VOICES WITHIN SITIOS Y LENGUAS: A BILINGUAL ELEMENTARY CONTEXT

BY

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DISSERATION

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Abstract

Latina/o students are the largest minority population in U.S. schools (Gándara, 2010), yet are provided limited opportunities to draw on their linguistic and cultural repertoires of knowledge for learning (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). States, such as Illinois, that require school districts to provide instruction in students’ primary language under specific circumstances, can allow us to explore ways that teachers support emergent bilingual students’ cultivated student voice and incorporated their home language and culture in the classroom learning environment. Cultivating bilingual individuals in this day in age has been relegated to transitional bilingual programs that continue to identify learning English as the main objective. Many programs have been eliminated because the home language is considered to be a debilitating factor for the English-only schema. Dominant discourses regarding immigration and the education of Latina/o communities is often fueled by deficit cultural perspectives that label marginalized linguistically diverse students in reductionist forms (i.e., limited English proficient, high risk and economically disadvantaged). However, by employing Chicana feminist perspectives to examine learning in a first grade bilingual classroom, the mechanism for dialogue and knowledge production is done through the home language.

This dissertation examines the instructional practices in a first-grade bilingual classroom and the ways Latina/o students engaged in Spanish and English. By theorizing classroom spaces and the interchange of languages, sitios y lenguas counters deficit discourses by providing a narrative that reclaims knowledge production (Perez, 1998), of bilingual and bicultural communities (Darder, 2011). This framework examines the process in which students’ home languages and cultural backgrounds are cultivated and valued as resources amidst the national discourse that views standard English as the language for learning. The research questions
guiding this study are as follows: How were the teacher’s beliefs and instructional practices enacted in the classroom to support student voice? What were the ways that students’ home knowledge was incorporated into the classroom?

Ethnographic methods were used to collect and analyze data (i.e., classroom observations, audio-recordings of small and whole group discussions, classroom artifacts, and semi-structured interviews), across the 2012-2013 academic year. By identifying the types of cultural and linguistic knowledge that students accessed to support their participation and engagement in literacy instruction, this research addresses a research gap in the field of literacy and bilingual education by examining the day-to-day practices that promote academic learning for emergent bilinguals. The findings show how the teacher countered the negative discourses about Latina/o immigrant families that existed in the school and larger society and illustrate how a multicultural social justice approach can be implemented effectively in the primary grades.
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Preface

I still remember my first experiences in school when I arrived in the U.S. I was sitting on the carpet as I watched other kids raise their hands and the teacher motioning them to get up and go to workstations. I was the last child, and I had no idea what to do. Even though the classroom was composed of students from linguistic and culturally diverse backgrounds, I only heard English. I didn’t encounter bilingual education until we moved to Oregon from California. By the time I was about to enter third grade, I noticed that I had been moved out of the bilingual classroom. I refused to be moved away from my friends, and so I didn’t go to the classroom I was assigned. I’m not quite sure how I managed to stay with the bilingual class, but I was happy.

I don’t pretend to know or give voice to the complexities of children’s worlds. In other words, “giving voice” is a complicated issue that must be addressed with care. Additionally, we cannot be naive and think that we can “completely” capture the perspective of our participants. As a self-identified Chicana/Latina scholar in the field of literacy research, I am invested in issues that pertain to children of color, in particular, Latina/o students. Even though, there are spaces and times in which I may have felt that I had similar experiences to children of color in the U.S., coming from a poor, immigrant background and being bilingual; I am highly aware of the privilege that I have gained being educated to the extent that I have thus far and the social responsibility I have to my community (Hurtado, 1998). The role of power and identity is very much intertwined with the role of the researcher. As an adult I frequently think back to my experiences growing up and undergoing a process of becoming bilingual in our English dominant society.

I remember my father would ask me to teach him how to speak English. The first “word” I taught him was T.V. I also remember the times where he would take me to go and translate for
him during his court hearings. I remember the judge being simultaneously impressed by me and upset with my dad for taking me out of school to have me translate for him. I still remember how my father’s facial expression reflected the pride he felt for my bilingualism and the shame for his inability to understand and speak for himself. These memories rushed over me during the summers I taught a kindergarten and first grade class of Spanish-English speaking children of migrant workers. That experience served as a pivotal moment in the development of a critical understanding of the relationship between culture, language and learning.

Doing research is a difficult endeavor that requires not only an overwhelming amount of time, but also relentless reflection upon our personal experience, knowledge and understanding. As I have stated above, I identify myself as a Chicana/Latina feminist scholar, and that comes with it its own set of epistemologies and contradictions that I’m still making sense of (i.e., insider/outsider). Even though, I believe that having an immigrant story, Chicana/Latina consciousness and being bilingual has provided me with insights in interpreting the space(s) of this bilingual classroom, and I am aware that it is by no means the only perspective (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Saavedra, 2011). However, the interpretations that you have before you derive from an intense process of critical reflection and analysis. My hope is that I have honored the stories of this bilingual classroom space, which were filled with success, frustration, laughter and ambiguity.
Chapter 1
Introduction

Background and Purpose

The education of Latina/o children has always been a contested terrain, especially when it comes to the language of instruction. Linguistic or cultural differences have been deemed as barriers to learning. Halcón highlighted the characteristics that have been attributed to Latina/o children’s inability to learn and progress academically stemming from them being non-English speaking, culturally deprived, low socioeconomic conditions and not valuing education (2001). These deficit portrayals of Latina/o children have a long history in the U.S., which helped fuel the segregation of Mexican/Latina/o children in the southwest during the 1930s. These segregated schools imparted a rigid English-only curriculum and punished those who uttered their native language. Even though Chicano educators at the time challenged these racist practices, these culturally and cognitively deprived theories have remained to this day. These prevalent discourses related to linguistic diversity in U.S. schools focuses on English acquisition, displacing and silencing the bilingual and bicultural experiences of countless individuals. This discourse is rooted in perspectives that view bilingual children in deficient terms and measure their abilities against academic expectations based on standardized assessments that are normed for English speakers (Abedi, 2004; García, 2010, 2012; García & Bauer, 2009; Solano-Flores & Trumbell, 2003). According to a 2011 National Center for Education Statistics report,¹ Latina/o students are the largest minority population in U.S. schools, yet they are provided with limited opportunities in schools to draw on their cultural and linguistic repertoires of knowledge for learning (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). Second language learners, including Latina/o Spanish speaking students, are referred to as Limited English Proficient (LEP), English language learners

¹http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_203.50.asp
(ELLs) or English Learners (ELs). However, I use the term emergent bilingual to refer to students in the process of developing more than one language, as it recognizes the dynamic and ongoing process of learning two languages simultaneously, rather than privileging one language over the other (García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008). Large portions of emergent bilinguals receive instruction only in English (DaSilva Iddings, Combs, & Moll, 2012), which ultimately limit the opportunities from which to draw from their cultural knowledge and home language for learning.

The educational programs available to emergent bilinguals differ based on state requirements. In Illinois, for instance, the Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program model is required if more than 19 students have the same home language background (L1) and are not “proficient” in English (L2). TBE programs provide instruction in the student’s native language while transitioning them into academic subjects in English. English acquisition, essentially the target language is achieved through ESL instruction (Short, 2000). Nonetheless, parents have the right to opt out of bilingual and/or ESL services and have their children placed in a general education classroom. Many times these parental decisions are often due to the lack of information and understanding of second language development, bilingualism and learning.

Understanding the historical perspectives of bilingual education highlights the discourses revolving around language and education. Discussions regarding bilingualism have been situated in opposing ways—subtractive and additive. The former, for instance, tends to occur in TBE programs, while the latter is cultivated in spaces where both languages obtain relatively equal standing as in dual language programs (Lindholm-Leary, 2005; Lindholm-Leary & Howard, 2008). As mentioned above the goal for TBE programs is English acquisition without any regard whether children maintain their home language, which make these programs subtractive forms of bilingual education (Valenzuela, 2005). On the other hand, additive bilingualism is when a
student is able to maintain their native language while acquiring their second language (Roberts, 1995). Support for bilingual education and programs have shifted over time. Still, the issues that have remained part of the discussion are how language ideologies and power are understood in the context of educating linguistically diverse students (García, 2014). For example, even though the primary goal of TBE programs is English proficiency and not bilingualism, (and even less biliteracy development), these classroom contexts provide an opportunity to explore how bilingual teachers support emergent bilingual students’ voice through home language and cultural knowledge. Furthermore, the in-between spaces, “where the child is neither monolingual nor biliterate” (García & Woodley, 2015, p. 134) are just beginning to be explored.

**Significance of the Case Study**

This case study explores how a first-grade bilingual teacher, her bilingual teaching assistant, and emergent bilingual students accessed their linguistic and cultural knowledge and lived experiences for thinking and learning. I draw from Chicana/Latina feminist perspectives (Delgado Bernal, 2009), specifically Pérez’ (1999) theoretical construct of *sitios y lenguas* [spaces and languages; sites and discourses] to examine teaching and learning in a bilingual classroom. Public discourse has often debated the value (or lack thereof) of home languages other than English and the experiences from those who come from poor, immigrant working class backgrounds. In educational contexts, culturally and linguistically diverse students are marked by descriptions of limited proficiency (Fránquiz, Salazar, DeNicolo, 2011), which degrade the complexity of their home language practices and the ways in which parents, family, and community teach cultural knowledge that prepares them individually and collectively to become self-sufficient (De la Luz Reyes & Halcón, 2001; Gonzalez, et al. 2005; Valdés, 1996; Zentella, 2005).
Teachers in bilingual classrooms are often perceived as offering compensatory education (Brisk, 1998; 2006), which simplifies the complex ways in which bilingual teachers not only have a sophisticated understanding about language and literacy development, but also engage very young emergent bilinguals in critical thinking and knowledge production (Torres-Guzmán, Abbate, Brisk, & Minaya-Rowe, 2002). In seeking to understand how emergent bilinguals, teachers, and parents construct their own meanings of who they are and who they want to become, highlights they ways that they challenge assimilationist and xenophobic discourses that degrade and dehumanize their experience and identity (Durand, 2011). Shifting the discourse from an assimilationist model to one that acknowledges the complex language practices and cultural knowledge as strengths is worthy of study.

The purpose of this case study is to understand the instructional processes used by a bilingual teacher and the bilingual teaching assistant to access emergent bilingual students’ linguistic and cultural knowledge from home for knowledge production in the classroom. The following research questions guide my case study:

1. How were the teacher’s beliefs and instructional practices enacted in the classroom to support student voice?

2. What were the ways that students’ home languages and cultural knowledge were incorporated in the classroom?

These questions are examined through *sitios y lenguas* as a frame of reference and a tool for looking at the ways in which students, teachers and parents have uncovered complex ways in which cultural and home knowledge are evident in the everyday. *Sitios y lenguas* can serve as a platform for elevating the voices of bilingual and bicultural people amidst a political climate, which locates English at the center of educational policies for linguistically diverse populations. It does so by creating an interruption, within the larger political climate on English-only, by
individuals who question these policies without any regard to the consequences for emergent bilinguals educational future.

Theoretical Framework

I draw on *sitios y lenguas* and a Chicana/Latina feminist scholarship that recuperates the voices of Chicanas/Latinas by inserting them in historical texts, which have ignored, repressed and colonized their lived experience (Hernández, 2003; Perez, 1993; 1999). *Sitios y lenguas* is a strategy used by Chicanas/Latinas, as women of color and a marginalized group, to create counter-sites of resistance to hegemonic discourses produced by colonizing ideologies that have erased them from history (Perez, 1993; 1999). In a similar manner, hegemonic discourses and representations of bilingual Latina/o children over the years have described them in deficit terms (García, 2014). *Sitios y lenguas* counters these discourses by repositioning their voices and the locations that they inhabit as viable for learning. This repositioning does not attempt to erase their biculturalism or distort their identities as deficits in political historical imaginations.

I build on *sitios y lenguas* to further the project of decolonization for Latina/o emergent bilingual children and their parents and teachers. This process of decolonization through *sitios y lenguas* is pertinent to educational contexts since schools have served as institutions of colonization and assimilation (Grande, 2008). Many examples can be found during the Americanization of Mexican children’s schooling in the southwest during the first half of the 20th century (see Darder, Torres and Gutiérrez, 1997; 2013). For instance, the ideology that learning could not take place in the home language and that it had to be eliminated in order for proper integration or assimilation into dominant American society (Gonzalez, 1997; 2013). Pérez (1994) urges marginalized people to decolonize these colonial spaces and institutions by creating their own spaces and language, *sitios y lenguas*. Drawing from Chicana/Latina feminist
epistemologies I name these colonial spaces in schools where emergent bilingual children have historically attended. From this perspective, any analysis of educational contexts must thus, be done “concurrently with an analysis of colonialism” (Grande, 2008, p. 236).

Chicana/Latina feminist scholars have analyzed educational discourses, structures, and practices to understand the education of Latinas/os and validate their knowledge production based on their own lived experiences and perspectives (Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godinez, & Villenas, 2006). The wisdom, teaching, and tools that have contributed to positive social change refers to how Chicana Latina feminist produce knowledge (Carmona, 2012). Delgado Bernal, Alemán and Garavito (2009) explored how Pérez’ decolonial imaginary could be the impetus for educational scholars to reconsider how we theorize discursive, social and physical spaces of ambiguity, contradictions and possibilities, while incorporating how we can acknowledge hybrid identities, histories and practices in educational spaces. I also borrow from Massey’s (1994) construct of space, to further define the classroom beyond simply a physical space in which power is reproduced and social relations that are both simultaneous and dynamic. Massey also argued that space and time needed to be theorized integrally and that space-time is not only perceived but also experienced differently by the observer. She writes, “for people are everywhere conceptualizing and acting on different spatialities.” Similarly, Pérez’ decolonial imaginary is comprised of a third space, the in-between or interstitial gap, where multiple stories of realities are exchanged. Furthermore, this third space is the juncture between the colonial institution and implication to their sustenance. Yet, even as we are accomplices to systems of domination, whether it is patriarchy, heterosexism, capitalism, or racism, through the decolonial imaginary as a third space, we can attempt to change those structures, rupture dominant narratives and rewrite our own.
Pérez’ (1998) *sitios y lenguas*, as a theoretical practice, demonstrates how hybrid identities emerge, change and transform within discursive, metaphorical and physical spaces. She called for marginalized groups to claim their own spaces and languages. I utilize *sitios y lenguas* in a similar manner in which Dillard (1997) conceptualized endarkened epistemology as “inherently cultural, positional, political, strategic, relational, and transformative” (p. 3) with origins in Black feminist thought, undergirding its epistemological and cultural foundations. In other words, *sitios y lenguas* as a framework locates a positional stance as strategic in the sense that it is culturally inherent, politically driven by Latina/o subjects who attempt to transform the day-to-day realities. Bilingual classrooms are spaces of possibilities in which Latina/o children can express their agency through their home languages by developing their bicultural voices. This study examines the ways that emergent Spanish-English bilinguals, parents, and bilingual teachers constructed *sitios y lenguas* as a strategy for challenging hegemonic discourses around “monolingualism” may further the project of decolonizing their schooling experience.

**Structure of the Dissertation**

In Chapter 2, I build on the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 1 by providing an overview of Chicana²/Latina feminist epistemologies that ruptures the silence and erasure perpetuated by racism, sexism and heteronormativity in the academy. I draw from Chicana/Latina feminist research for ways in which the marginalization of Latinas/os at all levels of education remains a central focus for examination. By coupling educational research with Chicana/Latina feminist paradigms, I narrow the review of literature pertinent to identifying language learning as a dynamic process. I then expand the review by introducing how *sitios y lenguas*...
*lenguas* as a theoretical framework identifies students’ home languages and ways of knowing in repositioning bilingual students as knowers.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach for examining and interpreting classroom participants’ learning experiences through a qualitative paradigm, case study approach and informed by a Chicana/Latina feminist theoretical framework of *sitios y lenguas*, to explore language use and learning in a first grade Spanish-English bilingual classroom. I then introduce the setting, participants, and my role as a researcher in more detail and the data collection and analysis procedures. In my role as a researcher, I draw from Chicana/Latina feminist theories, *sitios y lenguas* in particular to situate my privileged status as a researcher (Villenas, 1996) and enactment of my own cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998). In addition to articulating a concept of *acomedita*, or courteous nature, which illustrated the ways that my role shifted between the different spaces that I inhabited in the classroom and with who I was interacting with. I learned to position and navigate my body, my use of technology during data collection.

The subsequent chapters feature the findings that employ *sitios y lenguas* in different contexts and situations. Chapter 4, for instance, details the classroom *sitios* established by the norms and practices that structured the discourse and interaction between the classroom participants. *Lenguas* refers to the ways in which students used their home language and voice as tools for learning, self expression, and making critical connections. This chapter discusses how the home language and cultural knowledge for emergent bilingual students provided ample opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning.

Chapter 5 highlights how the bilingual teachers’ (Catalina and Adela) own *sitio y lengua* allowed me to see from their perspective the intellectual engagement with questions regarding agency, voice, and commitment to educational equity and social justice. In this chapter, through
testimonio and platicas, I document the teachers’ sitio y lengua, as instances in which they actively and in subtle ways resisted larger discourses of deficit oriented perspectives of bilingual children of color and pledged their commitment to cultivating bilingualism and critical thinking in their students.

Chapter 6 focuses on the parents’ sitio y lengua, particularly the ways in which they transferred family and cultural values and practices onto their children. These values were interlaced with issues of language, citizenship and education. I begin with explaining the ways that race, class and gender were embedded in the parent’s own schooling experiences in their native country and their realities as immigrant working class individuals with U.S.-born children. I also describe how the literature on parent involvement has developed concepts of familismo, consejos, respeto, y educación to paint a broader picture of Latina/o parents’ involvement with their children’s schoolwork and their emergent bilingualism.

Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation with a summary of the primary findings. It is my intention to demonstrate the learning potential that exists when a teacher understands the significance of utilizing the home language and students’ cultural knowledge for learning. In turn, how this process facilitated students to engage in critical discussions that affected them as children of immigrants. Throughout the dissertation, I emphasize how significant the home language and cultural knowledge is for the participants’ classroom experience, despite prevalent discourses and educational policy regarding English acquisition. I end with a discussion of the implications for literacy instruction, teacher preparation, school and home collaboration, and future research.
Chapter 2

Literature Review: Mapping a Theoretical Framework

Current issues concerning the education of Latina/o students continue to centralize what language should be utilized for instruction. Latina/o students are still considered at-risk if they do not come into the classroom speaking English, and they continue to be tested in English (Bedore & Peña, 2008). This chapter examines the ways that Chicana/Latina feminist theory shows how sitios y lenguas, as a theoretical tool, can better account for bicultural children’s learning in bilingual spaces. First, I explain the main tenets of Chicana feminist perspectives that cultivate cultural knowledge production by expanding on the conceptual frameworks of cultural and linguistic hybrid identities. Second, I outline research studies in the field of education that draw on Chicana epistemologies to address Chicana pedagogies and pedagogies of the home (Delgado Bernal, 2001) to elaborate on mestiza consciousness. Third, I discuss current understandings of literacy, bilingualism, and the education of Latinas/os. Lastly, I draw from sitios y lenguas as a construct of Chicana/Latina feminist work and how it illuminates the process of bilingualism and biculturalism for Latina/o children in educational contexts.

Chicana Feminist Theories and Epistemology

Chicana feminist work highlights cultural characteristics of the Latina/o community by situating the cultural knowledge and language of Latina/o communities at the center to better understand identity, bilingualism and cultural knowledge. In highlighting these areas, Chicana feminist work acknowledges the unofficial sites of the home that embrace Chicana, Latina and Mexicana ways of knowing and lived experiences as resources to resist racial, classist, sexist, homophobic practices of exclusion (Delgado Bernal, 2001). In doing so, Chicanas/Latinas

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3 An important identity theoretical construct, an awareness of embodying both colonized and colonizer cultural values that are contradictory. Embracing these contradictions and ambivalence heals these ruptures of the violence from colonization.
counter traditional knowledge constructions derived from Eurocentric, male perspectives (Alarcón, 2002; Martinez, 1996), connect theory with practice⁴ and address the needs and concerns of their communities by centering on issues of immigration, health and education. Elenes (2002) remarks that as much as theories may be engaging and interesting, to understand social phenomenon, “it is necessary to apply similar theoretical perspectives to interrogate educational policies and pedagogies that hinder the educational progress of the Chicana/o community” (p. 246). The ways that children of immigrants experience education is an example of a social phenomenon that is important to examine through a Chicana feminist frame of reference. Understanding the particular issues that immigrant communities face is crucial for recuperating the voices, stories, and narratives of Latina/o communities.

