s proficiency in both languages, I foresee that the relationship between my mother and my two brothers Omar and Vicente will include a greater emotional connection than the one they have with my father. My mother will continue to be the intermediary in the communication between my stepfather with Omar and Vicente should their current basic English communication not be appropriate to the context of their message.

My brother Vicente will continue to be a monolingual English speaker. I do not foresee any reason why he would need to redevelop his Spanish-speaking abilities. I predict that because my brother does not have an emotional nor a political attachment to the Spanish language, he will not find it important to marry someone who is Spanish proficient, nor will he find it important for his future children to develop the Spanish language.

**A Change on the Bilingual Spectrum**

As for my sister Roseanna, I anticipate she will continue to maintain her current semi-proficient Spanish register because she needs the language to continue to hold informal conversations with our stepfather and her in-laws. She will develop an academic (medical) register in Spanish only if she finds the need to develop it for her job. I expect my sister will find it important for her children to be proficient in both Spanish
and English due to how important it is to us that our spouses and family can communicate to our parents and in-laws. I also anticipate that my sister will follow in my footsteps and enroll her future child(ren) into a bilingual dual-immersion program.

As for my brother Tito, I believe he will either stay where he is currently or lose his Spanish proficiency. His job, taking over the family business in Chico, no longer exists and his current job does not require him to use his Spanish-speaking skills. The only reason Tito might remain where he is currently on the bilingual spectrum is due to his church ministry; it requires he not only maintain the Spanish language, but that he continues to broaden his comprehension in the language when it comes to biblical and religious vocabulary. As for Tito, I am uncertain of his political views about marrying someone who is proficient in Spanish. However, as Pentecostals, we tend to marry within the church and denomination. The church we currently attend and have attended since children is predominantly a Spanish-speaking church. Therefore, I foresee that Tito will marry someone with at least basic Spanish proficiency and, unless his future spouse finds it important for their children to become proficient in both languages, his children will become monolingual English speakers.

I believe Omar will eventually lose his basic Spanish-speaking skills, which will result in a complete L1 language loss. Omar currently does not use his basic Spanish-speaking abilities. The only way I can see Omar acquiring the basics of the Spanish language is if he begins to help my father with the new catering truck in Victoria, Texas. With Tito staying in California, Omar, being the oldest boy with my parents, might have
to take on the role Tito once held. I predict that Omar, like Vicente, will not have an emotional or political conviction to marry someone who is proficient in Spanish nor find it important for his children to learn the language.

As for me, I will continue to be both bilingual and biliterate. As an English and Spanish language teacher, I will continue to maintain both of my academic language abilities. As for my children, I predict that because my husband and I made a conscious decision to enroll our children in a Spanish dual-language immersion program and each model a language at home, both of our children will be bilingual and biliterate by the time they enter high school. Although my husband and I have taken all the steps to ensure that our children are both bilingual and biliterate, we cannot be certain our children will continue to maintain their Spanish-language proficiency once they have entered high school or when they are adults. It also does not guarantee us that our sons will find it important that their children develop and maintain the Spanish language.

In an English-dominant country, Spanish-speaking parents must take the necessary steps to ensure that their children will maintain their first language while developing their second language. If parents do not make the conscious decision to maintain their child’s first language, some language loss will be inevitable. My parents did not make a conscious decision to maintain our first language; they assumed we would maintain it on our own, even though the home was the only place we interacted with the language. My family is proof that if there is not a conscious plan to maintain a language, some degree of or complete language loss will occur. My family is also proof that if
someone makes the conscious decision to maintain a language, it can be done. My sister and I were little girls and our desire to have a loving relationship with our stepfather was the only reason we maintained the language; it assured us that we had the basic conversational tools needed to build a relationship. Had my stepfather not wanted to build a relationship with us, I do not believe my sister and I would have maintained our first language.

If new generation Latino parents, and other non-English speaking families, do not make a concerted effort to foster and encourage home language maintenance, it is very likely English will become the dominant language of the country within future English learners’ homes. Thus, an ongoing mono-linguistic society and one that will continue to fall behind the rest of the world in trade, commerce, education, science, and intercultural competency will be promoted.

The maintenance of a home language can be a difficult undertaking. Nevertheless, it is clear from this research that maintaining a home language and promoting biliteracy and biculturalism is possible. Moreover, my own multigenerational family is proof that home language maintenance must be intentional. Bilingual families must make a conscious and intentional decision (from the birth of their child[ren]) to promote, practice, and nurture home language maintenance. Parents, grandparents, siblings, extended family members, and even communities, should all play a role in the “maintenance process.” For future English learner generations, the role of multiple language ability is paramount; the expanding global society makes this skill a valuable
and important requisite for future success, within and outside the U.S. borders. This skill also will slow the inevitable assimilationist pressures of an ongoing monolingual society while at the same time continue to acknowledge the burgeoning demographic changes of students and families of color and their multilingualistic backgrounds.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in research which will be conducted by Isabel Acosta, Graduate Student at California State University, Sacramento. The purpose of this study is to detail how different generational family members identify themselves ethnically via language proficiency in their native language (Spanish) and their proficiency in their second language (English).

For this study interviews will be conducted and recorded. During the interviews, you will be asked questions pertaining to your first language maintenance and second language development and maintenance. You will also identify the type of bilingual that best represents you by using Valdés & Figueroa’s (1994) Table 1.2. You will also be asked to fill out a chart that identifies what language you use frequently to speak to each member of your family.

There is no risk involved in this study and no direct benefit to you. However, it is hoped that the results of this study will provide some insight regarding the development and maintenance of language in intergenerational bilingual families.

You are free to choose to participate in this study. You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study. You may refuse to participate without any loss or repercussion. You may also withdraw any time from the study without any loss or repercussion. You may also refuse to answer any questions if you do not feel comfortable with the questions.

The information provided by you will remain confidential. Nobody except the researcher will have access to it. Your name and identity will also not be disclosed at any time. To conserve confidentiality, you will be given a pseudonym for any reports or publications of this study. All recordings and data will be stored in a secure location and destroyed as soon as the interviews have been transcribed and data analyzed.

Should you have any further questions, you may contact Isabel Acosta at (xxx) xxx.xxxx or by email at bellacosta514@gmail.com.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your signature below indicates that you have read this page and agree to participate in the research.

___________________________________                                  ____________________
Signature of Participant                                                                   Date
Isabel Acosta is asking you to participate in research study on how different generation family members identify themselves through their ability to talk in their first language (Spanish) and second language (English) and how their surroundings/social cultural context (community, neighborhood, and school) influence their ability to maintain their first language and second language.

For this study interviews will be conducted and recorded. During the interviews, you will be asked questions regarding your ability to speak your first language (Spanish) and how you have developed and been able to continue to speak your second language (English). You will also be asked to identify the type of bilingual that best represents you by using Valdés & Figueroa’s (1994) Immigrant Language Typology. You will also be asked to fill out a chart that identifies what language you use frequently to speak to each member of your family.

There is a minimal risk involved in this study and no direct benefit to you. However, it is hoped that the results of this study will provide some insight regarding the development and maintenance of language in intergenerational bilingual families.

Your parents have already been asked whether it is OK with them for you to participate in this research study. But if you decide not to participate, no one will be upset with you. You will be given a fake name in order to protect your identity. Please write your name and today’s date on the line below if you are willing to be in the research.

Should you have any further questions, you may contact Isabel Acosta at (xxx) xxx.xxxx or by email at bellacosta514@gmail.com.