There is a predisposition for anxieties to emerge over immigrant communities that speak a different language other than English in the United States (Aldama, 2001; Chavez, 2008). As anti-immigrant sentiments rise, for instance, attacks on children’s education emerge in order to maintain an “American” identity, consequently bringing to the surface the “normative registrars” of “the taken-for-granted world of white, male Americans” (Wellman, 1997 cited in Elenes, 2002). In other words, privileges that most English-speaking, heterosexual white men enjoy are not questioned or seen as advantages as their race, gender, class and heterosexuality become the norm upon which difference is measured. However, when immigrant Spanish-speaking communities mobilize for language-based programs they are met with hostility. Elenes (2002) explains,

social groups are divided into those who deserve certain privileges (read ‘rights’) and those who do not. Civil rights legislation and the programs aimed at remedying ‘past discriminations’ are seen as un-American because they confer group rights that are not gained through individual merit. (p. 248)

⁴ Delgado Bernal, 1999; Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godinez, & Villenas, 2006; Elenes, 2002.
Elenes also cites bilingual programs, as locations that challenge the monoculture and monolingual constructions of the “American” identity by utilizing the home language in learning, hence become a site of struggle for many communities. Chicana feminists theorize “against a white frame of reference” that challenges “traditional white ways and texts” (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxii). In other words, by destabilizing the norm based reference as white, male and monolingual and centering the experiences and perspectives of Chicana/o and Latina/o communities, we come closer to an alternative frame of reference, to a different consciousness, where multiple languages are acknowledged for their flexibility and hybridity, where identity formation embraces biculturalism, and where the production of cultural knowledge from communities of color is legitimized.

**Cultural knowledge production and voice.** Chicana feminists epistemologies recognize the social categories that individuals are located, in particular the ways in which race, gender, class and heterosexuality are interconnected (Flores, 2000). However, when these categories represent difference as a problem, they become oppressive and intersect and operate simultaneously depending on the circumstance, time and location for individuals and communities. This intersectionality of race, gender and sexuality challenges singular and unilateral experiences through which critical analyses call for a “theory of subjectivity.” This theory encapsulates the ways that Chicanas move between cultures, languages and spaces (Alarcón, 1991; González, 1998). Furthermore, these subjectivities are socially inscribed categories of race, gender and sexuality that shape the personal experience into a politicized location. The acknowledgement of the personal experience provides the space for Chicanas to remake/rewrite themselves into history through their own making. For many Chicana feminists “[o]ne important practice of decolonization is replacing silence with voice” (p. 693).
Decolonization in this context is the rewriting of history, questioning the neo-colonial practices that have served to erase the Chicana feminist collective experience. The vestiges of colonization have left Chicanas no other option but to claim the self and space within institutions that have been culturally and economically inaccessible (Córdova, 1998). Chicanas have written about an array of issues that affect their communities, and are not limited to labor struggles, the education of their children, and the unlawful sterilization of Latina women (Anzaldúa, 1987; Benmayor, 1991; Calderón, 2011; González, 2001; Hurtado, 1989; Villenas, 2001, 2010). The mere act of centralizing the Chicana, as a subject with voice, is an undertaking of opposition, refusing to be further colonized (Cruz, 2011; Sandoval, 1991). The combination of subjectivities, personal experience and voice allow for Chicana feminist perspectives that combine multiple theoretical models and languages to produce “a multivocal discourse” (p. 696).

**Chicana consciousness.** The awareness of sexism and racism propelled many women of color to write from their location and experience, partaking actively in changing their realities. Chicanas were relegated to traditional gendered roles of the caretaker, willing to endure any suffering for the “good” of *la familia*. Modeling after the writings of Black feminists, Chicanas also began to articulate their sociopolitical present, past and future (Collins, 1981; hooks, 1981). By placing women of color at the center, Chicana feminists set out to document in nontraditional formats, the survival strategies that challenged oppressive cultural modes of social organization by creating new projects, agendas and theories of their own making (Anzaldúa, 1990). The *frontera*, borderland theory constructed understandings of the physical and theoretical borders between normalized ideals and that which was *othered*. Those who occupied the borderline between belonging and not belonging were implicated in Mexico and U.S. relations. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) explained, “[a] borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by
emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (p. 3). Those that inhabit the borderlands live in a state of duality, which calls for a *mestiza* consciousness, a tolerance for ambiguity and contradictions of socially constructed oppositions (i.e., female-male, homosexual-heterosexual, of color-Anglo).

Theorizing a Chicana mestiza consciousness through the borderlands is an attempt to deconstruct dichotomies that serve to justify oppressions. Hybridity is introduced as a way to mend these dichotomous ruptures of coloniality and oppression. Hybridity, *mestiza/o* identities, fuse nationalities, cultures, ethnicities and languages “making a new culture—una cultura *mestiza*” (p. 44), that challenge the taken for granted norms through a Chicana feminist logic. This framework is significant because Anzaldúa employs a bilingual strategy in uncovering the new *mestiza* consciousness by implementing multiple languages and linguistic hybridity in her discourse to overcome traditions of silence.

**Linguistic hybridity.** A central issue for Chicana feminists is maintaining a politicized working-class perspective in “disrupt[ing] complacency and to push concrete political action” (Hurtado, 1998, p. 137). For example, supporting bilingual education is not solely a working-class political issue but vital for the sustenance of immigrant, working class Chicana/o and Latina/o communities. Maintaining a commitment to the Spanish language is not only a refusal to assimilate as articulated by Hurtado (1998; 2003), but also establishes a space for cultural expression and connection to the global Spanish-speaking community. However, this is not meant to ignore the ways in which Spanish has also served as a colonial tool for the eradication of not only indigenous languages but peoples as well (Anzaldúa, 1987; Córdova, 1998). Speaking Spanish attests to this history of colonialism that eradicated previous generations of indigenous languages, lands and resources (Collins & Blott, 2003; Macedo, 200). At the same
time, maintaining varieties of Spanish has become a form of resistance to the hegemony of the English language in the U.S.

Zentella (2002) argues that the languages that minorities speak cannot be separated from political and socioeconomic experiences. Prevailing discourses of the low academic achievement of working class Chicanas/os and Latinas/os are associated with the limited proficiency of the minority and majority language. Though, Spanish speakers, from Latina/o backgrounds, in particular “often blur the boundaries between Spanish and English to facilitate the adoption of new words and ways of speaking that reflect new ethnic and racial identities” (p. 322). Anzaldúa (1987) highlighted the way that labels or categories of language proficiency are problematic by affirming that “[u]ntil I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish . . . my tongue will be illegitimate” (p. 59).

The problem lies in how language is not seen as a “flexible symbolic system of communication” but rather as a system of grammatical rules (Zentella, 2002, p. 328). Archaic notions of linguistic boundaries are still in existence, evident in school and accountability requirements where the two languages are separated by subject, day or time frame (Cummins, 2007; Fitts, 2006). However, these time constraints for the use of each language are implemented so that the home language will not be relegated to a secondary role in the academic learning of bilingual children (Valdés, 1996). Conceptual understandings regarding linguistic hybridity has been implemented in bilingualism and biliteracy research and practice (Martin-Beltrán, 2009; García & Sylvan, 2009; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Orellana et al., 2003). More specifically, it is more evident in research that describes bilinguals as highly competent in their use of multiple

**Bicultural and hybrid identities.** Bilingualism and biculturalism are intertwining experiences for young children of immigrants; growing up in the U.S. requires bridging the values of the home with mainstream cultural ideologies (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Hybrid identities, like bicultural identities, is “the process by which marginalized groups construct alternative identities that negotiate elements of dominant and subordinate cultures” (Elenes & Delgado Bernal, 2010) in order to thrive culturally, politically and economically. Many times these cultural and linguistic elements come in conflict with diverse ethnic groups. For instance, the struggle over maintaining one’s cultural and linguistic heritage has been perceived as “un-American,” in direct opposition to an American national identity. However, “speaking English, in and of itself, has not led to an improved quality of life for the majority of Latino, African American, and Native American people” (Darder, 1997, p.36). Anzaldúa (1987) postulated that “[e]thnic identity is twin skin with linguistic identity” (p. 57). Hence, bicultural identity formation and the emergence of voice is the premise for cultural and linguistic justice for students of color (Darder, 1997).

Thus, the bicultural voice does what simply speaking English cannot:

[It] points to a discourse that not only incorporates the world views, histories, and lived experiences of subordinate cultural groups in the United States, but also functions to rupture the historical and institutionalized silence of students of color and the beliefs and practices that support such dehumanizing forms of silence in the first place (Darder, 1997, p. 40).

Classrooms in which students’ languages and backgrounds are embraced is a crucial element for Chicana/o and Latina/o communities in not only maintaining the home language of many children of immigrants but as a place in which they are not silenced by the prevalence of the
English language and its discourses. Breaking out of these silences leads to counter-narratives and *testimonios* that narrate the experiences of the Chicana/o and Latina/o community.

**Counter narratives and testimonio.** Counter narratives function to highlight the rupture of silence imposed by racism, classism and heteronormativity (Delgado Bernal, 2002) by understanding how these social restraints of the everyday influence the production of inequality. Counter narratives are “a discursive technique for resisting cultural and linguistic domination through personal and collective redefinition” (Montoya, 1994, p. 185). In particular, Chicana and Latina scholars have cultivated methods that embrace testimonios, oral histories, Spanish and indigenous languages, and artistic productions (i.e., poetry, performance art, painting, dance and music) for social justice (Anzaldúa, 1990; Flores, 2000). Hurtado shares similar practices advocated by Saldívar-Hull (1991), in that

[w]e have to look in nontraditional places for our theories: in the prefaces to anthologies, in the interstices of autobiographies, in our cultural artifacts, our cuentos, and if we are fortunate to have access to a good library, in the essays published in marginalized journals not widely distributed by the dominant institutions. (as cited in Hurtado, 1998, p. 137)

A Chicana feminist perspective contests prevailing ideologies (Delgado Bernal, 2002) and descriptions that function to justify social hierarchal structures through cuentos, oral and written counter narratives (Flores, 2000) and testimonios (Latina Feminist Group, 2001). Cuentos set the foundation for resisting labels imposed by racist discursive practices, whether intentional or not, by a misinformed majority and oppressive institutional forces. For Flores these cuentos come in multiple linguistic forms where “[c]enter and margin positions are put in[to] question when the language of the culture is inaccessible to outsiders, for those who now have the knowledge to understand are those traditionally thought of as ‘on the margins’” (p. 692). In other words, these cuentos “flip the script” (Roberts et al., 2008) change the discourse by actively creating alternative discourses that allow critical practices that utilize bicultural personal
experience and hybrid languages to explore issues that affect the Latina/o community from their own vantage point.

*Testimonios* are individual stories that contribute to a collective oppressive experience of marginalized communities that illuminates their struggle for self-determination. As a pedagogical tool, *testimonio* has the potential to disrupt dominant ideologies and narratives. *Testimonios* are listened to actively and documented by an interlocutor, who collects and prepares the *testimonio* into a manuscript for publication in order to reach a larger audience and bring attention to the experience of the individual and the community affected by the institutionalized violence (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, Flores Carmona, 2012).

**Chicana Feminist Research and Education**

Chicana feminists have engaged with researching educational topics that affect the Latina/o community, such as access to quality education, critical pedagogy, academic achievement, and social and racial constructions of Chicana/o identity (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Elenes, 1997; Gonzalez, 2009; Delgado Bernal et al. 2009; Sandoval, 1999; Villenas, 1996; Villenas & Moreno, 2001). Other similar work addresses the education of children of immigrants, the achievement gap, undocumented students, and bilingual education (Gándara, 1995, 2002, 2009; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Reyes & Halcón, 2001; Zentella, 2005). Generally, most of these topics have been central focal points in educational research; however, most of them are approached from a deficit perspective or are under researched (Montoya, 1994).

The work of Delgado Bernal (1998), *Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research*, as the title suggests, calls for the use of a Chicana feminist framework in educational research. This article speaks to the pervasive nature of traditional research in its quest for objective truths and universal archetypes. Instead, as Delgado Bernal proposes, Chicana feminist
frameworks are rooted in the experiences of Chicanas and the intersections of gender, race, class and sexuality. The education of Latinas/os is a major concern for Chicanas, not only from a pedagogical bases, but because it is intertwined with issues of “power, ethics, politics and survival” (p. 556).

Delgado Bernal’s (2001) study on first generation Chicana college students at predominately White campuses investigates the ways in which these “self identified?” Chicana students draw from their home and cultural knowledge to navigate obstacles in predominately White institutions (PWIs). Data analysis of life histories and focus interviews indicate that pedagogies of the home serve as a foundation for cultural knowledge, one that affords students opportunities for survival and success, in often silencing educational spaces. Thus, Delgado Bernal’s study demonstrates that ethnographic research can show how Mexicano/Latino children utilize their cultural and linguistic resources for learning (see Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1992, 1994; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 1995; Trueba 1988, 1991). These linguistic and cultural resources formulate the basis for “funds of knowledge,” the bodies of knowledge acquired historically by Latina/o communities to ensure the survival of families (González et al., 1995). Delgado Bernal (2001) employs a Chicana conscious approach seeking to understand how students draw from their bilingual, bicultural identities and their commitment to community and how they interpret their spirituality in their experiences in institutions of higher education. Thirty-two female students were interviewed, 27 of who were born in the U.S. and came from working-class families. More than half of their mothers were either homemakers or worked as farm laborers. Approximately half of their fathers worked as farm or manual laborers. Over half of the parents had attained a ninth grade education. A third of the participants were first generation college students. Twenty-nine of the participants considered themselves bilingual.
Early experiences in school made some of the participants feel inadequate about their proficiency in Spanish and in English, yet as they grew up they began to see the positive effect of their bilingualism in college. For instance, their fluency in Spanish could be counted as the foreign language requirement. For others, Spanish was utilized as a resource, translating for parents of the local community during their service learning courses. Many of them acknowledge how Spanish, facilitated with the acquisition of English, ultimately contributing to their bilingualism. Additionally, they also understood how their bilingualism would contribute to their continual success. Still, fewer discussed how their bilingualism was tied to their identity and importance of maintaining their home language. Another finding discussed how students’ biculturalism contributed to seeing other perspectives and embracing multiple ethnic identities, in particular their “Mexicanness” despite their communities’ negative portrayal in the media. A final finding was the commitment to their communities, which include their families, other children of immigrants by giving back with their time and promoting education to their siblings and other children of color.

Oftentimes, language is targeted by educational policies that purport to improve the education of Latinas/os, as language is the vehicle for the transmission of knowledge and communication. Examples can be found in legislation in California English for the Children (Proposition 227), and other similar initiatives in Arizona and Massachusetts. In 2002 the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII) of 1968 (Baker, 2006) became known as the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act after the passing of NCLB (Billings, Martin-Beltran & Hernandez, 2010). Francisca E. Gonzalez’s (2001) study of young Mexicana’s development of womanhood, on the contrary, defines young

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5 The author used the terminologies; Chicana/Mexicanas/Latinas, however, I will use Latina/o to encompass all three identities throughout the dissertation.
Mexican college students as *pensadoras*, as active thinkers who draw from their cultural backgrounds and identities to question social hierarchies within social, political contexts of teaching, learning and knowing (see Chabram-Dernersesian, 1999). González’s work combats deficit perspectives of Chicana/Mexicana/Latina students that portray them as lacking the capacity to engage in high level of intellectual thought in educational institutions. Many of these misconceptions are attributed to students’ limited English proficiency and the presumed lack of interest in education. González employs a multi-methodological approach, one that incorporates critical race theory and Latina/o critical theory to frame and interrogate dominant ideologies and policies that displace what she termed Chicanas/Mexicanas/Latinas. She strategically merges *trenzas* (Montoya, 1994), a metaphor and defense mechanism to mask against racism and the theoretical construct of *mestizaje*, “a consciousness of an ethical commitment to egalitarian social relations in the everyday political sphere of culture” (p. 646). In doing so, this provided a method to examine the ways in which educational policies discriminate against Chicanas/os, Mexicanas/os, and Latinas/os. For instance, *trenzas y mestisaje* proposes a cross-disciplinary technique that approaches scholarship about communities of color through multidimensional strategies that resist traditional methodologies that has distorted or omitted their knowledge and experiences (Delgado Bernal, 1998).

In González’s (1998) study, student participants articulated what *consejos* and *educación* meant to them. *Consejos* embodied the ingrained value system and expectations of their families that informed their thinking and knowing about the world around them. *Educación* exemplified the day-to-day teachings and learned behaviors representative of the values and expectations inculcated by their families collective wisdom. When describing their identity formation, the young Mexicanas explained that their “Mexicanness” was a compilation of the “negotiation of
cultural meanings and lifestyle through feelings of nationalism, roots, and the experience of transnational migration” (González’s, 1998, p. 650). This Mexicanness is dynamic, shifting between multiple forms of oppression, ambiguity and contradictions that are experienced differently from socially dominant scripts of family and cultural narratives. For these young Mexicanas, success was determined by principles of respect, ambition and self-determination, which emanated from their families’ teachings. These young pensadoras were haciendo que hacer,6 enacting a “creative thought process, one of thinking and shaping consciousness, knowledge about material and nonmaterial reality, together with reasoning and integrity that weaves inner and critical knowledge” (p. 652). González (2001) argues that cultural knowledge needs to be fostered, as it imparts the strategies and tools for navigating obstacles in obtaining equitable opportunities in education. Moreover, González calls for further research that looks at how language policies discriminate against young Mexican, Chicana/o, and Latina/o children.

**Spaces and Languages**

Latina/o students’ cultural knowledge is fostered in bilingual educational spaces. Even though there are discrepancies between different model approaches to bilingual education, there are spaces in these programs where the home language is utilized for developing critical thinking and bridges the home knowledge with school learning. Educational policies that filter down to state and local education administrators, who are then responsible for interpreting policies such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), often come in conflict with bilingual programs and classroom instruction (García & Bauer, 2009; Menken & Solorza, 2014). Kate Menken and Cristian Solorza (2014) found that administrators in New York City schools actively resorted to eliminating bilingual programs as they were attributed to

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6 A theoretical construct that situates the daily work in teaching and learning analytical skills and problem solving in home and educational contexts.
students’ low-test scores, despite time spent on the development and maintenance of the student’s home language. Hence, the use of the student’s home languages was seen as an impediment to achieving academic success. English-only instruction, on the other hand, was believed to bring the greatest short-term improvement on academic development. Menken and Solorza uncovered that administrators “decision [was] typically based on a belief that eliminating the bilingual program [would] improve the test performance of emergent bilinguals—individually of any actual data analysis” (p. 108). Empirical work on Latina/o academic achievement and accountability found that performance accountability measures are often grounded on evidence-based rhetoric, when in fact the evidence is selected purposefully to fulfill a particular agenda (Valenzuela, 2005). The selection of studies has also been significant in the effectiveness debate of bilingual educational research. For instance, the way in which research meta-analysis is conducted reflects the researchers’ ideological and methodological approaches.

Conflicting assessments on the effectiveness of bilingual education is based on multiple variables that look at the language of instruction, standardize test scores in English, control groups, program models, school and class context, and time (Francis, Lessaux, & August, 2010). More importantly, what have been located as factors in differentiating effective bilingual programs are studies’ research questions and objectives (Francis et al., 2010). Furthermore, it appears that the debate over the effectiveness of bilingual education is really more about the technicalities of the study. Contemporary research on language and literacy has developed ways of understanding bilingual’s complex and flexible use of language by utilizing theories that account for alternatives to monopolizing language and literacy practices, spaces and epistemologies (Gutiérrez et al., 1995; Gutiérrez et al., 2008; Gutiérrez et al., 2011; Martin-Beltran, 2009; Saavedra, 2011).
**Language practices.** In a recent article, Wiley and Rolstad (2014) discuss how language and literacy practices have been described as falling under either an autonomous or ideological orientation, where the former asserts that literacy is obtained through mental sequences of encoding and decoding text and vocabulary comprehension. The ideological perspective, on the other hand, takes on social and cultural contexts as primary factors in literacy development (Wiley & Rolstad, 2014). The shift in literacy as a social practice (Gee, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978) and embedded in power relations (Pennycook, 2001) is a useful perspective that regards the learning and teaching of linguistically diverse students as a culturally specific act (Delgado Gaitan, 1990; Gonzalez et al. 1995). However, “school readiness” has been utilized to classify young minoritized children as either adept or unprepared for formal schooling (Dyson & Genishi, 2009).