___________________________________                                  ____________________
Signature of Participant                                                                   Date
Parent Consent for Minor Child to Participate in Research

Your minor child is being asked to participate in research study which will be conducted by Isabel Acosta, graduate student in the College of Education at California State University, Sacramento. The purpose of this study is to detail how different generational family members identify themselves ethnically via language proficiency in their native language (Spanish) and their proficiency in their second language (English).

Should you approve for your child to participate in this study, interviews will be conducted and recorded. During the interviews, your child will be asked questions pertaining to their first language maintenance and second language development and maintenance. Your child will also identify the type of bilingual that best represents him by using Valdés & Figueroa’s (1994) Immigrant Language Typology. Your child will also be asked to fill out a chart that identifies what language your child uses frequently to speak to each member of their family.

There is minimal risk involved in this study and no direct benefit to your child. However, it is hoped that the results of this study will provide some insight regarding the development and maintenance of language in intergenerational bilingual families.

Your child is free to choose to participate in this study. Your child will not receive any compensation for participating in this study. Your child may refuse to not participate or not answer any questions that make him uncomfortable without any penalty. Your child may also withdraw any time from the study without any penalty.

The information provided by your child will remain confidential. Nobody except the researcher will have access to it. Your child’s name and identity will also not be disclosed at any time. To conserve confidentiality, your child will be given a pseudonym for any reports or publications of this study. All recordings and data will be stored in a secure location and destroyed as soon as the interviews have been transcribed and data analyzed.

Should you have any further questions, you may contact Isabel Acosta at xxx.xxx.xxxx or by email at bellacosta514@gmail.com

Your signature below indicates that you have read this page and agree for your child to participate in the research.
**Consent**
I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.
PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY. My child is free to decline to Participate in this research study, or I may withdraw their participation at any point without penalty. Their decision whether or not to participate in this research study will have no influence on their relationship with the researcher.
My child ________________________________ has my consent to participate in the educational research study.

Student is a minor ________________ (age)

Parent/Guardian signature: ________________________________ Date: ______________
APPENDIX B

Questions and Procedures

Procedures:
1. Using Valdés and Figueroa’s Types of Immigrant Bilinguals (See Appendix-2), Please Identify the Type, Stage, and Language use that best identifies you as a bilingual.

2. Using the Frequent Language Use with Individual Family Members chart (see Appendix-3), please identify which language you frequently use with each member of your family.

General Questions:
1. Do you think it is important to know English? Why?

2. Do you think it is important to know Spanish? Why?

3. What role has and does your social cultural context play in the maintenance of your L1?

4. What role has and does your social cultural context play in your development and maintenance of your L2?

Specific questions based on identification of Generation, Types and parent involvement:

Generations

1st generation identification:
1. What life events led you to end up at this type of identification?

2nd generation and 3rd generation identifications
1. Do you feel more or less emotionally connected to your parents or family members due to your L1 status? Why?

2. What led you to this type of self-identification?

3. Do you think that you have always been in this identification category? Why?
**Types**

**Those who do not have an “a/A” in their type:**

1. What factors influenced your language loss?

2. Do you think that you will try to regain your proficiency in your L1?

**Parents:**

1. What was your role in the development of your children’s L1?

2. What was your role in the development of your children’s L2?

3. What was your role in the Maintenance of your children’s L1?

4. What was your role in your maintenance of your children’s L2?

5. Is there anything that you wish you could have done or not done differently in regards to your children’s development or maintenance in their L1?

6. Is there anything that you wish you could have done or not done differently in regards to your children’s development or maintenance in their L2?
Spanish Version

Questions and Procedures

Procedures:

3. Usando la tabla de “Valdés and Figueroa’s Types of Immigrant Bilinguals” (See Appendix-2), Identifica el tipo (Type), la etapa (Stage), y uso de idioma (Language use) que te identifica como bilingue.

4. Usando la gráfica “Frequent Language Use with Individual Family Members chart” (see Appendix-3), identifica el idioma que ud. usa más con cada miembro de su familia.