This perception of preparedness disregards historical displacements of minoritized children’s ways of knowing by introducing middle class values in school settings (Delpit, 1995; Gándara, 1995; Heath, 1983; Fine, 1991; Valenzuela, 1999). The emphasis that children who come from English-speaking literate households are better equipped with the tools that facilitate metalinguistic awareness for literacy development is problematic. This assumption postulates that a home and school mismatch is due to cultural deficits and cognitive abilities. However, language use and its practices vary widely across contexts (Au, 1980; Dyson, 1995; Hymes & Nieto, 1994; Paley, 1986; Smitherman, 1986; Wiley & Rolstad, 2014). Wiley and Rolstad (2014) argue that despite extensive research on sociocultural perspectives on literacy, the CCSS disregard the complexity and flexibility of language varieties and its literacy practices. Furthermore, second language development and literacy researchers attempt to understand the
social implications of subtractive and additive bilingualism, construed through the lack or limited
access to bilingual education or the access to an equal education.

The level of cognitive demand used to examine language development and proficiency
have been articulated through theories of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS),
“social language,” and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), “academic
language,” to explain why certain immigrant language minority students obtained conversational
language within only a few years of arrival to the host country while academic language in
English took 5-7 years (Cummins, 1981). In order for this distinction to hold, another dichotomy
was reified: the contrast of oral and literate cultures. Academic language is considered to be
more cognitively demanding, less contextualized, and abstract than social language. It is
assumed that literate households from middle class backgrounds are more likely to experience
academic success due to the acquisition of academic language in Standard English. The danger
that this poses is the reproduction and maintenance of the status quo, instead of conceding that
school is a culture-specific domain, in which certain values are manifested to uphold normative
cultural practices (Darder & Torres, 2004; Darder & Mirón, 2006; Wiley, 1996). Wiley and
Rolstad’s (2014) critique of the CCSS intends to shift the focus back to how language must be
located within larger sociocultural and class contexts that continue to place children in
disadvantaged positions (Gándara, 2010; García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014). They argue that the
use of linguistic and cultural deficits and achievement gap to explain academic development are
unproductive ways that minimize how children are in fact engaging in stimulating and
intellectual work (DeNicolo, 2010; Fránquiz, Salazar, & DeNicolo, 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al.
2009).
Dynamic bilingualism and translanguaging. Other approaches that counter deficit discourse of emergent bilingual children include looking at language as dynamic, hybrid and intertwined with power (Pennycook, 2001). Dynamic bilingualism, thus, places language practices for communication at the center in a multicultural and linguistically diverse society, rather than as a remote set of literacy skills. Ofelia García (2014) proposes a critique of the duality of bilingualism in language education practices and research. The duality of bilingualism derived from early second language acquisition research focused on concepts of additive and subtractive bilingualism (see Lambert, 1974). For instance, the most common forms of bilingual education have been transitional bilingual programs. These programs vary across context; however, a central goal is the use of the home language for English acquisition. Other programs that have been implemented to recover bilingual instruction as a central goal has been two-way bilingual programs where majority language speakers are taught alongside minoritized children (see Lessow-Hurley, 2005) who more often than not also speak variants of English (García, 2014).

Language practices are acquired and utilized to varying degrees and are context dependent. García (2009) argues that contemporary language practices are better understood by transglossia, a multimodal communicative practice, in which prior “static language identities and hierarchical language arrangements” are debunked. Dynamic bilingualism extends beyond the linear acquisition of two languages or the additive and subtractive notions of bilingualism. It is a complex interrelated linguistic practice in which bilinguals are constantly negotiating, adapting and pulling from their linguistic resources to make meaning (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008, p. 135, cited in Garcia, 2014a). To illustrate dynamic bilingualism in young children, Garcia draws examples from her earlier work (Garcia et al., 2011). In a kindergarten classroom, for
example, students were able to demonstrate their dynamic bilingualism by making use of their linguistic repertoires; using Spanish, English, and gestures to communicate meaning. García (2014) interviewed fifth grade students and found that they viewed Spanish and English not as languages to be used separately, but rather, as integrative linguistic practice for communicating meaning.

In cultivating dynamic bilingualism, García (2014) argues for translanguaging to be seen as pedagogy. She defines translanguaging as

the ways in which bilingual students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that include . . . the home language practices of students in order to ‘make sense’ of teaching and learning, to communicate and appropriate subject knowledge, and to develop academic language practices. (García, 2014, p. 112)

In contextualizing the pedagogy of translanguaging, García draws from an example of high school students in a New York City high school, who come from Latina/o immigrant backgrounds (see García & Sylvan, 2011). For a literacy lesson, the teacher utilized rap lyrics from a Latino rapper and an Anglo rapper for translation purposes. In translating these lyrics to Spanish or English, students drew from their linguistic repertoires (García, 2014). The act of translanguaging became a response “to the complex and multidirectional processes in the language practices of people and challenges the view of languages as autonomous and pure, as constructed in Western thought” (García & Sylvan, 2011, p. 389). Beyond the linguistic aspects of the lesson, the teacher also encouraged critical discussions that allowed students to speak up and voice their views about immigration, deportation, and discrimination (García, 2014).

**Biliteracy practices.** Research on emergent biliteracy has found that young children develop their own concepts and theories about language and literacy before school literacies are introduced (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1989; Reyes, 2006). Generally, language researchers in the fields of bilingualism, biliteracy and language development investigate how sequential
bilinguals, children who learn their first language (L1) at home and their second language (L2) at school (García, 1998; Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1995, 1996), develop literacy abilities in reading and writing. Iliana Reyes’ (2006) work examines the emergent biliteracy in young learners. Research in early literacy development in two languages suggests that young children who come from multilingual environments develop literacy in more than one language without formal instruction (De la Luz Reyes). However, with a supportive environment, one in which teachers serve as mediators for biliteracy development, young children can achieve biliteracy (Dworin, 2003; Reyes, 2006).

Emergent biliteracy is an ongoing and dynamic process of meaning making, thinking, speaking, reading and writing (Reyes, 2006). Early literacy acquisition is a multidimensional activity, distinct for every child (Genishi & Dyson, 2007; Goodman & Owocki, 2004). At a young age, children who are exposed to writing systems develop an awareness of print and make their own hypotheses about such systems (Kenner, et al. 2004; Ferreiro, 2007; Goodman, 2007; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1989). Exposure to two different writing systems does not hinder children’s literacy development and their understanding of the function of literacy (Hakuta, 1986; Yaden & Tardibuono, 2004). In a recent review of Emilia Ferreiro’s (1982) work, Goodman, Reyes, and McArthur (2005) explain how early exposures to either similar or distinct writing systems allow emergent bilingual children to develop metalinguistic awareness of letters representing sounds within the alphabetic principle, which is fundamental for literacy in writing and reading. As with logographic, non-alphabetic writing systems (i.e., Chinese) attention is placed on the characters, lexical morphemes (Hu & Commeyras, 2008). According to Li (2006), children “need to master the language-specific orthographic skills in learning to read and write in the two languages” in order to become biliterate in English and Chinese (p. 377).
Reyes (2006) found that bilingual children experience a bidirectional process during their literacy development in two languages. For instance, their L1 is as much influenced by the L2 as the L2 is influenced by the L1. In other words, cross-linguistic transfer is not linear, but rather works in both directions, when exposed to more than one language simultaneously. The ways in which parents and other adults use scaffolding in the learning process are also considered to be bidirectional, as adults are shaped by their interactions with children (Reyes & Azuar, 2008). Reyes further argues that “the optimal time to introduce L2 literacy in young emergent bilingual children” also needs to be reconsidered within the “contexts in which children are growing up bilingually” (p. 287). The conditions and specific linguistic contexts are important to consider. For example, a young child who is exposed to two languages at home and/or at school cannot apply their L1 literacy to their L2 because they are developing formal literacy in both languages simultaneously. Additionally, when children are provided with “optimal environments” they are resilient and efficient learners of multiple languages (Moll et al., 2001). Teachers and educators are trying to understand how young learners can be supported in schools and how listening and learning from families and their children can provide an opportunity to continue to examine spaces of formal literacy instruction.

**Third space and classroom ecologies.** Researchers Gutiérrez, Larson and Kreuter (1995) partook in long-term ethnographic data collection from four Los Angeles school districts, across K-8 grade levels. From this larger project, Gutiérrez and colleagues (1995) presented a case study of the relationship between a teacher7 (Diane) and her Latina student (Nora)8 situated in an ever-changing sociocultural context of linguistic practices. The main objective of this study was to locate instances in which the talk and interaction between teacher and student provided

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7 Authors did not provide the race of the teacher.
8 Pseudonyms.
social spaces in which unofficial and official knowledge was constructed. On the one hand, official knowledge was defined within a constricted space where quietness was praised and students were receptacles of knowledge. On the other hand, unofficial knowledge was constituted by the ways in which students made sense of their own day-to-day experiences as sources of knowledge. Furthermore, this study utilized third space as a framework to redefine what counted as possible effective classroom practices. The study revealed that the teacher’s monologic script, “instruction [that was] teacher controlled, restrictive, and cultur[ally]-bound” (p. 414), defined the purpose of schooling and literacy. Nora participated on her own script production as well, defined as counterscript, which competed with the teacher’s script by re-keying, or establishing a discourse of her own and by not submitting to the rigidness of the teachers’ script. The authors argue that it is only until both scripts are abandoned that the possibility of an unscripted space, what they refer to as the third space, is realized. The third space brings together personal and social relevance of both teacher and student to engage in a “responsive-collaboration script” that creates a context where all cultures, discourses and knowledge’s are available to all in the classroom and cultivates resources for learning.

Gutiérrez (2008) advances the third space concept by developing a sociocritical approach to literacy in a collective third space. The context of the study took place in a four weeklong summer program at UCLA offered to youth of migrant farm workers. The main objective in the program was for students to begin to conceptualize who they were and what they could accomplish academically. This undertaking was made possible through a third space, in which “practices of a shared humanity, a profound obligation to others, boundary crossing, and intercultural exchange in which difference is celebrated without being romanticized” is created (p. 149). Sociocritical literacy means paying attention to the way that contradictions and
sociocritical practices are locally experienced in educational institutions and historically influenced (Gutiérrez, 2008). Furthermore, sociocritical literacy in the third space challenges narrowly conceived notions of literacy or vertically oriented notions of learning (i.e., incompetence to competence). Nonetheless, repertoires of practice is a more expansive way that captures the vertical and horizontal aspects of literacy, horizontal features being what is learned outside of school.

Gutiérrez, Bien, Selland, and Pierce’s (2011) work draws on repertoires of practice, in which the individual and community cultures, and histories are situated to understand the regularity and variance of literacy practices of dual language learners (DLLs). They argue that current models of literacy for DLLs do not consider the dynamic ways of language learning, much less the hybrid and multimodal practices that emerge in cultural contexts in which children of immigrants inhabit. The problem of educating DLLs tends to revolve around discourses that define academic literacy as a set of skills that focus on vocabulary, writing conventions, and differentiating between informal, social and formal, academic settings. In doing so, English becomes the vehicle to this sort of academic literacy at the expense of developing and maintaining the home language. This emphasis delineates any space for other approaches and possibilities for critical thinking and learning. This study takes place in an after school program that incorporated a technology-mediated program called Las Redes (Networks) designed for emergent bilingual Latina/o children in grades K-5. The school maintained a commitment to bilingual children by implementing technology and language learning for these students. The authors describe this space as a learning ecology organized around productive social interactions with undergraduate students.
Undergirding this exchange are polycultural tactics that merge home and school literacy practices through polylingual (beyond bilingualism) productions of written and oral texts. They found that “this hybrid and polycultural space, home and everyday language practices are unmarked and serve as resources for both cognitive and social accomplishments; considered legitimate in their own right” (p. 240). Additionally, these linguistic hybrid spaces constructed children’s identity as competent and creative thinkers and writers, while countering English-only discourses regarding rigid instructional practices for emergent bilinguals. The authors also found that multiliteracies were not only encouraged but also seen as valuable. Instead of only relying on their home language, students experimented with academic English. The multimodal exchanges between *El Maga*, the mythical cyber wizard, students, and undergraduates made learning stimulating and interactive (see Jewitt, 2009). By integrating school-based literacy practices with students’ everyday cultural knowledge, this enabled hybrid literacies to emerge as learning ecologies that legitimize student’s experiences, languages and identities.

**Testimonio and teaching.** Originated in Latin America, *testimonio* “is a literary genre that has been used by individuals to tell a collective story and history of oppression through the narrative of one individual” (Saavedra, 2011). *Testimonio* has been adopted by Chicana feminists and used as a method of storytelling, sharing one’s own story to express personal experience from a marginalized space. According to Elenes (2000) *testimonial* is situated knowledge, in which universalist perspectives of the subject are contested by centralizing the voices of the oppressed. Saavedra’s (2011) work with children uses *testimonial* as an instructional tool to center their stories, experiences and identities. Employing Chicana feminist theories and methods with children pushes against the taken-for-granted truths that conceive emergent bilinguals as
students without a language, *deslenguados* (Anzaldúa, 1987; Demas & Saavedra, 2004), and lacking “readiness” (i.e., skills, behaviors and norms) to succeed academically.

By rearticulating the spaces that emergent bilinguals inhabit provides an opportunity for reinvention (Saavedra, 2011). Saavedra uses her own *testimonio* to recount her experiences as a young bilingual biliterate child. She describes how her multiple names, identities and languages were something to be kept hidden. She reflected, that if schools had embraced her hybridity then she would not have had to silence her identities. As a third-grade bilingual teacher in Texas she writes, “I made concerted efforts to embrace, respect, and center my students’ *experiencias* in the classroom. Unfortunately, my efforts were often thwarted by the emphasis on accountability, standards, and high stakes testing” (Saavedra, 2011, p. 263). There was an occasion when she heard her third graders talk about whiteness representing beauty, and stating how “colonization has taught us well to hate ourselves—our brown, black skin, our brown eyes, our bodies” (Saavedra, 2011, p. 264). In response to these comments, Saavedra held mini lectures about the consequences of European colonization. She wrote about how these lessons began to make sense and how students related to the ways in which they constructed their identity but also engaged in dialogue around ways to challenge them. Discussions around colonization and Whiteness were understood by students who where able to connect these complex topics with their own experiences as first generation immigrants.

Knowledge and identities are constructed and used within these gaps to destabilize dichotomies of domination and subordination in the third space. Saavedra argues that if we use *testimonio* with children and if adults listen to the ways in which they construct their lived experience, it subsequently serves as a “counter-narrative to adult hegemony—that is, the fact that adults have created a world where children are the perpetual modernist project” (p. 266).
*Testimonios* from children allows them to become a speaking subject, one that conveys to adults how they construct knowledge and meaning in their lives (DeNicolo, González, Morales, & Romani, 2015). In doing so, possibilities of producing organic intellectuals in young children can function as a tool for theorizing from their own localities and make interpretations of their own for meaning-making.

**Teachers and testimonio.** In her research with pre- and in-service Latina bilingual teachers, Prieto (2009; 2013) implemented paired (auto)biographical dialogues and then conducted oral (her)story interviews. Through the analysis, Prieto found that the *maestras* enacted cultural strategies that informed the notion of *una conciencia con compromiso*. For one of the participants named Cici, *sobrevivencia* (survival, transcendence and self-sufficiency), became a way to break ties with painful experiences she endured from the men in her family. Prieto discusses that “while Latin@ cultural norms instruct us not to talk about histories of abuse, especially when suffered at the hands of our own family members” (p. 172), a Chicana feminist approach allows for transformation and agency to recover the sense of self and identity from the pain. Despite these experiences, Cici found value in family. She understood that a close family unit was necessary in order to survive the poor economic conditions endured in the country of origin and in the U.S. Unfortunately, for Cici, her teacher preparation program did not provide a space where she could work through her “shifting and often contradictory subjectivities” in making sense of her experience.

The other participant, Mariela identified strongly with her Mexican ancestry. However, her initial difficulty in obtaining a college education stemmed from the sheltering she received from her parents, in particularly from her mother. Her mother was guided by her Catholic belief

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9 The term comes from the second wave of feminism that offered a feminist critique to traditional historiography, which tended to be a male-centered canon.
that women did not leave the house until they were married. It was with her father’s help that she convinced her mother to let her leave to college far from home. For Mariela, attending college provided her the space to grow and experience self-discovery. For Mariela, speaking Spanish was a marker of identity and connection to other Mexican people. Prieto found that even though the maestras found ways to cultivate their sense of self, commitment to teaching in bilingual settings, and understood conflicting cultural values within the family, they did not have opportunities in their own programs to explore these areas.

The research conducted by Burstein and Montaño (2001) on six urban veteran Chicana/Latina teachers utilized a critical Chicana pedagogy, one that illustrated the teachers’ commitment to teach Latina/o children. Their commitment originated from their political identities. Their classrooms were sites of learning, where political and cultural productions of teaching and learning were challenged in order to transform the education of Latina/o students. The study used testimonio, stories that evoked their cultural knowledge, experiences challenging racism, sexism and oppression. Their experiences as Chicanas provided the ideological clarity that maintained their dedication to their activism in the service of teaching Latina/o bilingual children (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001). The researchers found that social networking, a Chicana and activist identity, commitment to students, and establishing relationships (comadrazgo) with younger Chicana/Latina teachers maintained these teachers’ vitality. Many of them became the “voice” who spoke up and advocated for Latina/o students by exposing them to their history and heritage. These testimonios of Chicana veteran activist teachers illuminated sites of political and cultural learning, where discourses around students’ heritage and history were incorporated into the curriculum. The following section discusses studies that have utilized sitios y lenguas to look at classroom spaces and linguistic practices in the development of
bilingualism, biculturalism, and cultural and home knowledge (Burstein & Montaño, 2001; De los Rios, 2013; Delgado et al., 2009).

**Sitios y Lenguas**

Chicana Feminist scholars have produced theories to study the education of Latinas/os and to validate the knowledge production from their lived experiences and perspectives (Delgado Bernal, et al. 2009). Chicana feminist educational researchers have utilized *sitios y lenguas* as a framework from which to produce educational scholarship (De los Rios, 2013; Delgado Bernal, et al., 2009). More importantly, Chicana feminist theories illuminates the ways in which marginalized students negotiate discursive, metaphorical and physical boundaries. In other words, they provide understandings of boundaries, whether physical or symbolic that differentiates people into racial, economic, cultural and linguistic categories (Delgado Bernal, et al. 2009). *Sitios y lenguas* as a theoretical lens re-conceptualizes the learning of bilingual children and pedagogical practices of bilingual teachers.

**Higher education.** A study of first year Latina/o undergraduates conducted by Delgado Bernal, Aleman Jr. and Garavito (2009) examined students’ experiences navigating a largely White institution of higher education. The participants took part in a yearlong ethnic studies course, which involved mentoring Latina/o elementary students enrolled in a Spanish dual-immersion program, where 60% of the student population was Latina/o. A Chicana feminist analysis of the undergraduates’ experiences in the course illustrated the ways in which *sitios y lenguas* functioned as a powerful lens to understand knowledge production. Analysis showed the ethnic studies course as a *sitio* [separate space] for Latina/o students enabling them to explore their racial, cultural, linguistic and economic positions as Latina/o students. This *sitio* also served as a space for “self-preservation” (as cited in Delgado Bernal et al., 2009, p. 578). *Lenguas*
[discourse] came in the form of challenging normative discourses around race, class, gender, sexuality, social, and educational equity. Both Spanish and English were used in the mentoring of the Latina/o elementary students to challenge dominant ideologies that held English as the only mode of communicating knowledge. In addition, the mentorship of Latina/o elementary students by first-generation Latina/o college students nourished the undergraduates’ own connectedness to the Latina/o community. The authors challenge higher education institutions to create *sitios y lenguas*, or spaces and cross cultural dialogue, to enhance our abilities to engage and participate in a pluralistic democratic society (Hurtado, 1998; 2003)

**High school.** In a recent study, De los Rios (2013) researched the experiences of high school students in grades 11 and 12 in a yearlong Chicana/o-Latina/o Studies course. She argues that public schooling has been used as a tool for “Americanization” by limiting what ethnic studies courses recover, such as the counter historical narratives, perspectives, and epistemologies of the marginalized. She used *sitios* in her study to refer to the discursive spaces created in the Chicana/Latina Studies course. In this course, for example, the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality and power were examined, in addition to providing a historical analysis of the self-determination of Chicana/o and Latina/o communities. The use of *lenguas* refers to the discourses around race, class, gender, sexuality and citizenship status, in particular, to their normative influences, which were discussed and challenged in class. De los Rios found that the ethnic studies course and classroom space provided students with a better understanding of their hybrid identities and an awareness of how colonialism affects Latinas/os today. Students were able to “talk back” to repressive structures (i.e., racism and sexism) and “become stronger” in dealing with these issues at home and society at large (p. 68). Through this dialogue, students developed a deeper sense of commitment to their community. This involved their active
participation in reimagining their daily lives and actions that “humanize, uplift, and honor others” (p. 70). De los Rios concluded that the course had a profound affect on students’ sociopolitical and ethnic identities, and social responsibility to Latina/o communities. These findings highlighted a need for a “humanizing effort” in re-conceptualizing the education of Latinas/os in the U.S. (p. 59).

These studies showed the relevance of using sitios y lenguas, which provided a lens to locate spaces and discourses that challenge deficit constructs that affect Latina/o university and high school students. With these studies I’ve mapped a theoretical framework that can offer an alternative interpretation to the ways that emergent bilingual children learn to draw on their cultural knowledge to discuss and understand issues that were relevant to them and their families. Bilingual contexts, such as bilingual classrooms, have historically been contested terrains, particularly for their use of home language as a source for developing critical thinking and bridges the home knowledge with school learning. Language and literacy research has developed understandings of the complex and flexible ways that emergent bilingual children develop their literacy in home and school contexts.

**Conclusion**

The use of Chicana/Latina feminist theories and epistemologies in my research allows me to explore emergent bilingual students’ language and literacy practices from an alternative interpretive framework. The major tenets of Chicana feminist frameworks discussed in this chapter illuminate the ways in which bilingual and bicultural individuals employ cultural and linguistic hybridity to resist the hegemony of the English language in the U.S. Chicana/ Latina feminist educational research has provided the foundation to expand on my work in early childhood and language and literacy education. Specifically, it has made me think critically
about the ways in which pedagogies of the home, consejos, and cultural knowledge have been utilized to speak back to educational policies that frame their home languages and cultural knowledge as illegitimate. The counter narratives and testimonios presented in this study highlight the ruptures of silence imposed by deficit descriptions of Latina/o families and communities. This study contributes to these new understandings by examining the day-to-day instructional literacy practices that promote academic learning for first-grade emergent bilinguals. I use sitios y lenguas as a framework to explore the ways in which a first-grade teacher created critical spaces for bilingual students to engage in discussions that pertain to their cultural and linguistic experiences.
Chapter 3

Methodology

This study, informed by a Chicana/Latina feminist theoretical framework of *sitios y lenguas*, examines language use and learning in a first grade Spanish-English bilingual classroom. In Chapter 2, I discussed how bilingual classrooms are dynamic spaces immersed with complex processes of learning language and literacy in two languages. Emergent bilingual children are continuously navigating, adapting and drawing from their linguistic resources to develop their own concepts and theories about language and literacy to make meaning of their lived experience. When I walked into this space for the first time, I was completely drawn to the sounds of children’s voices, laughing, and talking. Perhaps to other observers this setting might have appeared a bit chaotic, but to me it was rich with commotion, engagement, and learning. I instantly felt like I was at home. It is hard to describe this feeling of home, but I felt comfort in this space as I spent more time in the classroom observing students and teachers. I came to understand the source of this comfort through my exposure to women of color feminist writers (see Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2002) and *sitios y lenguas*. As an interpretive framework, *sitios y lenguas* illuminated the classroom as a space that was preserving the cultural and linguistic identities of children of immigrants.

Designed from the perspective of qualitative inquiry, this ethnographic case study examines teaching and learning in a bilingual classroom space. I address the following two research questions in my study:

1. How were the teacher’s beliefs and instructional practices enacted in the classroom to support student voice?

2. What were the ways that students’ home knowledge was incorporated into the classroom?
According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), qualitative research is a complex set of interpretive practices that attempts to locate a “series of representations” of how we make sense of the world. By documenting observations thorough fieldnotes, recording conversations and interviews of the “situated activity,” researchers seek to make meaning of contexts. With this in mind, my study was designed through a qualitative approach to document and interpret the instructional practices that bilingual teachers enacted during literacy activities implemented in students’ home language. For Buch and Staller (2007), ethnographic research is a method that inquires about the every day lived experiences, activities and social practices of groups of people in order to gain an understanding of their worldviews. In using ethnographic tools, my goal was to capture dialogue, engagement, and language use during classroom activities that illustrate teachers’ beliefs and instructional practices that foster a learning environment in which students home language and cultural knowledge are validated as sources for learning language and literacy. Conducting a case study approach aided in honing in on the object of study as a “specific, unique, bounded system” (Stake, 2005, p. 436). Dyson and Genishi (2005) further illustrate that “cases are constructed not found, as researchers make decisions about how to angle their visions on places overflowing with potential stories of human experience” (p. 2) and depending on the context, any social phenomenon will appear distinct to different researchers. The specific context of this bilingual classroom allowed me to see how both the teachers and students constructed and deconstructed ideas about language and literacy and what represented knowledge.

The interdisciplinary nature of my work illustrates how this case study reveals the teacher’s approach of drawing from students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds as resources for learning. Drawing from Chicana/Latina feminist theories, sitios y lenguas in particular, I seek
to provide an interpretation that is fair to all participants. I also take into account how constructions of my participants’ cultural and linguistic identities are fluid and not static. The forthcoming chapters focus on how these constructions play out in the classroom, specifically, teachers’ pedagogical beliefs, student learning and parental participation. I selected a longitudinal ethnographic approach to conduct my study as it allowed me a longer time in the field to observe the day-to-day interactions between teachers and students, the reflective practice of teacher pedagogy, and the parent’s views and understandings of bilingualism and education. While the language of instruction has been a central and debated issue in the education of bilingual students, the goal of my study was to illustrate how teaching and learning in a bilingual classroom extends beyond what languages are used to implement literacy activities. In an effort to convey the story of this classroom, I begin by describing the setting, participants, data collection and analysis, and my role as a researcher.

**Setting**

**School.** The study took place in a first-grade bilingual classroom at Green School, one of 11 schools in a medium-sized urban school district in the Midwest, from September 2012 to May 2013. The school district has a school of choice program that attempts to diversify all schools based on students’ socioeconomic status and availability of seats at each school. Other factors include whether siblings already attend the school, the proximity of the school to the home, and programmatic needs. Programmatic options include bilingual and/or ESL services. According to the 2012-2013 school report card, 76% of the student population at Green School was from a racial/ethnic background other than White; 14% were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP), and 74% came from a low-SES background. These features made this school

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10 Pseudonym.

11 A report that provides student performance on standardized tests, demographic information and other relevant information.
site ideal for my project because the student demographics represented the national trend of the increasing numbers of [linguistically diverse] minority children in public schools. In addition, at the time of the study, Green School was the only school in the district that offered a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program for its Spanish-speaking, English language learners (ELLs).

**Transitional bilingual model.** One of the most traditional bilingual program models is the TBE; it uses the home language in the initial grade levels then increasing the amount of English instruction by grade level. The TBE model is the most widely implemented bilingual program throughout the nation. Parents of students identified as ELLs had the choice to enroll their children in a bilingual classroom, receive ESL services, or decline these services. During the 2012-2013 school year, approximately 74% of all ELLs received some type of bilingual or ESL service. As in any TBE program model, Spanish, or the students’ native language, if different, is used for initial instruction. Nonetheless, the program’s goal is to transition ELLs into an all-English setting by third grade (Castro-Feinberg, 2002), or sooner if students pass the state English proficiency exam. Students who receive bilingual and ESL services in the district are administered the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs ®), a state mandated annual assessment of English language proficiency. This assessment is aligned with the WIDA standards, a set of theoretical approaches that define the level of language proficiency that ELLs or language learners must acquire in order to participate in academic learning. These standards include criteria for English language development in Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

**Bilingual program.** The bilingual program at Green School consisted of a bilingual classroom from kindergarten through fifth grade. The transitional bilingual program provides instruction in the student’s native language, Spanish, and in English in the following content

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areas: language arts-reading and writing, math, science, and social studies. Instruction in English increases at every grade level, beginning at 20% in kindergarten, 30% in first, 40% in second, 50% in third, 60% in fourth and 80% in fifth grade. In first grade, Spanish instruction is implemented in language arts, specifically for vocabulary development (i.e., songs and rhymes), and literacy (i.e., read aloud, independent, shared and guided reading and writing). Math, science and social studies are instructed through small and whole groups to develop social and cognitive skills. English instruction includes vocabulary development with Words their Way, read alouds and science.

What made this site particularly interesting was its bilingual staff. Several years ago, the bilingual teachers at this school were recognized by the state board for excellence in teaching and service to the bilingual program; it was the highest level of recognition in the state for teaching and service. During this period, the bilingual program had a principal who was very supportive and understood the basis for instructing bilingual children in their home language. Other staff in the school also recognized their commitment to students and teaching. Their story was published in the local newspaper. One of the parents’ letter of support printed in the newspaper described how these teachers made the school a second home for their children because of their dedication to providing a nurturing environment. They did this by bridging the students’ home and school experiences. Through the home language, teachers established open communication with parents, who as a result, felt comfortable coming to the school. The teachers also stressed how education was very important to Latina/o families.

**Bilingual staff.** The bilingual staff in the study included the first grade bilingual classroom teacher, Catalina, and the first grade bilingual teaching assistant, Adela. I elaborate on Catalina and Adela in the participants’ section below. I wanted to get a sense of the social
dynamics of the bilingual staff, so after my morning observations, I joined the bilingual teachers for lunch in the teachers’ lounge. Catalina, the focal teacher, skipped lunch numerous times because she was working with students one-on-one. The teachers who did make it to lunch would pull out additional chairs for all to sit on one of the round tables. They shared recipes and stories about growing up, but the most salient conversations were about students. These teachers never took a “break” from their teaching. They discussed amongst themselves students’ progress and areas that needed improvement. Their sharing allowed them to brainstorm together about how to approach the learning difficulty that a student was experiencing. In many instances, different teachers had had the same students in previous years and could discuss what worked for them so that other teachers could adapt their current teaching approach to help facilitate areas of concern. For instance, the second grade bilingual teacher would speak with the Spanish literacy specialist about how she could help a recently arrived student from Mexico whose education had been disrupted. I had been working with the student on a weekly basis. Unfortunately, he did not know his vowels or consonants, which are essential for early Spanish literacy. In addition, Adela conversed with other bilingual teachers and the Spanish literacy specialist regarding students that she worked with in the kindergarten classroom who were also experiencing problems.

Many of these conversations among the teachers took place in Spanish, and they would code switch, alternating linguistically between Spanish and English to ensure the English speakers that they were not talking about them. Adela shared with me that in the past, she had been asked by other staff to speak English in the lunchroom. In her own words, “‘English por favor,’ te haz dado cuenta en el lunch, ‘English por favor,’ claro te lo dicen en broma pero de repente es sarcástico . . . a veces lo dicen entre broma pero es porque les fastidia” [“‘English please,’ have you noticed that during lunch, ‘English please,’ of course they tell you as a joke,
but it is also sarcastic”). Even though the premise of the magnet school was to promote students’ learning of a second language [Mandarin], which would allow for students to become open-minded about diverse ideas and cultures, it became apparent from Adela’s experience that all teachers did not share the same values.

Participants

In selecting a classroom for my study, I wanted a classroom teacher who used Spanish as the primary language of instruction and had long-term experience working with Latina/o children. Secondary participants included Adela, the teaching assistant for Catalina, and parents of the focal children. The teacher, teaching assistant, and 13 out of the 24 students’ parents were interviewed. Employing a sitios y lenguas theoretical framework allowed me to see how sitios, the norms and practices that structured the discourse in different contexts, such as in the classroom, and in the home for the teachers, students and parents spoke back to deficit discourses. The discourse was exemplified by lenguas, the ways in which teachers, students and parents used Spanish as a home language for their voice to emerge as tools for learning, self expression, and making critical connections to their lives as bilingual and bicultural individuals.

Catalina (bilingual teacher). The primary participant was the first-grade bilingual classroom teacher, Catalina. Catalina is from Argentina and a U.S. citizen. She is bilingual in Spanish-English, but dominant in Spanish. Catalina studied in Argentina, but earned her bachelor’s degree, teaching certificate, and Master’s degrees in the U.S. She was an ESL teacher for 9 years, and has been a bilingual teacher for the last 10 years. I initially met Catalina in a bilingual education graduate course during the earlier part of my graduate studies. I recall the

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13 Four sets of parents declined to be interviewed. I attempted to schedule interviews multiple times with 6 parents but was not able to contact them. One set of parents was Anglo who had adopted a child from Guatemala. One set of parents that I was able to interview were college educated. The last four sets of parents had children in the high reading groups at the start of the school year, which contributed to narrowing the selection of parent participants.

14 Pseudonym.
way she would pose questions and challenge statements that made single assertions. For example, she would ask me if support in the native language really helped bilingual students with their learning. At first I became alarmed; why would a bilingual teacher ask such a thing? It was not until I got to know her that I realized that she engaged in this critical manner even with 6 and 7 year olds! It was her inquisitive nature that facilitated her teaching and which pulled me into her classroom. Throughout the year we would stay after school and have our pláticas, informal conversations about various topics that included, but were not limited to, educational issues, curriculum units, my graduate studies, and foreign films. We developed a very close relationship through our like-mindedness in regards to biliteracy, equity and learning. Outside of school, we attended a local university conference together, and viewed foreign language films at the local independent art theater. Our pláticas became daily exchanges of ideas that gave each other a sense of voice and legitimacy to our positions on bilingual development, and the overall education of Latino/a children.

Catalina was known to be vocal about expressing her thoughts and concerns to other staff and administrators. Her inquisitive nature at times was misunderstood as a direct challenge to the authority of administrators. Although Catalina was considered a veteran teacher, she often felt that her knowledge about Spanish literacy was often disregarded because she was a bilingual teacher. She became very frustrated when documents that were sent home were incorrectly translated or did not adhere to the local language use of the Spanish-speaking community. For instance, she remarked on how she had one version of report cards for the administrators and another one that she translated for parents. I recall one platica that I had with her as we were driving to the store to pick up materials for her class; she shared with me her urgency in making sure that her students exceeded the expected reading levels for first grade. By the time students
reached the second semester in the second grade, students would be transitioned into only English, regardless of whether or not they had passed the ACCESS, an assessment of English language proficiency that is based on expected developmental stages of four domains (i.e., listening, reading, writing, and speaking). For Catalina, the first grade represented the last complete academic year in which students would receive literacy instruction in Spanish, their home language, before they were expected to read and write in English across content areas.

Through our pláticas, I learned that Catalina valued collaborating with others, although there existed a lack of collaboration at her school. She reflected, “when you work together things grow, the problem this year, there is, I don’t know, I work well with people, I work alone too, but I need somebody, I need dialogue” (Catalina, Bilingual teacher platica, 10-19-12). Throughout the year this need for discussion around teaching and learning became so essential. I noticed how Catalina utilized Adela and those around her to think through the lessons she was about to implement. I became someone that Catalina discussed issues with in regards to assessment, curriculum, and pedagogy. I felt humbled that she valued my perspectives on these issues, never having been an elementary school teacher myself. I shared my observations of students with her and offered possible solutions when she requested them. I recall an incident towards the end of the year when a student who had been having difficulty in reading and writing throughout the year, did not complete a spelling assignment of the 100 most commonly misspelled words in Spanish. The student was 28 words short from achieving the goal and reward. We brainstormed as to whether or not he had “earned” the reward. We both believed that he had. However, that was not the issue; the issue was how could we present the reward with a valid reason to the whole class and not make it seem that it was some sort of preferential treatment. At first we thought we would let the class decide whether he deserved the reward or
not, but then we thought that doing so could possibly bring out the best and worst in students. Instead, Catalina decided to talk to him directly first, and explain to him the situation and what he thought should be done and how the class would be addressed. Catalina valued Adela’s and my feedback as she constantly asked, “how do you think it went?” The other main concern for Catalina was noticing every kindergarten class entering first grade came with very low literacy and math skills. Many students did not know their ABC’s or how to count to 10. This was in contrast to other years, when students came with already high levels of literacy in Spanish, making it easier to introduce English literacy. After the school year ended, Catalina worked with her “lowest” students in reading during summer school. However, these were students who she wanted to work on their English literacy, as they had almost tripled their reading scores from the beginning of the school year.

**Adela (bilingual teaching assistant).**  Adela was a U.S. citizen from Peru who was bilingual in Spanish-English, but dominant in Spanish. She had been a bilingual and special education aide for approximately 10 years at the time of the study; she was also in the process of becoming a certified bilingual teacher. Adela was one of the warmest people that I met; she became a valuable informant and shared with me her knowledge about the students, parents and school staff. She was born into a military family and grew up in the era of the military dictatorship in Peru. Her father traveled frequently; thus, her mother became the head of the household for many years. As the youngest of three sisters, Adela described herself as a very free-spirited, liberal minded individual who detested rules and always found ways to break them. Upon graduating from high school, her father insisted that she enroll at the university to study law. However, Adela had other plans in mind. She decided to study computer science and learn

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15 Throughout the dissertation, I refer to the teaching assistant as a teacher because she took on many roles typical of a head teacher.
16 Pseudonym.
English. At 19 she moved to Spain to work. In Spain, she engaged with women who also shared similar ideas about feminism, particularly that women had the same rights as men. The trajectory of a woman, Adela believed, was not to only get married and have children, but to actively pursue their own economic sustainability.

Adela later moved to the U.S., where she began working as a custodian at a local high school. Shortly afterwards, she noticed a job posting for a bilingual aide position. She felt this was an opportunity for utilizing her bilingualism. According to Adela, at the time she began working in the schools, the district was experiencing a significant increase of Latina/o families with young children, and there was no bilingual program, only English as a second language (ESL). Most teachers who were teaching a class with over half of the student composition coming from Spanish speaking homes were White and only English speaking. Adela recounts how she “was helping [the] kindergarten [class . . .]. I was translating for her [the teacher] and the kids. The kids felt comfortable [with me]; she didn’t realize how much they knew, and it was because of the lack of a common language” (Bilingual teaching assistant interview, 8-12-13).

According to Adela, this led many regular classroom teachers to think that the Latina/o children in their classrooms had learning disabilities. She saw that parents began to come to school more because they felt comfortable that they would be able to communicate with the teaching staff. When the bilingual program began to grow, she and other bilingual staff, began to see the difficulty in maintaining and refining the program. As more staff was hired, Adela’s contract was not renewed. Thus, she had to take a position at a school without a bilingual program. Realizing that only a teaching degree would afford her the opportunity to work in a bilingual program, she began to take courses for certification. She described her calling to teach bilingual children in the following manner:
Yo quiero seguir con la población Latina porque yo vengo de esas raíces, me siento tan comprometida con ellos, me siento que soy parte de ellos, cuando no pasan un examen, igual, yo creo que es muy lindo cuando enseñas de tu misma cultura, estas enseñando parte de lo que tu haz crecido.

[I want to continue (working) with the Latina/o community because I come from those roots. I feel so committed to them. I feel that I am a part of them, like when they don’t pass an exam. Likewise, I feel that it is wonderful to teach those from your same culture; you are teaching part of what you have grown up with.] (Adela, bilingual teaching assistant interview, 8-12-13)

Her commitment to students and the shared cultural background propelled Adela to take an opportunity to go back to the school where the bilingual program was housed, even if it meant that she would have to take a pay cut. Many times Adela and I would talk about her coursework and the SAT assessment that she needed to take in place of the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) assessment to become a certified teacher. She told me about her testing anxiety and how she related to students when they did not do well. Many of the assessments are timed and Adela required more time to be able to complete a test. Her academic proficiency was not adequately measured by these tests. Before these concerns, there was a time when she doubted continuing on to become a teacher, until she started working with Catalina. Working with another teacher who was so committed to her students ignited her desire to continue to work towards certification.