General Questions:

5. ¿Crees que es importante saber el inglés? ¿Por qué?

6. ¿Crees que es importante saber el español? ¿Por qué?

7. ¿Qué papel ha jugado y está jugando tu contexto social cultural con respecto al mantenimiento de tu primer idioma?

8. ¿Qué papel ha jugado y está jugando tu contexto social cultural con respecto al desarrollo y el mantenimiento de tu segundo idioma?

Specific questions based on identification of Generation, Types and parent involvement:

Generations

1st generation identification:

2. ¿Cuál eventos en tu vida te guiaron a llegar a este tipo de identificación?

2nd generation and 3rd generation identifications

4. Te sientes más o menos conectado emocionalmente con tus padres O miembros de tu familia debido a la condición/estado de tu primer idioma (L1)? ¿Por qué?

5. ¿Qué te guió/llevó a identificarte de esta manera?

6. ¿Crees que siempre te has identificado de esta manera? ¿Por qué?
Types
Those who do not have an “a/A” in their type:
3. ¿Qué factores/causas influyeron la perdida de tu primer idioma?
4. ¿Crees que intentarás recuperar la capacidad de comunicarte en tu primer idioma?

Parents:
7. ¿Cuál fue tu papel en el desarrollo del primer idioma de tus hijos?
8. ¿Cuál fue tu papel en el desarrollo del segundo idioma de tus hijos?
9. ¿Cuál fue tu papel en el mantenimiento del primer idioma de tus hijos?
10. ¿Cuál fue tu papel en el desarrollo del segundo idioma de tus hijos?
11. ¿Hay algo diferente que te hubiera gustado haber hecho o no haber hecho con respecto al desarrollo o mantenimiento del primer idioma de tus hijos?
12. ¿Hay algo diferente que te hubiera gustado haber hecho o no haber hecho con respecto al desarrollo o mantenimiento del segundo idioma de tus hijos?
# APPENDIX C

Table 1.2: Possible Types of Immigrant Bilinguals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Language Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Newly Arrived</td>
<td><em>First Generation – Foreign Born</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understands little English. Learns a few words and phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aa</td>
<td>Type 1</td>
<td>Understands enough English to take care of essential everyday needs. Speaks enough English to make himself understood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Type 2</td>
<td>Is able to function capably in the work domain where English is required. May still experience frustration in expressing himself fully in English. Uses immigrant language in all other contexts where English is not needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Preschool Age</td>
<td>Acquires immigrant language first. May be spoken to in English by relatives or friends. Will normally be exposed to English-language TV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>School Age</td>
<td>Acquires English. Uses it increasingly to talk to peers and siblings. Views English-language TV extensively. May be literate only in English if schooled exclusively in this language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Adulthood</td>
<td>At work (in the community) uses language to suit proficiency of other speakers. Senses greater functional ease in his first language in spite of frequent use of second.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Type 2</td>
<td>Uses English for most everyday activities. Uses immigrant language to interact with parents or others who do not speak English. Is aware of vocabulary gaps in his first language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Preschool Age</td>
<td>Acquires both English and immigrant language simultaneously. Hears both in the home although English tends to predominate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aB</td>
<td>School Age</td>
<td>Uses English almost exclusively. Is aware of limitations in the immigrant language. Uses it only when forced to do so by circumstances. Is literate only in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aB</td>
<td>Adulthood</td>
<td>Uses English almost exclusively. Has few opportunities for speaking immigrant language. Retains good receptive competence in this language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>Preschool Age</td>
<td>Is spoken to only in English. May hear immigrant language spoken by grandparents and other relatives. Is not expected to understand immigrant language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>School Age</td>
<td>Uses English exclusively. May have picked up some of the immigrant language from peers. Has limited receptive competence in this language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Adulthood</td>
<td>Is almost totally English monolingual. May retain some receptive competence in some domains.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES


*Communication Disorders Quarterly, 21*(1), 4-16.


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