Adela had a gift in how she was able to engage with people. Students gravitated to her as well as I did. Her warmth and humor energized the classroom. Every morning that she would come into the classroom, she would say “Buenos días, niños!” and the students would respond “Buenos días, Mrs. Adela!” Mrs. Adela had a very close relationship to students. During her reading groups, she always began discussion by asking them to share how they were doing or what they did over the weekend. Students would talk about issues that concerned them or were of significant importance to their families, such as birthdays, baptisms, and events that had occurred in their neighborhood. It is difficult to describe, but her sister, who had been a
substitute in the class, described it as “tu bajas al nivel de ellos, tu eres otra niña mas” [“you meet them at their level, you become one of them”] (Adela, bilingual teaching assistant interview, 8-12-13). I also experienced this during the times I sat with them at their table, placing my iPad on my lap, and participating in activities in which they were engaged. For example, the first time I went with them to the library, I sat with a group who was coloring, and I, too, started to color. One of the students began to talk about how his biological dad came to visit him over the weekend, but that his mother did not want him there, so they got into an argument. Another student also shared about her experience with her father coming to the house and knocking on the window in an attempt to be let in, but that her mom called the police. At first I felt that I was intruding in their space, until they started asking me about my personal life. They wanted to know if I was married or had children of my own.

There were two main reasons that Adela returned to the bilingual program, including the ways that the teachers respected and acknowledged her contributions as a teacher and the students. Students would come up to her and hug her. In her own words,

Que vengan y te abracen, eso no lo cambio por nada . . . Cuando hice el cambio a [la escuela bilingüe] me vinieron a abrir la puerta todos los niños, eso fue, aun tengo eso en mi cabeza, [oigo] Mrs. Adela! desde allá y las de la cafetería, [gritándoles] “síétanse!” Mrs. Adela, vas a regresar con nosotros? [Immediately it filled me. For them to come and hug you, I would not change that for the world. When I made the change back to (the bilingual school), they all came running to open the door for me that was, I still have that on my mind, [I hear] “Mrs. Adela!” from afar and the cafeteria staff [call out] “sit down!” Mrs. Adela, are you going to come back? Immediately it filled me.] (Adela, bilingual teaching assistant interview, 8-12-13)

At the time of the study, the bilingual program, along with its staff and students, had been at Green School for 2 years. Adela would occasionally confide in me her frustrations with the administration and implementation of the bilingual program. Although the district’s official webpage is not clear on what type of transitional bilingual education (TBE) program it implements, from my observations and from the teachers’ account, it would qualify as an early
exit program, which is considered as one of the least successful bilingual programs (Ovando & Collier, 1998). Despite these programmatic limitations, the bilingual teachers in this study demonstrated not only their commitment to teaching Latina/o emergent bilingual students, but their capacity to understand their students’ cultural, linguistic and political positions.

**Students**

There were 24 students in the class (16 boys and 8 girls). Later in the year, one male student transferred to another district. All except one student in the class qualified for free or reduced lunch. Most of the students were of Mexican descent; however, three students identified themselves as Puerto-Rican and Mexican, Peruvian, and Guatemalan. Most students’ native language was Spanish; however, one came from a home that spoke Q’anjob’al. Others were emergent bilinguals, meaning that they were developing more than one language at once. All 24 students participated in the study to some extent.

**Focal Students**

I identified seven students as my focal students. The focal students facilitated the process of analysis across the data sets. In choosing the focal students, I wanted a range in reading proficiencies in Spanish. Catalina used the Evaluación del desarrollo de la lectura (EDL) [Spanish] or Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) [English] reading program to identify and document students’ reading level and progress. She identified five groups based on their reading proficiency levels in Spanish, from early readers to extending readers (A-E: with A representing the early reader and E representing the extending reader). Based in these assessments, I selected seven primary participants (three from group A, three from group C, one from group E) for my focal groups that included a range of reading levels, but wanted to focus

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17 The reading levels were obtained through the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), a standardized reading assessment. The DRA is a reading program and assessment developed by Pearson Education, Inc. that measures oral reading fluency, retelling and comprehension. Typically assessments are administered in September and in May.
on students with lower reading levels. Other criteria included students who were vocal and quiet to get a range of voices and social interaction. I selected students after I had interviewed interested parents, whose level of formal education did not go beyond high school and were from low socioeconomic status, because I wanted to understand the demographic that is discussed in terms of lacking the economic means for educational advancement. In addition to the aforementioned criteria, I also wanted an almost equal gender representation from classroom demographics (three girls and four boys). Table 1 shows the demographic data for each of the seven focal students.

Table 1

**Student Demographic Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Some descriptors</th>
<th>Initial reading level</th>
<th>Final reading level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abel</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Very talkative, was considered the “clown” and “trouble maker” by his peers. He was also in the process of being tested for dyslexia. Often would stay in during recess to do his homework. Had four other siblings, two older, one younger.</td>
<td>A (L: 1)</td>
<td>A (L: 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Quiet, but very social. She was considered to be the most artistically talented by her peers. Best friend was Emma. Had three older sisters.</td>
<td>A (L: 4)</td>
<td>C (L: 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>High participation during math lessons and always seemed to get his work done very quickly. Had two older brothers.</td>
<td>C (L: 6)</td>
<td>D (L: 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Quiet, but extremely involved with social dilemmas. She was preoccupied with her social status. Always had “girly” outfits. Best friend was Adriana. Had one younger sister.</td>
<td>A (L: 4)</td>
<td>C (L: 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Very outspoken, perhaps one of the most critical students in the class. Avid storyteller. Had a younger brother.</td>
<td>C (L: 5)</td>
<td>C (L: 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kira</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Participated a lot during class lessons, she was not shy. Started to get preoccupied with friendships toward the end of the year and had difficulty completing homework. Had one younger brother and newborn twins.</td>
<td>E (L: 8-10)</td>
<td>D (L: 15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Some descriptors</th>
<th>Initial reading level</th>
<th>Final reading level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ivan</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Quiet, but participated. Always seemed tired in class and often distracted. Sometimes would stay in during recess to do his homework. Had a baby sister.</td>
<td>C (L: 6)</td>
<td>D (L: 15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. All student names are pseudonyms.

\[^a\] All students were born in the U.S. Their ethnicity was taken from what parents stated during the interviews.

\[^b\] Refers to their age on August 2012. 

\[^c\] By no means are these descriptors to be read as fixed. They provide a brief picture of what I observed during peer and teacher interactions.

\[^d\] Reading levels were taken from formal reading assessments performed by the teacher and mandated by the school district.

Parents

The parents of the focal students were secondary participants. Parent narratives were vital in understanding how *sitios y lenguas* framework allowed me to see how parents understood their subject positions as immigrant working class individuals with U.S.-born children. I interviewed at least one parent/guardian of each focal child. Some of parents preferred to be interviewed at the school, while others chose their homes. The interviews at school were about an hour, whereas the interviews in the home were about 2 hours. During the home visits I was offered food and water, I accepted because I was brought up to be appreciative when people shared their food. It was considered rude not to accept their hospitality. One of the families who I interviewed came from a town close to where my parents are from. Listening to their stories reminded me of the stories my parents shared with me about the reasons they came to the U.S. and their hopes for a better education for us.
Table 2

Parents’ Demographic Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Age of (m)migration</th>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>Opinions re: bilingual education</th>
<th>Interview location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abel</td>
<td>M: Adolescent</td>
<td>M: HS (U.S.)</td>
<td>Mother was very skeptical of the bilingual program, at first did not understand why her son was in the bilingual program. But, eventually let him stay.</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F: Adult</td>
<td>F: ELM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>M: Adult</td>
<td>M &amp; F: ELM</td>
<td>Supported the bilingual program</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F: Adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>M: Adult</td>
<td>M &amp; F: ELM</td>
<td>Supported the bilingual program</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F: Adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>M: Adult</td>
<td>M: ELM</td>
<td>Initially wanted child to be in English-only, but eventually supported the bilingual program</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F: Adult</td>
<td>F: unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian</td>
<td>M: Adult</td>
<td>M: ELM</td>
<td>Supported the bilingual program</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F: Adult</td>
<td>F: HS (Mexico)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kira</td>
<td>M: Adult</td>
<td>Mother: ELM</td>
<td>Supported the bilingual program</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F: Adult</td>
<td>F: unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan</td>
<td>M: Adult</td>
<td>M: HS (U.S.)</td>
<td>Supported the bilingual program</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F: Adult</td>
<td>F: ELM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was one of a curious learner and participant. I wanted to gain trust and build a relationship with my participants. Delgado Bernal (1998) proposes that when researching issues in the Latina/o community, it is important to pay attention to “who generates an understanding of [Latinas/os] experiences, and how [their] knowledge is legitimized or not legitimized” (p. 560). I employed ethnographic methodological principles that acknowledge the contradictory identities and privilege statuses as a researcher and my relationship with my participants. For example, even as I collected data as a researcher, I reflected on the complicated ways that I assumed my identity and how my experiences as a Latina and Mexicana could have manipulated and problematized my research. I also located areas in which my role as a
researcher was both marginalized and complicit in discourses of the subordination of the “other.” In other words, I negotiated the space between the “insider” and outsider” identity in the roles as a researcher. Finally, I situate my work in challenging oppressive structures by producing knowledge that promotes social justice for communities of color. Taking on this call is imperative for me as a researcher as I attempt to highlight the ways in which teaching and learning for bilingual Latina/o children through Chicana/Latina feminist perspectives identifies Latinas/os as “subjects and creators of knowledge” (p. 730).

As a self-identified Chicana/Latina feminist ethnographer, I acknowledge my own contradictory identity and privileged status. Through the practice of reflexivity, I am aware of how identities are claimed and/or reconstructed in complicated and problematic ways by participants and researchers. Moreover, as an academic I understand that we are complicit in categorizing participants as the other that needs to be examined. At the same time, I recognize that as researchers of color, we are also colonized within the academy. Chicana/Latina feminists and other women of color feminists attempt to not portray our participants’ lived experiences as fixed. Instead, we need to highlight instances in which their experiences are interwoven with immigration, citizenship, socio-economic status, racism, bilingualism and gender issues that influence the construction on identities when interacting with access, privilege and inequality. I hope that by acknowledging these complexities and intricacies, correlations of cause and effect are not simply taken as explanations of truth.

Cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) extends Anslem Strauss and Juliet M. Corbin’s (1990) theoretical sensitivity, which stipulates the ethnographers’ experience with “the research situation with varying degrees of sensitivity depending on their previous reading and expertise with or relevant to the data” (p. 41). Delgado Bernal’s (1998) cultural intuition extends this view
by incorporating community memory and collective experience in analyzing data. My research study utilized my own cultural intuition. For example, my personal experience learning English as a young immigrant child and maintaining my native language led to the ability to analyze text spoken and written in Spanish and English and decipher the intricacies of translation and interpretation in two languages. Chicana/Latina feminist perspectives inform the ways in which I see and understand the world around me. Particularly, as an educational researcher who positions herself with the postures of qualitative work, I am informed by my own subjectivity. My implementation of a qualitative design has provided me with tools that tell a very complicated, yet incomplete story, of the people working for the education of Latino/a children.

The first day of “casing the joint”\textsuperscript{18} (Dyson & Genishi, 2005), I arrived early to the school site, eager to see the bilingual classrooms. I began with the second grade classroom. I helped the teacher finish organizing the class as she greeted parents who came in with bags of school supplies with their student’s name. After 2 hours I went to the first grade classroom. The voices of children talking with one another interspersed with the teacher’s guided instruction surrounded me as I entered the classroom for the first time. I walked through the room smiling, unable to contain my happiness. While a few children paused to look up at me, they continued to work; others asked curiously who I was, and I told them my name. I have reflected on my entrance into this classroom community because it was unlike any other elementary classroom that I have seen. The primary difference is that in other classrooms the voice that I heard most and sometimes exclusively was the teacher’s. I knew this was the classroom whose story I wanted to tell. I have read many studies on what teachers do to the detriment of children; I did not want to tell that story. While I appreciate work that sheds light on problematic teaching

\textsuperscript{18} The process by which researchers methodologically approach a project, formulate questions, design the study, data collection and what will be the focus of observation.
practices, I wanted to tell a story that offered a glimpse into a teacher’s classroom that allowed me to tell a different story.

At the beginning I was intimidated by the teacher’s demeanor, as she paid no mind to me. I was not sure what my role would be in the classroom. I did not want to estorbar, to become a burden or interfere with the use of the classroom space. I began to learn to shift my body in a way that allowed me multiple angles in the classroom. I would begin by sitting at the round table the teacher used for guided reading instruction, then I would move to the chairs near the computer workstation, and often times I would sit on students’ chairs during whole group, or on the carpet while students read independently or in pairs. When a student was absent, I would take their place at their table. At the beginning, students wanted me to sit at their table even if there was not any extra space. Sitting closer to the students as they worked, at their tables, or on the carpet, provided me a closer look to their interaction. I established this closeness early on, so my adult body would not be extremely noticeable among children. I also modeled after Catalina and Adela, the way that they used space and conducted the daily routines. For example, Catalina had given each child at every table, a weekly “job” where they either (a) checked if their classmates at a table completed their homework; (b) made sure there were sharpened pencils in the morning; (c) kept their table organized, (d) helped pass papers; (e) controlled noise level at their table; or (f) were the teachers’ little helper. After the homework was checked, Adela went around to pick up the homework bins and set them aside, and made sure that the homework check was done properly. There were times that Adela was busy with guided reading, and I took on her tasks. I wanted to make myself useful.

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19 Students received a weekly pay for fulfilling their jobs/tasks. At the end of each week, half of them were able to buy items at the Tienda de Primero [1st Grade Store].
Ear on, my mother taught me to be *acomedida*, making oneself useful. When we visited the home of a family member or a friend, for example, my mother expected that I ask if there was anything I could do to help our hosts. I observed the way that I performed these tasks in the classroom. During the school day, I would help keep things tidy, tie shoelaces, fix zippers, provide tissues, look for teaching materials, mediate troubled friendships, get the homework folders ready, and at the end of the day I would help by cleaning tables and putting up chairs. Students did not have time to put their chairs up themselves; as in other classes, every last minute was used for instruction. The class would occasionally be late for specials, assemblies, recess, bus pick-up, because time almost became constricting; there was not enough of it.

When I entered the classroom, salutations, hugs, or questions greeted me. My role with students shifted across time and space. At the beginning, students were extremely curious of me. They would ask about my personal life, my age, questioned why I was not married, and if I had children. Other questions were brought up because of my note-taking and audio recording. I would tell them that I was studying how they learned and that I, too, went to school and had to do *tarea* [homework]. Some would leave me to my *tarea*, others were interested in playing games on my iPad. But with time, they learned that my iPad was used only for my *tarea*.

On occasion, I felt that I was interrupting their learning because of my presence and note taking, but I quickly learned how to position and navigate the technology I used in the classroom. The children stopped seeing my iPad as a novelty. However, when I brought the USB flash drive audio recorders, they called them *las camararas* [video recorders], although they only recorded audio. Many would get right to work when they saw me place them at their tables, others got distracted and wanted to help me set them up, and sometimes I would let them. When I had the opportunity to sit with them, I did not take notes, I just set my iPad on my lap and would listen to
them, and when they asked for help, I would assist them. When they were distracted I would ask them what they were working on, as a way to get them back on task. Other times, I, too, would get distracted by their social lives and soon after the noise from their talk would elevate, and Catalina would ask students what they were working on and we would all get to work.

During the periods when I sat with them, I came to learn more about their lives and how freely they talked about home, their parents, and family. Much of their talk revolved around what they did over the weekend, if they attended una fiesta de cumpleaños [birthday party], or un bautizo [baptism]. Students talked about their family’s hardships. On many occasions, I observed how allies and foes were constructed. Many times they would come up to me and tell me about their troubled friendships, or “tell on” another student. I would say to them what I observed Catalina say, which was to share their feelings with the person and try to come up with a solution. There were moments when I felt comfortable to mediate problems if they were recurrent. Again, I tried to model how both Catalina and Adela resolved these issues by hearing both sides and then having the students themselves come up with a solution by sending them to the hall for a moment to discuss their issues with each other, and tell them to come back to the class when they had reached a resolution. However, for some, the teacher was the first recourse to go to with their problems, but for others this generated a space for them to solve their own problems.

Data Collection Procedures

The data was collected during an entire academic school year, in the fall of 2012 and spring of 2013. The study’s primary data sources were classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Secondary data sources sets included: classroom artifacts, still photos, and informal conversations with the teacher and teaching assistant. All interviews were audio-
recorded and transcribed verbatim. I took fieldnotes of the classroom observations on a password protected program application on my iPad. This facilitated the electronic transfer to a word document for analysis. Informal conversations continued throughout my analysis and writing of my dissertation to provide insight and clarification in order to fill missing elements to the analysis. The data provided insight into the daily activities of the teachers and students, how the classroom participants constructed their own *sitios y lenguas* in a space in which they were encouraged to cultivate their bicultural identity and home language to become bilingual.

**Classroom observations.** Data collection of Catalina’s teaching and students’ learning spread across the academic year, with classroom observations at least 3-4 times a week, between 3-6 hours each day. Table 3 below provides a description of the data collected.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observations, fieldnotes, audio recordings small and whole group (i.e., read alouds, Daily Letter, reading groups, independent reading), student artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher semi-structured interviews (i.e., school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching semi-structured assistant interviews (i.e., homes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents semi-structured interviews (i.e., school, home)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The classroom observations included fieldnotes and audio recordings of Catalina’s instruction during whole group and small group work. I also audio recorded the guided reading sessions that Adela facilitated at the red table.20 In addition, I recorded peer interaction at each table, as I was able to place a USB recorder at each table. The note taking application (NotesPlus®) on my iPad also had a long-range audio recording capacity. Fieldnotes and the audio recordings from the

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20 All tables were color-coded, *mesa morada, verde, roja y azul* [purple, green, red and blue tables]. When Catalina wanted to refer to a group of students, she referred to them in terms of the color of their table.
classroom observations were utilized to corroborate with the emerging themes identified from the interviews with parents, Catalina and Adela. Additional data was collected in the form of still photos to document spaces in the classroom.

**Still photos.** It was important for me to document the spatial organization of the classroom with photographs. The photographs documented the transitions of the classroom curriculum in literacy, math, science and social studies. The walls were decorated with student work, a word wall (in Spanish), a calendar (bilingual), and the school rules (in English). They captured student and teachers’ engagement during lessons and the different themes covered over the year in science and math. They showed students’ facial expressions during read alouds, birthday celebrations, and writers workshop presentations. These photographs captured the details that I was not able to document fully through my observations alone. They also informed my observations by revisiting them when completing my fieldnotes.

**Semi-structured interviews.** The semi-structured interviews and *pláticas* with Catalina, Adela, and parents were conducted to explore their perspectives regarding the education of bilingual Latina/o students. During these interviews, *testimonios* from the teachers and parents emerged, where they narrated personal experiences that dealt with marginalization (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012). There were three teacher interviews conducted; they took place at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year in the teacher’s classroom after school. Each interview session lasted between 2 to 3 hours. The interview with the teaching assistant lasted between 2-3 hours and was conducted at the end of the academic year. The parent interviews took place in the fall 2012 semester, either at their homes or at the school. Out of the seven parent interviews, five were conducted with both parents. Each parent interview lasted
approximately 1 hour. Interviews that took place in the home lasted over an hour but were under 2 hours.

**Platicas: Informal conversations with teachers.** During my time in the classroom, I slowly began to develop a relationship with the teachers. We found ourselves engaged in platicas, informal conversations during the school day and especially after school. During the day we would talk about our weekend plans in the midst of transitioning from one lesson to another and when going to specials or lunch. During the lunch break I would join Adela and other teachers. I listened to their conversations, and when I began to feel more comfortable I engaged with them. I learned a lot from these talks as most of them focused on how to navigate challenges with student learning. The teachers would share their concerns and I observed the way that they engaged in problem solving, by providing ideas or resources. During one of these platicas, I volunteered to go and read with a student who had just arrived from Mexico and apparently did not know his alphabet. In a short semester I saw his growth, and I understood how teachers felt when they saw student progress. After school I had many platicas with Catalina and Adela; we would spend hours talking about the events of day or week and especially those moments that the children made us laugh. We would talk about our hopes and the challenges we experienced throughout our lives. I believe that sharing these experiences in our platicas helped each other heal (Flores Carmona, 2014).

**Interviews with parents.** My interviews with parents took place in their homes or at school. Of the seven focal parent interviews that I conducted, I was able to interview both the mother and father in five of the interviews. I believe that this illustrated the importance of education for both parents. Through the interviews I learned that they both shared the responsibility of educating their children. I came to learn about their immigration stories, their
work experiences and those from childhood and adolescence that propelled them to come to the U.S. At their homes, if the television was on it was tuned to Univision.\textsuperscript{21} The smell of food cooking and the sounds of Spanish being spoken reminded me of home; it gave me a sense of being at home. The focal children were happy that I had come to visit with their family; they smiled and eagerly showed me their rooms, books, and writing with pride. Many of them sat with their parents as I conducted the interviews; sometimes they would interject and participate. I ended up staying longer in their homes than anticipated. Saying our goodbyes took several minutes.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis began with a thorough reading and examination of all the fieldnotes, transcriptions of the audio-recordings, interviews, and still photos in chronological order to identify “key events” that aligned with my research questions (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 48) and the conceptual framework of *sitios y lenguas*. I identified key events during the following instances: (a) when students’ linguistic and cultural knowledge were used during instruction; (b) whole group and small group discussions; (c) when students were involved in knowledge production; and (d) discussions involved critical questioning. The focal students guided the data analysis across the data sets. In other words, I re-examined each data set to further understand what was occurring and the ways in which the focal students’ knowledge was accessed and connected to the learning of new content. From this identification of key events, I identified categories in which *sitios y lenguas* were enacted. These categories included lived experiences, knowledge acquired from family and community, popular culture, and critical conversations that addressed real life topics beyond school curriculum. After identifying categories, I re-examined key events to look for patterns in interactions and language use among all participants as well as

\textsuperscript{21} A U.S. television network, broadcasting in the Spanish language.
the specific instructional practices Catalina used during the key event (LeCompte & Schensul, 2013; Mertens, 2010). I performed horizontal and vertical analyses of the interview transcripts (Gee, 2000; Thompson, 2000). For example, I examined each interview (formal and informal) line by line for emerging themes, and then used a vertical analysis to cross-reference themes across interviews. The interview themes were then triangulated with the classroom observation data to arrive at themes that characterized my data.

**Limitations**

The limitation of case studies in general is often revolved around whether it is a method or research design (Mertens, 2010). However, Robert Stake (2005) reminds us that case studies are not intended for generalizations, but unique perspectives about a general phenomenon. The limitation of this particular study are broad in that it is limited to one classroom and does not serve as a representation of what contexts in all bilingual classrooms may look like. Additionally, the length of the study is limited to one academic year and does not take into account student learning across subsequent grade levels. Another limitation is that I may not be able to capture the perspectives of first grade children in a complete and just matter, not only because I am an adult, but also because early childhood research is a complex endeavor in that we must be careful not to essentialize children as docile and passive agents (Saavedra, 2011) but active in their own socialization and learning (Dyson, 2003; Paley, 1986; Rogoff, 2003).
Chapter 4

Classroom Knowledge

This chapter examines how language practices and instructional methods provided a context for emergent (Spanish-English) bilinguals and their teachers to elevate their voices and to decolonize their experiences in the classroom. In this classroom, *sitios* refers to the critical spaces that were constructed through the recognition that all ideas—that all languages are important contributions to collective and individual learning. In other words, the norms and practices that structured the discourse and interaction between classroom participants established *sitios*. This meant that learning did not occur in a linear fashion; instead, overlapping utterances and storytelling were regarded as legitimate tools for producing knowledge. *Lenguas* refers to the ways in which classroom participants used their languages and voices as tools for learning, self-expression, and thinking. Looking at *sitios y lenguas* enabled me to see counternarratives that disrupted dehumanizing, distorted and deficit associations of Latina/o students. Catalina cultivated students’ *lenguas* (home language and language varieties) as the medium for home knowledge to become an essential tool for learning in a bilingual classroom.

There were four ways students’ languages and voices were evident in the classroom: (a) drawing from home knowledge; (b) demonstrating alternative ways of knowing; (c) responding to questions; and (d) showing their understanding through comprehension. The latter two categories were also evident in the Spanish version of the Developmental Reading Assessment reading assessment, Evaluación del desarrollo de la Lectura (EDL), specifically targeting student’s reading engagement and comprehension. By the end of the year all students, for the exception of Abel, reached grade level represented by the level 16 or were far beyond that level in Spanish. Additionally, at the end of the year Catalina evaluated their English reading levels
with the DRA. However, I want to mention that if students were only measured in English, it would have not provided a broader picture of student’s literacy development based only on these English assessments. At the same time, these assessments alone don’t illustrate the richness of their learning that I was able to capture.

The data that I collected for analysis came from whole class discussions, in particular the read alouds from Basal Readers and children’s literature, or individual texts selected by the teacher. Catalina was able to utilized these kinds of texts so that students would be able to associate what they were reading with their personal experiences, and in so doing, be able to form critical connections to major ideas, in addition to learning skills and expectations required for school learning. The major theme that emerged through data analysis was ¡Yo, si se! (I know!). Secondary themes such as La duda (doubt) and Conexiones (critical connections) informed the sitios y lenguas in the classroom. These subsequent themes were organized by looking at how students produced knowledge through their lenguas. Student knowledge was recognized in the classroom because it was a space that acknowledged the home practices and experiences of the everyday.

As a facilitator of learning, Catalina provided alternatives and pushed students to think critically and independently. Students applied their knowledge through their lenguas or home languages for self-expression and making critical connections as part of the learning process. I begin the following section by outlining the characteristics that defined the primary theme, ¡Yo, si se! Subsequently, I discuss the secondary themes that categorized La duda and Conexiones. I explain how sitios (the norms and practices of the classroom) allowed lenguas (home languages) to illustrate how knowledge was produced, recognized, and applied by both the teacher and students.
¡Yo, sí se! [I know!]: Averiguar [Investigate]. Aprender [Learn]. Pensar [Think].

Preguntar [Ask].

Students not only demonstrated their engagement with reading by selecting the language they felt most comfortable with when expressing themselves, but made critical connections from their personal experiences to the texts they were reading. The data from the EDL/DRA assessments tracked student’s progress, specifically in reading engagement, oral reading fluency and comprehension. This was accomplished by the teacher’s observations, evaluations and documenting change in students’ reading performance in Spanish. The themes that I identified during classroom instruction were also highlighted in the EDL/DRA evaluations. Student’s responses to questions illustrated their reading engagement and comprehension. I argue that it was possible for students to have a heightened engagement with reading because the instruction was in their home language. For example, even though most of the read alouds were conducted in Spanish, when there was a bilingual (English and Spanish) text, students opted for the story to be read in Spanish. When this occurred I observed the level of engagement that occurred among students to be greater than when a text was read in English. During the times that Catalina read an English text and asked questions in English, students drew from both their Spanish and English repertoires (lenguas); however, most tended to respond in Spanish. The classroom’s norms and practices (sitios) became a location for student agency, by allowing students to choose how to participate (whether it was to express their knowledge or remain silent). Many classroom discussions began with the teacher inquiring if students had any prior or background knowledge regarding the topic. Almost immediately, students would call out “¡Yo, sí se!” (I know!). However, the self-confidence some students’ had regarding their own knowledge base had a
quieting effect on other students. Later in this chapter, I will elaborate on the silencing of students when I discuss the norms and home language use.

La Duda [Doubt]: La Verdad Verdadera [The Real Truth]. En Realidad [In Reality].

An overarching approach to Catalina’s pedagogy was the way in which she approached inquiry based learning by promoting a sense of doubt in students, la duda. This was particularly evident during the daily read-alouds. During this literacy event, Catalina used students’ cultural and linguistic knowledge as resources for learning academic content. For Catalina, learning integrated the established academic protocol while also incorporating students’ cultural and linguistic knowledge. Following a similar process each day, the read-alouds began with the introduction of the text (i.e., title, author, and illustrator), an explanation of the genre (i.e., fiction, non-fiction) and a picture walk that invited students to share their predictions of what the story would be about (Lane & Wright, 2007). The manner in which Catalina used read-alouds created a critical space for students’ cultural and linguistic knowledge to guide their learning. The transcript analysis of the read-alouds (in English and Spanish) highlighted how Carolina modeled critical thinking by generating la duda, or alternative possibilities to explain a particular idea or phenomenon. She did not simply reaffirm what students knew, but helped them develop a schema in which to think about how to go about investigating something that came into question in connection to the readings. As these patterns of la duda were documented, I began to identify ways in which the teacher did not limit her questions from the text to “what,” “when,” “where,” and “who,” but also asked critical questions that were relevant to their lives as children of immigrants. For example, during a discussion about voting during an election, the concept and meaning of papeles [documentation] came up. For (un)documented communities, holding papeles is having the right to vote and possess other rights as documented individuals.
When Catalina asked straightforward questions, she often received simple straightforward answers from students. But she extended this process by asking open-ended questions to expand on student learning. Through think alouds Catalina modeled the thought process she used to critically engage with a text. By asking reflective questions, she promoted a sense of inquiry that facilitated students’ self-to-text connections, critical connections or conexiones with the texts and general discussions regarding their lives. I documented those instances when Catalina utilized simple straightforward questions to get at students’ engagement, not comprehension. It was evident that it was important for Catalina that all students, the “talkative” and “quiet ones,” be provided with a sitio in which to use their lenguas to express their experiences as Latina/o politicized subjects due to their parents’ (un)documented status. As children of immigrants, their day-to-day lives included not only a struggle for access to quality education, but also their parents and communities struggle for social and economic stability. As I analyzed moments that addressed these issues during the read-alouds I labeled them as conexiones, critical connections. In checking for consistency across these critical connections I noticed how Catalina provided an array of ideas and ways for students to draw from their belief systems and understandings to understand the text. When students made conexiones, Catalina elaborated on the cognitive mental process of how they built upon their prior knowledge when making these connections. She also highlighted how this process made their “brain grow more intelligent,” something that really resonated with students and motivated them to become recognized as knowers.
In the following excerpt, Catalina was reading *Los ratones y el gato*, a Spanish story about mice attempting to outsmart the house cat by coming up with an idea to get rid of him. In the story, one mouse suggests killing the cat, but a younger mouse comes up with the idea of tying a *cascabel* (bell) around the cat’s neck to alert the mice of the cat’s presence. As the mice think about this, an older mouse asks who was going to tie the bell around the cat’s neck. The moral of the story being, “It is one thing to say that something should be done, but quite another to do it.” Prior to having students write an alternative ending to the story, Catalina sought to stimulate students’ background knowledge by asking them what they knew about cats and mice:

Adamir: Los gatos se comen a los ratones. [Cats eat mice.]

Catalina: Exactamente, quizás porque vemos, tradicionalmente los gatos se comen los ratones. [Exactly, perhaps because we have seen that, traditionally cats eat mice.]

. . .

Clemente: ¿Sabes quien gana en Tom and Jerry? El ratón, primero le hace trampa al ratón. [Do you know who wins in Tom and Jerry? The mouse, he first makes a trap for the mouse.]

Julián: El gato. [The cat (does).]

Clemente: Siempre le hace trampas al ratón y le salen mal. [He always makes traps for the mouse, but they come out bad.]

Catalina: ¿Le salen mal? ¿El ratón esta siendo creativo, pero en la vida real quien gana? [They come out bad? The mouse is being creative, but in real life, who wins?]

Students: El gato [The cat]. (Classroom fieldnotes, 4-29-12)

As seen above, some students talk about Tom and Jerry, and how Jerry always finds ways to outsmart Tom. However, in real life, cats pray on mice. Most of the students participating in the
dialogue were talkative, but Catalina also noticed the quieter students and began to involve them. She started with very simple straightforward questions before moving to more complex questions, as documented in the following excerpt:

Catalina: ¿Cuál era la idea que propuso el ratón viejo Octavio? [What idea did the wise mouse propose, Octavio?]

Octavio: Umm que . . . [Hmm, that . . .]

Clemente: Yo sé. [I know.]

(Catalina looks at Octavio and waits for his response. Octavio is quiet)

Jovan: ¿Pero no escucharon la campana? [But, didn’t you hear the bell?]

(Catalina looks at Jovan and he quiets down)

Catalina: ¿Que le dijo? [What did he say?] (To Octavio)

(Abel, Clemente, and Julián raise their hands)

Abel: ¡Yo! ¡Yo! ¡Yo! [Me! Me! Me!]

Catalina: No, no, no el tiene la cabeza y tiene boca puede hablar y lo vamos a respetar. Ok? Y lo vamos a celebrar porque el realmente puede hacer buen trabajo, y Mela también, y Emma también y Kamila también.

[No, no, he has a brain and a mouth to talk with and we are going to respect him. Ok? And we are going to celebrate because he can do a good job and so can Mela, and Emma and Kamila as well.]

Jacobo: Mela no. [Not Mela.]

Catalina: Saben les voy a decir una cosa, me parece que en esta clase hay gente habladora y gente callada, así que vamos a tener que ayudar a la parte callada que hable cuando tienen que hablar y la parte que habla que se calle cuando tienen que escuchar. ¿Qué dijo el gato viejo? [You know, I’m going to say something. I think that in this class there are people who are talkative and people who are quiet, so then that means that we have to help the quiet ones speak up when they need to and those who are talkative to be quiet when they need to listen. What did the wise cat say?]

Student: El ratón. [The mouse.]

Catalina: El ratón, disculpe, gracias. [The mouse, excuse me, thank you.]
Octavio: Que le van amarrar con una cinta al gato en el cuello. [That they are going to be tying a piece of yarn around his neck.]

Catalina: ¿Qué va tener la cinta esa? Kamila, que va tener la cinta esa? [What is that piece of yarn going to have, Kamila?]

(Kamila is quiet.)

Catalina: Le van amarrar una cinta al cuello al gato, y que va tener la cinta? Mela que va tener la cinta? [They are going to tie a piece of yarn on the cat’s neck, and what will that yarn have? Mela, what will the yarn have?]

Clemente: Un cascabel. [A bell.]

Catalina: ¿Excuse me, ahora va repetir ella, o usted le estaba ayudando a ella? ¿Mela que va tener la cinta? [Excuse me, now she is going to repeat, or were you trying to help her? Mela, what is that piece of yarn going to have?]

(Mela is quiet)

Abel: Tu dijiste, tu alzaste la mano Mela. [You said it, you raised your hand Mela]

(Mela continues to be quiet and looks down.)

Catalina: ¿Quiere que le lea de vuelta? [Do you want me to read again?]

(Mela nods)

Catalina: Lo voy a leer de vuelta. [I’m going to reread it.] (Classroom fieldnotes, 4-29-12)

This event took place at the end of the school year, and centered on a read aloud discussion that brought attention to students who had tended to be quieter than the majority. Catalina had referred to the students in terms of “los que hablan” [the talkative ones] and “los callados” [the quiet ones]. Students had their own labels for each other in similar terms as well (“no sabe” [doesn’t know] or “no habla” [doesn’t talk]. For instance, when Catalina asked if anyone knew something about a topic, some students would immediately respond positively for themselves and negatively for others. As noted in this example, a student interjected the teacher’s positive and encouraging evaluation of the quiet students, with a negative commentary about a
quiet student. Even though Mela was in the highest reading group and was identified as gifted, in
the eyes of the talkative students, she did not represent a knowledgeable student. However, it was
also possible that she was not able to show her level of knowledge in front of the class in the
same manner in which her classmates could articulate theirs.

Another approach that Catalina used to engage students involved asking them why they
came to school. During a literacy enrichment activity with the kindergarten class, Catalina asked
a distracted kindergartener why he came to school; he answered, “to be quiet,” which triggered,
gasps from the first graders who strongly disagreed. David, a first grader, quickly asserted that
they went to school to learn. Others remarked that they came to school to learn how to do math
and to read. Catalina continued with the discussion by asking students and listing many possible
reasons for coming to school, such as if they came to school to make friends, play at recess, eat
pizza on Fridays, listen to good stories and laugh, learn songs and sing along, and to become
intelligent. Students excitedly cried out “Yo, yo!” [Me, me!], “Si” [Yes], and “Yay!” Engaging
students to become excited and involved in learning was evident; indeed, it was a central aspect
of the classroom culture. In the following example, one can see how Catalina merged learning
with knowing. She taught students that one needs to learn in order to know and explained this
further by talking about how to fly an airplane:

Catalina:  Guau, ustedes vienen a la escuela porque quieren hacer muchas cosas. ¿Y
saben que? Les voy a decir una cosa. [Wow, you all come to school because
you want to do many things. And you know what? I am going to tell you one
thing.]

(Students talking)

Catalina:  También si ustedes quieren aprender andar en un avión, les voy a decir una
cosa. Si ustedes se van a la casa y se ponen a dormir hasta que tengan la edad
de andar en aviones, no van a poder andar porque la gente necesita aprender a
volar los aviones, necesitan saber leer, matemáticas, geografía. Si esta volando
[el] avión y dice, “Hay, me quiero ir a México. ¡No sé dónde queda México!
¡Estoy perdido aquí en el aire! ¡No sé a dónde ir! ¡Ayuda! ¡Ayuda!!” [Also, if
you want to learn how to fly an airplane, I’m going to tell you something. If you go home and sleep until you are old enough to fly airplanes, you are not going to be able to, because people need to learn how to fly airplanes, they need to know how to read, do math and geography. If you are flying an airplane and you say, “I want to go to Mexico. Oh, no! I don’t know where Mexico is! I’m lost! I don’t know where to go! Help! Help!”]

(Students laughing and crying out): Ah!!! (Classroom fieldnotes, 10-9-12)

By combining the importance of multiple skills such as reading, math, and geography with humor, Catalina consistently elevated the act of learning (aprender) as essential to knowing (saber). Learning to know became an essential component of the classroom culture. A knowledgeable student exemplified the agency that derived from the norms and practices of the classrooms’ sitios. However, agency was not as easily accessible to all students. Upon being labeled as “no sabe” (she/he does not know), the students’ facial expressions depicted sadness, indicating both the value of knowing in this classroom community and the vulnerability of not knowing. For instance, if one student was marked as not knowing, identifying them as “no sabe” diminished their agency, and almost no one in the classroom wanted to not saber. Abel’s interactions with Catalina and his peers provided the best examples of a student who clearly did not want to be labeled as “one who did not know,” as seen in the following example of a read aloud of the text titled Parts, written by Tedd Arnold. The story is about a little boy who begins to think that his body is falling apart after losing his first tooth. For students it was absurd that this little boy did not know that it was normal to have loose teeth or to have snot come out of his nose. Catalina confirmed that this child did not know very much.

Catalina: Pero vuelve a crecer, parece que este niño no sabe mucho. [But, it regrows, it seems that this boy does not know much.]

Abel: No fue a la escuela. [He didn’t go to school.]

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Catalina: Parece que no fue a la escuela (laughs and continues to read in English) todo es normal me alegro de escuchar, well then what is this yellow stuff? [It seems he did not go to school (laughs and continues to read in English) everything seems normal, I’m happy to hear, well then what is this yellow stuff?]

Damián: Sí, cuando te bañas te lo tienes que quitar. [Yes, when you bathe you have to take it off.]

Catalina: Se llama wax. [It’s called wax.]

Abel connected the little boy’s lack of knowledge about his body parts with not going to school. Catalina’s laughter was a sign of content because it solidified students’ value for coming to school to learn. The text provided an opportunity for students to demonstrate their home knowledge about the importance of taking care of oneself and cleanliness as Damián noted. Perceptions of cleanliness have become synonymous to being well cared for at home. Montoya (1994) described how her mother would braid her hair as tightly and neatly as possible to minimize some of the scrutiny she knew she would experience by “Them,” the Anglo, English speakers (p. 187). Her mother prepared her for the racial and linguistic discrimination and at 7 years old, she was already aware of her difference and how that difference was made problematic in society. However, rather than reproduce dominant cultural ideologies about difference, I discuss how lenguas and the home language provided students with opportunities to produce knowledge.

**Lenguas and student knowledge production.** Students demonstrated their knowledge production in their home language during the English read alouds. The teacher read *The leaving morning,* by Angela Johnson, a story about a young boy moving to a new house with feelings of uncertainty and nostalgia. When asked by the teacher if students could relate to this story, some students discussed moving from one mobile home to another within the same community. As I began to interview the families, I came to learn that many of them lived in one of the local

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trailer park communities. This mobile home community has experienced a demographic shift over the past two decades. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about 71.6% of the 850 residents in the mobile home community were of Latina/o background, a significant increase from only about 12 people in the 1990’s. Other students experienced moving many times, sometimes within the same town and state. However, one student recounted his parents experience moving from Mexico to the U.S. Even though he was born in the U.S., he inserted himself in the experience of his parents deciding to come to the U.S., as seen below:

Kira: Yo me moví tres veces [I’ve moved three times]

Damián: Julián se movió cinco veces [Julián has moved five times]

Catalina: ¿Quiero saber una cosa, le voy a preguntar a Clemente, ¿usted sabe porque se mudaron? [I want to know something; I’m going to ask Clemente, do you know why you moved?]

Clemente: Allá en México como era un poco peligroso [Over there in Mexico since it was a bit dangerous]

Catalina: ¿En que sentido? [In what sense?]

Clemente: Había muchos hombres y todos los mataban. [There were many men and they killed them all.]

Catalina: ¿Quién? [Who?]

Clemente: A los pobres. [The poor.]

Catalina: Perdón, Ivan, usted no sabe controlar su cuerpo . . . parece uno de esos insectos que zumban y no deja concentrar a nadie, perdón. [Excuse me, Ivan, you do not know how to control your body, you seem like one of those insects that buzzes around and does not let anyone concentrate, excuse me.]

Clemente: Es que mataban a los pobres. [They killed the poor.]

Catalina: Quienes son ‘ellos’? [Who are ‘they’?]

Clemente: Los que eran malos, y nosotros nos venimos acá, nosotros éramos un poquito pobres pero teníamos una casa pero no teníamos dinero, pero teníamos un

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poco de dinero. [The bad ones, and we came here, we were a little bit poor but we had a house but not a lot of money, but we had a little bit of money.]

Catalina: ¿Tu mamá y papá tenían miedo de morir? [Your mom and dad were afraid of dying?]

(Clemente nods)

David: Yo no quiero morir. [I don’t want to die.] (Classroom fieldnotes, 4-3-13)

For Catalina, the fear narrated in Clemente’s story about life in Mexico was important for students to attend to, and she expressed it through her statement to Ivan about him not allowing others to concentrate when his peers were sharing experiences and thoughts with the class. During my informal pláticas with Catalina I learned that she wanted students to have a platform to share experiences that others could relate to and learn from. Oftentimes, she was purposefully attentive to students’ peer talk so that she could pull from that during whole class discussions. Catalina engaged with students in difficult discussions about immigration and ethics. She did not shy away from these adult-like conversations, as she saw them to be critical for students’ knowledge production as it validated their experience as children of immigrants. Students utilized their lenguas, home language, to express the ways in which they saw the realities of their past and present and thus, have a say about their future.

**Sitios and recognizing student knowledge.** The norms and practices of the classroom were extensions of what children learned and brought from home. Catalina created a classroom space in which students’ knowledge was recognized and valued by her and the entire classroom community. She was committed to creating these spaces even amidst the many distractions, interjections and mishaps that occurred through out the day. Catalina had a keen understanding of when students’ stories were designed to gain the attention of the class and when students were attempting to express their day-to-day experiences. These experiences often reflected what it means to grow up bilingual and bicultural with immigrant parents and siblings. The frequency
and manner in which students shared their lives from home was telling of their comfort in the classroom. This can be seen in the following example of students discussing an immigration raid that took place at a local Mexican grocery store. Recently, there had been raids that had taken place in the mobile-home park community, where many Latina/o immigrant families lived, including many of these students’ families. These events had been covered in the local news. Kira initiates the discussion, and although she was born in the U.S., she identified herself as an undocumented immigrant and possibly in danger of being taken back to Mexico,

Kira: La cerraron a las dos; salieron en las noticias que se están llevando a nosotros a México. [They closed at two; the news said that they are taking us to Mexico.]

Catalina: ¿A quién? ¿A los dueños? ¿O la gente que trabaja o la gente que estaban comprando? [Who? The owners? Or the workers or the shoppers?]

Kira: Venden pan . . . [They sell bread . . .]

Catalina: Yo se lo que venden ahí, digame una cosa. ¿Usted como se entero? [I know what they sell, tell me one thing. How did you find out?]

Kira: Porque salió en las noticias. [Because it was on the news.]

Catalina: ¿Las noticias, en la tele? [The news, on TV?]

Clemente: En el canal 9. [On channel 9.26]

Catalina: ¿Ustedes conocen alguna persona que se hayan llevado? [Do any of you know anyone who was taken?] (Damián raising his hand) ¿Damián?

Damián: Un vecino mío se lo llevaron. [They took a neighbor of mine.]

Catalina: ¿El papá de quién? [Whose father?]

Damián: Un vecino. [A neighbor.]

. . .

Julián: Llevaron a un amigo mío, que se llama Lugo. [They took a friend of mine, whose name is Lugo.]

26 Local television news channel changed to maintain anonymity.
Catalina: ¿Es grandote ese, un adulto? [Is he a grown-up, an adult?]

Israel: Ayer la migra paro a mi hermano. [Immigration stopped my brother yesterday.]

Students: ¡Ugh!

Catalina: ¿Sí? ¿Y lo dejó ir? ¿No se lo llevaron? [Really? And did they let him go? They didn’t take him?]

Israel: Trabaja en El Restaurante, le llamo a mi mamá y a mi hermano. [He works at El Restaurante; he called my mom and my brother.]

Catalina: ¿Entonces no se lo llevó, estuvo con suerte, tu mamá estaba contenta de que estaba bien? [So, they did not take him, luck was on his side, was your mom relieved that he was ok?]

... 

Damián: Se llevaron a los del Mercado porque estaban vendiendo drogas. [They took the people at the store because they were selling drugs.]

Students: ¡Agh!

Catalina: ¿Estaban vendiendo drogas? ¿Y tú como lo sabes? [They were selling drugs? How do you know that?]

Damián: Porque mis vecinos siempre les daba drogas a los del Mercado. [Because my neighbor was always giving drugs to those at the Mercado.]

Kira: O sí, mi papí se enfermo, y le dieron medicina, le dieron drogas. [Oh, yes, my dad got sick, and they gave him medicine, they gave him drugs.]

Catalina: No me digas. ¿Y quien se lo llevó? [Don’t tell me. And who took him?]

Kira: Es que mi papi, estaba muy enfermo. [It’s because my dad was sick.]

Catalina: Déjame decirles una cosa, muchas veces los doctores dan drogas para curarse, pero no son de las drogas malas, son drogas buenas como la medicina, esas son buenas si uno tiene toz, o le duele la garganta, uno va al doctor y el dice tómese esa medicina. Hay otra clase de drogas que hacen mal a la gente. ¿Ustedes ya sabian de eso verdad? Le hacen mal a la gente, hacen mal al cuerpo y lo ponen loquitos. [Let me tell you something, many times doctors give drugs to cure people, but they are not bad drugs, they are good drugs like medicine, those are good if you have a cough, or a sore throat, one goes to the doctor and he prescribes medicine and tells you to take that medicine. They’re...
other types of drugs that people use. You all knew that right? They cause people harm, they are not good for the body and it makes them crazy.]

Abel: A mi me dolía la mano (*holding his arm*) porque no tenia cama y me dolía mucho, me enyesaron [me dieron] medicina. [My arm hurt because I didn’t have a bed and it hurt a lot, they put a cast on me and gave me medicine.]

Catalina: Esa es un antibiótico, esa es muy buena para matar los gérmenes. [That is an antibiotic, which is very good to kill the germs.] (Classroom fieldnotes, 9-27-12)

The initial discussion revolved around the immigration raid that had taken place and then quickly took a different turn as they progressed to explore the reasons for the detentions. Catalina was concerned that parents may have been taken away. Damián mentioned that people were taken as part of the raid because they were involved with selling drugs. It appears that Kira had misunderstood the type of drugs Damián was referring to, and Catalina took the opportunity to explain the difference between narcotics and medication. By clarifying this kind of information, Catalina attempted to impart knowledge onto students so that they could have a stronger foundation for their own knowledge and understanding. Catalina’s commitment to teaching students by offering possible alternatives in this instance, and pushing them to think critically and independently was evident in the *sitios* of the classroom. At the same time, Catalina highlighted the resources that individual students used to make them visible to the rest of the class. In this example, she asked Kira how she came to know about the events she was sharing in order to get at the source of information. It is important to note that Catalina does not evaluate Kira’s source as legitimate; she acknowledge how Kira obtained the information from the local television news source, but as a source it’s still open for examination and possibly critique.

The examination of reliable sources was addressed during another discussion regarding *Cinco de mayo*. Students explained to Catalina that it was a Mexican celebration where people had a party, danced, and had piñatas. Even though students believed that *Cinco de mayo* was a
Mexican *fiesta* and confirmed it with what they saw on television, none of the students shared whether it was a holiday that they celebrated in their homes. At the time, Catalina was attempting to have students begin to question why certain things were celebrated, by going beyond how holidays are celebrated (i.e., food, music, dance, piñatas etc.). She was very critical of the media manufacturing superficial facts and wanted students to begin thinking about how to be more critical of things they see in the media.

*Sitios and imparting knowledge.* Imparting knowledge to students was evident in class discussions, many times these contributions began with “déjame decirles algo” [let me tell you something] to create a space for Catalina to share something with them that may be useful to think about when applying knowledge that is learned. Other ways Catalina imparted knowledge was by articulating her wisdom by first highlighting “yo se que . . .” [I know that . . .], and then by adding specific information about a much larger issue. For example, the read aloud discussion below came from a children’s text called *El lobo y el perro,*27 [The wolf and the dog], an Aesop tale adapted by Eric Blair, about a wolf that comes across a well-fed domesticated dog chained to a post outside his owner’s home. The dog told the wolf that he too could be provided with food and shelter, as long as he agreed to be chained to provide security to the home. At first, it appeared to be a good proposition, however, the wolf was not sure that exchanging his freedom for food and shelter was worthwhile. The following excerpt details the discussion:

Catalina: ¿Qué hizo el lobo? se quedó con la familia, que hizo el lobo? [What did the wolf do? Did he stay with the family, what did the wolf do?]

Student: No quería que lo amarren. [He didn’t want to be chained.]

Catalina: ¿El quería ser . . .? [He wanted to be . . .?]

Students: Libre. [Free.]

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... Catalina: Están hablando tan fuerte que no puedo escuchar. ¿Qué fue lo que nos quiso decir el autor? [You all are speaking very loud, I can’t hear. What did the author try to say?]

Julián: Que el lobo no quiera quedarse con la familia [That the Wolf did not want to stay with the family]

Catalina: ¿Por qué no quería quedarse con la familia? [Why did he not want to stay with the family?]

Julián: Quería estar libre [He wanted to be free]

Catalina: ¿Exactamente, para el autor es más importante estar libre y pasar hambre que estar encadenado con la familia, ustedes que prefieren? ¿Comer y estar encadenados como los esclavos? ¿Saben que los esclavos estaban encadenados, no? ustedes saben de esto? [Exactly, for the author it was more important to be free and go hungry, than to be chained with the family, what do you all prefer? To eat and be chained like slaves? Did you know that slaves were chained? Did you all know that?]

Julián: Oh, ¿como diosito estaba? [Oh, like God was?]

Catalina: A los esclavos los compraban y los vendían, saben lo que me parece que mucha gente esta viendo para cualquier lado y no esta pensando, que esta distraída, que no está aprendiendo, como una gente con F, W con C tampoco, que tristeza, les voy a decir una cosa es súper importante que aprendan[n], en general los autores escriben con una intención, yo quiero que ustedes piensen si prefieren estar libre[s] con hambre, o estar en la casa como esclavo sin hambre [Slaves were bought and sold, it seems like people are looking around and are not thinking, they are distracted, like someone who starts with an F, W and C, how sad, I’m going to share something with you that is very important to learn. In general, authors write with an intention, I want you all to think of whether you prefer to be free and hungry or have food and shelter and live like a slave?]

Julián: Un esclavo, ¿tu? [A slave, and you?]

Catalina: Yo no. [Not me.]

Student: Yo sí. [I would.] (Classroom fieldnotes, 10-29-12)

Students demonstrated their comprehension of the text by responding to Catalina’s basic questions for obtaining their background knowledge. Even as Catalina attempted to impart her
knowledge and position about the larger issue of indentured servitude and freedom from this text, Julián noted a point of contrast informed by his exposure to the image of the crucifixion of Jesus. Catalina chose not to respond, or perhaps she did not hear the comment about “Diosito” [Jesus] and continues with her point regarding the enslavement of people. However, during a **plática** I learned that Catalina treaded with caution when discussing religion in class, as demonstrated in the Easter example, because she did not want to impose her own religious beliefs onto students. Most of the time when these themes emerged she would direct students to speak with their parents.

There is a point of frustration for Catalina in the previous excerpt where two students appear to be distracted and inattentive to a lesson on the concept of freedom that she felt they needed to be cognizant of its significance. The way she pulls them back into the group is by stating that she is about to say something of vital importance, at which time all faces turn to Catalina. As she regains their attention she then shifts the discussion to a more critical level by asking more thought provoking questions to make them think and analyze deeper. Even though Catalina shared with me that she might have hoped for students to prefer freedom to servitude, the very act of selecting a text that discusses these issues for students to contemplate was exemplary of the possibilities she generated in every read aloud. She used these read alouds to push students to think critically, make critical connections, and produce knowledge collectively.

I want to highlight another example where Catalina attempted to impart knowledge with another read aloud discussion that emerged from a text in English titled, *On the night you were born,*[^28] by Nancy Tillman that attempts to instill in children a sense of uniqueness to their existence. To highlight the theme, Catalina began with a higher order-thinking question

regarding students’ beliefs, thoughts, and hopes regarding their contribution to the world, as described in the following excerpt:

Catalina: Me gustaría saber que clase de cosas van hacer en este mundo. Que van a tratar de poner su marca en el mundo. Fíjense les voy a decir una cosa, Obama, sabe que, Obama una vez tenía seis años [I would like to know what types of things you are going to do in this world. What are you going to do to put your mark in the world? Listen, I’m going to say something, Obama, you know what, Obama was once 6 years old.]

Student: ¿Obama? [Obama?]

Catalina: ¿Ustedes saben quién es Obama? [Do you know who Obama is?]

Student: Sí. [Yes.]

Adamir: El presidente. [The president.]

Catalina: Sí, es el presidente de EE.UU. pero les voy a decir una cosa, el una vez fue a primer grado y a kínder. [Yes, he is the president of the U.S. but I’m going to say something, he was once in first grade and kindergarten.]

...  

Catalina: Así era [como ustedes cuando] Obama venía a la escuela, y ahora [es] el presidente de los EE.UU. Esta haciendo . . . resoluciones, todas las leyes que el pasa, tienen consecuencia, por ejemplo, el pasó una resolución por lo cual algunos inmigrantes pueden transformarse en inmigrantes legales, no tiene que andar corriendo de la migra, quiere decir que el hizo una cosa importante que afecto a mucha gente. [That is (he was like you when) Obama came to school, and now he is the president of the U.S. He’s making . . . resolutions and passing laws that have consequences, for example, the resolution for allowing some immigrants to become documented. They don’t have to run from immigration; that means he did something important that affected many people.]

Damián: De tener papeles. [In obtaining papers (legalization).]

Catalina: ¿Yo quiero saber una cosa, pero se tiene que ser presidente para afectar a mucha gente? Les voy a decir una cosa, yo pienso que entre ustedes, entre las cosas que ustedes dijeron, por lo cual ustedes son especiales, están afectando al mundo, y están afectando a quienes los rodean. Por ejemplo, hubo una persona que dijo, “sabe que yo soy especial porque yo ayudo a mi mama a cuidar a mi hermanito.” Si ella no estuviera ahí, la mama no sabría que hacer para cuidar el hermanito, tendría que encontrar otra manera. Quiere decir [que] lo que ella esta haciendo afecta no solamente a ellos mismo[s], si no que
afecta a otras personas. [I want to know something. Do you have to be president to affect people? I’m going to tell you something, I think that between all of you, with all that you shared, for why you are special, you are affecting the world, and you are affecting those around you. For example, there was one person who said that ‘you know, I’m special because I help my mom take care of my little brother.’ If she was not there, the mom would not know what to do to take care of the little brother; she would have to find another way. That means that she is doing something that does not only affect them, but others as well.] (Classroom fieldnotes, 10-16-12)

During a plática at the end of the morning session, I spoke with Catalina about the discussion that ensued about the book. She shared with me that she wanted them to think about what kind of imprint they were going to make in the world, going beyond what they wanted to be when they grew up. Catalina was personally invested in ideas of democracy and equity and therefore, utilized Obama in her examples; not necessarily because he represented democracy or equity, but because Obama represented a slight change to the status quo. However, his election represented future possibilities for a more equitable democracy for certain sectors of the general voting population. Regardless of the actual policies he has prompted, promoted, or executed as president, for the students, Obama represented an ally for their families. This came through in the whole class discussions. Damián was the youngest in his family and highly aware of some immigration policies that were in motion. From visiting with his family I came to learn more about the issues that concerned them, especially in regards to the documentation status of their eldest children. His oldest brother was a gifted young soccer player. His family hoped that he would be able to secure an athletic scholarship and thus, be able to attend college.

Classroom discussions often generated ideas about future occupations such as becoming teachers, athletes, or presidents. Kira, for example, talked about how she wanted to become a swimmer. Catalina added that she could become an Olympic swimmer. It was very common for Catalina to elaborate on students’ responses. When she asked what country Kira would represent at the Olympics, Kira answered Mexico. However, Catalina reminded her that she might have to
represent her birthplace, the U.S. The merging of both countries created a subtle recognition of the biculturalism in the class without it being explicit. The majority of the students in the class identified primarily with their Mexican or other Latin American identity. At the same time, Catalina reminded them that they were also U.S. citizens and students quickly started to shout out proudly the U.S. cities where they were born. It was important to her that students were aware of their bicultural identity. Prior to naming their future ambitions, students talked about how they were special because they took care of their little brothers and sisters, how they could do cartwheels or their homework independently, and how they liked to draw and help clean their bedrooms. Catalina reminded them that they were also special because they were bilingual. The manner in which Catalina identified and validated students’ cultural and linguistic resources was powerful. This validation created a space for students to apply their lenguas, home language for learning, and self-expression to make critical connections [critical connections to what/about what? Expand briefly].

**Lenguas and applying knowledge.** Catalina guided students to engage in thinking through an inquiry process. She utilized students’ prior knowledge (De Jong & Harper, 2005) to support them in accessing lenguas and new knowledge. Consequently, la duda would emerge when students did not fully understand certain particularities of an issue being discussed in class. A theme that often appeared in the data was religion, Catholicism in particular. It was not until my last interview with Catalina that I learned that she was Jewish, although in retrospect, I can see how she used many comparisons and parallels with Judaism and Catholicism in class. The following discussion came from a recurring literacy event, the Daily Letter, in which Catalina wrote a short message on a large piece of butcher paper regarding a current event. The letter represented various literacy tasks for Catalina; it was an opportunity for students to work on a
thematic unit from the curriculum, vocabulary, and oral readings. The theme on this particular
day revolved around celebrations, and students were asked what was celebrated during the
Catholic Easter and Jewish “Easter” [Passover]. After students took basic content information
from the letter, Catalina asked them what was celebrated during these holidays. The excerpt
below describes the first portion of the discussion.

Catalina: Una es la Pascua Judía, la otra es Católica, ¿qué es lo que celebra[n]? [One is
the Jewish Easter and the other is the Catholic one, what is celebrated?]

David: Dan huevos. [They give out eggs.]

Catalina: ¿Eso es lo que celebran? [That is what they celebrate?]

Students: Sí [Yes]

David: Y se [toman] una foto con la pascua. [And they take a picture with the Easter
(bunny).]

Catalina: ¿Qué están celebrando? [What are they celebrating?]

Julián: Huevos de plástico, eso están celebrando. [Plastic eggs, that is what they are
celebrating.]

Catalina: ¿Eso es una forma, perdón, cuando ustedes celebran los cumpleaños, celebran
el pastel? [That is one way they celebrate, excuse me, when you all celebrate
birthdays, do you celebrate the cake?]

Students: ¡No! [No!]

Catalina: ¿Qué se celebra? [What is celebrated?]

Julián: El cumpleañero. [The birthday person.]

Catalina: Exactamente. ¿Qué es lo que se celebra? [Exactly. What is celebrated?]

Student: La fiesta. [The party.]

Catalina: No, no, no, eso es como se celebra. [No, no, no that is how it’s celebrated.]

David: Se celebra el cumpleaños. [The birthday is celebrated.]
Catalina: ¡Exactamente! ¿Se celebra los cumpleaños, el cambio de años, y se celebra con globos, que más? [Exactly. The birthday is celebrated, the age change, and it’s celebrated with balloons, what else?] (Classroom fieldnotes, 3-27-13)

Students’ initial reasoning for the celebration revolved around what and how it was celebrated, not why it was celebrated. By utilizing a contrasting example with birthdays, Catalina was able to get students to see the differences between the “why” and “how” certain things are celebrated. Once a student was able to get at the “why,” Catalina remarked with “exactamente” [exactly], to validate the response. However, when a student reverted back to “how” an event is celebrated she implements a cyclical motion to her instruction, she identified the response as a “how” and reverted back to the initial question to then extend the “what,” “how” and “why.” The following excerpt continues the discussion about Easter but does not go into the differences between Catholicism and Judaism, as Catalina had to establish their background knowledge.

David: ¿La pascua es cumpleaños? [Is Easter a birthday?]

Catalina: ¿Se celebra los cumpleaños? [Is a birthday celebrated?]

Student A: De Dios. [God’s (birthday).]

Student B: De Jesús. [Jesus’ (birthday).]

Student C: Del niño Jesús. [baby Jesus.]

Student D: De su bebé. [his baby.]

Catalina: ¿Ustedes cómo saben? [How do you all know?]

Damián: Mi mama me dijo que hay un niño Jesús. [My mom told me there is a baby Jesus.]

Catalina: ¿Ah, y su mama le dijo que cumplió? [Oh, so your mom told you he was having a birthday?]

Damián: Seis años. [6 years old.]

Catalina: ¿Va cumplir seis años? [He’s going to turn 6 years old?]

Leo: Yo vi la película de Jesús. [I saw the movie about Jesus.]
Catalina: ¿Ahora viene el cumpleaños? [So his birthday is coming up?]
Octavio: No. [No.]
Clemente: Es en navidad [It’s on Christmas]
Students: ¡Sí! [Yes!]
Catalina: ¿Entonces que se festeja este domingo? [So, then what is being celebrated this Sunday?]
Student E: Día de pascua. [Easter.]
Ivan: No sabemos. [We don’t know.]
Catalina: Ciertamente. [Indeed.] (Classroom fieldnotes, 3-27-13)

By establishing their background knowledge, Catalina learned that students were pulling from their home knowledge about the Catholic holiday. Students knew it had to do with Jesus and the various ways he’s referenced. Although there continues to be some confusion with the contrasting birthday example, some students interject by inserting that Jesus’ birthday is during Christmas, not to be confused with Easter. Catalina then cycles back to the original question. While one student reiterates that Easter is the holiday in question, another student declares that they do not know. It was rare for students to remark that they did not know and for Catalina to agree, however, in this instance it was stated with humor made evident by her tone of voice and facial expression. Instead of abandoning the discussion all together, what followed was the quest to understand what Easter was all about. The discussion continues to revolve around the ways in which Easter is popularly celebrated with the Easter Bunny and eggs.

Catalina: ¿Ah, si no sabemos, y no hay mucha gente que sepa la pascua Judía y pascua Católica, como vamos a averiguar? ¿Qué vamos hacer? Les voy a decir una cosa. Yo se que se celebra el viernes, pero creo que se celebra hoy y mañana. ¿Qué podemos hacer para averiguar? [Oh, if we don’t know, and it seems that not many people here know about the Jewish Easter and Catholic Easter, how are we going to find out? What are we going to do? I’m going to tell you something. I know its celebrated on Friday, I think it’s celebrated today and tomorrow. But, how can we find out?]
Jovan: Se esconden huevos. [They hide eggs.]

(Catalina writes on the board: Se celebra con huevos. [It’s celebrated with eggs.])

David: Eso dije yo. [That’s what I said.]

Catalina: Eso es como, yo pregunte ‘qué es lo que se celebra?’ ¿El conejo? ¿Qué se celebra? [That is how I asked “what is celebrated”? The bunny? What is celebrated?]

Student A: ¿Los huevos? [The eggs?]

Jovan: El conejo. [The bunny.]

Catalina: ¿Y porque ese día? [Why that day?]

Jovan: El conejo los tiene que esconder. [The bunny has to hide them.]

Clemente: No, el conejo esta entre los huevos. [No, the bunny is between the eggs.]

Catalina: ¿Ustedes piensa[n] que el conejo pone huevos? [You think that the bunny lays the eggs?]

Student B: No, los compra. [No, he buys them.]

Student C: Los papás compran los huevos. Les meten dulces. [The parents buy the eggs. They put candy in them.]

Catalina: Me parece fantástico. Me parece que es una celebración fantástica, pero ¿qué están celebrando? [That sounds fantastic. I think it’s a fantastic celebration, but what are you celebrating?] (Classroom fieldnotes, 3-27-13)

As students continue to associate the bunny and eggs with Easter, Catalina thinks aloud what she knows about the Jewish holiday and attempts to guide them to how they would go about finding out the reason as to why Easter is celebrated. However, she still goes along with their thought process concerning their knowledge about Easter eggs. As noted, different students at this point are heavily invested in identifying what and how Easter is celebrated. Catalina interjects to ask clarifying questions resulting from the statements that students had made or to reiterate her original question as to why the holiday is so widely celebrated by Catholics. In the following section of the excerpt, students were still working through the discussion to come to an
agreement with what is being celebrated. Catalina shifts the discussion by guiding students to utilize tools for investigating a topic when they do not have much information on hand:

Catalina: ¿En los cumpleaños, se celebra cuando uno cumple años, pero para las pascuas no sabemos, como podemos averiguar? ¿No saben que hacer? [On birthdays, turning a year older is celebrated, but for Easter we don’t know, how can we find out?]

David: Pienso. [I think.]

Damián: Preguntar a un amigo o un vecino. [Ask a neighbor.]

(Catalina writes on the board: “Preguntar a un amigo o un vecino” [Ask a neighbor.])

David: El sabe. [He knows.]

Catalina: ¿Mela si no sabemos, alguien sabe de acá? ¿Ray? ¿Hay alguien que sabe? [Mela, if we don’t know does someone over here know? Ray? Is there someone who knows?]

Julián: El conejo. [The bunny.]

Catalina: ¿Se celebra la vida del conejo? [Is the bunny’s life celebrated?]

David: [La] foto. [(The) picture.]

Damián: Cada vez se muere el conejo. [Every single time the bunny dies.]

Catalina: ¿Ya [les] preguntamos [a] todos los que están acá? [Did we ask everyone that is here?]

Octavio: Yo si sé. [I know.]

Catalina: ¿Que se celebra? [What is celebrated?]

Octavio: Cuando le punieron la cruz a Jesús. [When they placed the cross on Jesus.]

Catalina: Hay alguien que si sabe. [There is someone here who knows.]

Evan: La cruz. [The cross.]

Catalina: Exactamente, no, cuando pusieron la cruz [Exactly, no, when the cross was placed.]

Jovan: Lo mataron los hombres. [The men killed him.]

Catalina: Ah, se acuerdan de la historia esa. [Oh, so you remember that story.]
Evan: Yo la vi ayer. [I saw it yesterday.]

Catalina: ¿Qué se celebra la pascua? Fíjense, que una persona acá, el dijo una cosa y nos hizo acordar. Eso de preguntar a un amigo nos resultó, porque le preguntamos. [What is celebrated on Easter? Look, we have here someone that knows. He said something that made us remember. Asking a friend gave us results, because we asked him/her.] (Classroom fieldnotes, 3-27-13)

The ways in which Catalina followed up with students, thought aloud, and guided them through the process of applying tools for investigation resulted in students activating further their prior knowledge. Even though Catalina did have an “answer” in mind, she facilitated the discussion for students to find the solution within the classroom members and highlighted the resources that they brought with them to school, in particular, the home knowledge that was inculcated by their parents and the cultural and religious programs that they selected to watch on T.V.

**Discussion**

This chapter illustrates the ways in which a bilingual teacher’s instructional methods facilitated the emergence of student voice as a tool for learning, self-expression, and critical thinking. Through a *sitios y lenguas* framework, it was possible to see how critical it is for emergent bilingual students to have a space where their ideas contribute to their individual and collective learning. Knowledge was produced in a dynamic cyclical form, in which a continuous nonlinear strand of learning for understanding was present in the classroom. By accessing home and community knowledge, students were able to demonstrate alternative ways of knowing. This in turn offered an alternative discourse to the one that perpetuates derogatory perceptions of Latina/o children and their families. Coming from diverse economic conditions, Latinas/os have made a home in various places in the U.S., whether it was to escape the violence in Mexico or other countries in Latin America in search for better educational opportunities for their children in the U.S. As Catalina’s classroom pedagogical practices discussed in this chapter demonstrate,
these educational spaces are continuously being transformed by the experiences that children of immigrants bring to larger political, ideological and economic contexts.
Chapter 5

Teacher Knowledge

Catalina: Lo que pasa es que uno no se tiene que reír, ese es el problema.
[The thing is, we can’t laugh, that is the issue.]

[He [Abel] was always clowning around.]

Adela: Es como cuando tu vas a la casa de tu mama . . . put it that way . . . con nosotros se sienten muy en familia.
[It’s like when you go visit your mom . . . put it that way . . . with us they feel like family.] (Teacher and teaching assistant informal conversation, 11-9-12)

One day after school, while Catalina was compiling homework packets and Adela was wiping the table, I listened intently and joined the discussion about how laughter contributed to the noise in the classroom. Adela observed that students felt as if they were at home with family. This observation was evident from my fieldnotes, as I noted students making jokes, telling stories, and overlapping talk in class illustrating their comfort, emanating a sense of being at home. These interactions between students and teachers contributed to the liveliness of the classroom environment. Catalina’s emphasis on academic learning and Adela’s effort to develop social interaction complemented each other and illuminated how students engaged with learning in the classroom.

Through sitios y lenguas, power structures become apparent, as issues regarding socioeconomic and immigration status are part of the discursive practices in the classroom. Schooling institutions are spaces that are both oppressive and challenging, where languages, identities and cultures are in constant flux of appreciation and devaluation (Delgado Gaitan, 1994). In this first grade classroom, sitios [spaces] were identified by the norms and practices that structured the discourse and interaction between classroom participants. Lenguas [languages] referred to the ways in which students used their home language and voice as tools
for learning, self expression, and making critical connections. Utilizing a Chicana feminist approach enabled me to see the ways in which the two teachers created their own sitio y lengua, within the classroom’s sitios y lenguas. With sitios y lenguas nothing is abandoned, but rather intertwined with complex human dilemmas, concerns and hopes for the education of Latina/o students. In this chapter, I introduce the teacher, Catalina and her teaching assistant, Adela. Specifically, I discuss the ways in which the teachers’ sitio illuminated the ideological formations regarding the sociopolitical significance of teaching Latina/o children. Sitio, in a nonphysical sense, emerged within the everyday experiences of being a bilingual teacher, subjected to a myriad of conflicting messages regarding the value of bilingualism and multiculturalism. The teachers’ sitios were not simply a part of the larger classroom sitios, but rather, a part of the way in which Catalina and Adela actively pursued their agency and voice as subjects within a system that perpetually situated them in a field of remedial education for “at-risk,” “limited English Proficient,” “Hispanic” children. Their agency emerged out of their commitment to teaching all students despite the challenges of literacy development being “reduced to a linear list of skills” (Dyson, 2015), before continuing on with more complex literacy practices. They used their lenguas to actively challenge the deficit discourses and views within and outside the classroom space.

I identified two central themes through my narrative analysis of the teacher interviews and vertical analysis across data sources (Gee, 2000; Thompson, 2000). They highlighted the teachers’ individual sitio y lengua and the factors that influenced the development and enactment of sitios y lenguas in the classroom: (a) ser maestra, [being a teacher] and (b) estar en familia [being with family]. In the following sections I discuss these two themes along with their respective sub-themes. The three sub-themes for ser maestra were as follows: (a) critical and
independent thinking; (b) language, culture and knowledge legitimacy; and (c) equity and universality. The sub-themes that constructed estar en familia were (a) consejos, advice that provided children with values that guided their behavior and attitudes, and (b) noise and humor that emerged as an element for a dynamic learning environment, and as a way of navigating the everyday tensions between all classroom members.

**Ser Maestra**

A central feature of the theme ser maestra was the teachers’ commitment to students that emerged in the testimonios during the interviews. Their commitment involved an understanding of the importance to encourage students to become critical thinkers by respecting students’ home language and recognizing their cultural knowledge. The maestras worked actively to identify unjust practices that have not appropriately defined the opportunities, challenges, and hopes for bilingual, Latina/o children. Their stories detailed their personal experiences that informed the ways that they were critical about unjust systems and the ways that they engaged in challenging those systems through teaching.

The journey that led Catalina to teaching was not one that she actively pursued or initially desired. Catalina did not grow up wanting to become a teacher. Born and raised in a metropolitan city in a South American country that endured political turmoil and violence, Catalina spent summers during her youth on camping trips with other adolescents. They discussed political activism, social inequities, and how to partake in changing the reality of those who did not have access to resources. They were deeply involved in what it meant to change systems that worked only for the privileged. Her parents had a vast social circle of friends and a large extended family. During social visits, the adults engaged with the children and youth by including them in discussions of current events and explaining what they heard on the radio and watched on
television. Catalina discussed how these social, cultural, and linguistic practices recognized children as critical thinkers.

**Critical and independent thinking.** Catalina enacted the belief that children are critical and independent thinkers in her daily interactions with all classroom participants. This was evidenced in her commitment to demonstrating to students their own knowledge production. Catalina attributed this ability to her aunt. She recalled that when she was a child, her aunt would talk to children as if they were adults, recognizing them as contributors to knowledge. When engaging in conversations with them, her aunt posed questions that pushed them to think deeply about their views and interpretations. I observed Catalina many times engaging in the same types of conversations with students in her classroom. Catalina had a way of utilizing every response from students; nothing was abandoned but rather, integrated for a fuller understanding of the material, no matter how far fetched it may have seemed to anyone in or outside of the classroom.

In the following excerpt, Catalina and Adela, the teacher’s assistant, engage in a discussion regarding students’ contributions during class discussions:

Catalina: Pero aparte yo tengo que andar de pies de pluma, bueno no puedo andar con valores, es cosa de la familia, entonces yo tengo que ser muy respetuosa. [I have to tread lightly, I can’t impose my own values, that is a topic for the family, so I have to be very respectful.]

Adela: Eso es lo que yo estoy aprendiendo mucho de ti en eso, antes en el pasado, they [other teachers] would impose so much. Buscar el equilibrio, porque no saben como, yo he aprendido mucho como respetar sus valores. [That is what I’m learning a lot from you, before in the past, they (other teachers) would impose so much. It’s about looking for balance, because they don’t know how, I have learned a lot about how to respect their values.]

Catalina: Yo no puedo imponer mis valores. [I can’t impose my values.]

Adela: ¡Exacto! Y hay muchas personas, muchas maestras, they impose, imponer lo que no [hay que] creer o si existe. [Exactly! There are many people, many teachers, they impose, impose what not to believe or what exists.]
Catalina and Adela’s commitment to respecting students’ values and critical thinking skills, as discussed above, is evident in a whole class discussion on life sources. These statements regarding the importance of respecting students’ values are apparent and evident in a lesson regarding identifying things with a life source. In the lesson, Catalina asked students what they knew about the moon. Students’ responses included that the moon had stars, God, dead people, spirits, aliens, sand, and rocks. Rather than discounting the answers that were inaccurate, the teacher confirmed that astronauts had collected rocks from the moon as objects of study, but stated that she was uncertain as to whether the moon hosted spirits or aliens. Catalina used discussions as a way to help her students think critically regarding topics based on their own prior knowledge. She always tried to engage all students in the discussions across language proficiency and reading levels. For example, in the discussion of life sources, Abel had stated that rocks were on the moon. Abel was an emergent reader and during classroom observations, I noted ways in which Abel created distractions that made it difficult for him to follow along with the text during reading lessons. Abel had been undergoing assessments to identify whether he had a learning disability, such as dyslexia. Outside of Catalina’s classroom he was referred to as a “trouble maker” and “at-risk.” However, she focused on highlighting his strengths. On many occasions, I observed how Catalina provided Abel with space to explore and explain his knowledge to the class.

Catalina: ¿En la luna hay rocas, si hay muertos o si están los espíritus de los que se murieron la verdad verdadera es que no sé, pero por seguro los astronautas que fueron a la luna lo que vieron fueron rocas, muchas rocas, diferentes clases de rocas, Abel, usted como sabia eso?
[There are rocks on the moon, if there are dead people or spirits of those who have died, the real truth is I don’t know, but what I do know is that the
astronauts that went to the moon saw rocks, many rocks, all types of rocks, Abel, how did you know that?

Abel: Yo vi en la tele que unos astronautas se fueron a la luna en un roque, y fueron . . .
[I saw it on T.V. that some astronauts went to the moon on a spaceship, and they went . . .]

Catalina: ¿Fueron a la luna y trajeron rocas? [They went to the moon and brought rocks?]

Abel: Si. [Yes]

Catalina: Fijense, que interesante, me parece que usted esta seleccionado los programas que mira en la televisión bien seleccionados
[Look, how interesting, I think that you are selecting very good programs to watch on the television.]

(Student talking)

Catalina: ¿Esperecen un momento que le voy a preguntar a mi experto, que es lo que vio en la televisión, porque fijense, él sabe. Primero que todo, ese programa de televisión es de ficción o es de no-ficción?
[Wait one moment, I’m going to ask my expert, what is it that you he saw on television, because look, he knows. First of all, is that television program fiction or nonfiction?] (Classroom fieldnotes, 11-9-12)

Catalina utilized this moment to not only highlight Abel’s contribution to the knowledge production in the classroom, but acknowledged it and supported him in further clarifying what he knew. She then tied it to the larger theme they had been discussing regarding fiction and non-fiction literature. Later in the discussion a student asked a question about how the astronauts got on to the moon from the spacecraft, which triggered more questions from students and the noise in the classroom elevated, and a lively discussion ensued. Students wondered why astronauts wore special suits and carried oxygen tanks in outer space. To clarify their questions another student exclaimed that it was because there was no air on the moon! The teacher used this to return to the main topic identifying life sources and the conditions necessary for the preservation
of life. The teacher guided students’ learning by providing the space and time for students to come to understand each other’s contributions and build on their knowledge base.

Even though Catalina and Adela were born in South America and did not share the ethnic hybridity of their students who were predominantly of Mexican descent, both teachers expressed a critical consciousness regarding the barriers and obstacles faced by underserved communities. Both teachers understood knowledge as power. In the following excerpt, Catalina and Adela discussed access to information and power.

Catalina: ¿Qué sea la información, the knowledge, pertenece a ciertos sectores, y por supuesto que muchas veces saber es poder. Usted sabe eso [to Adela]? Ver de que manera ese conocimiento . . . [In other words, that information, the knowledge, belongs to certain sectors and that many times knowing is power. Did you know that [to Adela]? To see how that knowledge . . .]

Adela: Se spread out. [Can be spread out.]

Catalina: [Que] el acceso al conocimiento se abra para todo al resto de la gente. [That the access to knowledge be made available to the rest of the people.]

Adela: [Que] no se limite, los niños tienen que saber la verdad, y las maestras tienen que saber esa conciencia, ahí viene el problema, los mismos educadores que están tienen que tener esa conciencia de decirles. [(That) it’s not limited, children need to know the truth, the teachers have to have that awareness, and there is the problem that educators need to have that consciousness to tell them.] (Teacher and teaching assistant interview, 11-9-12)

Both teachers understood the responsibility that they had as educators to not provide half-truths or misinformation to students regarding real life issues. This can be seen in the following classroom excerpt, where the students were sitting on the carpet facing the daily letter written on a large piece of white butcher paper. They began to read in English; “Dear Children, Today is Friday . . .” the teacher looked at me and smiled as they took initiative in reading in English. Although language arts instruction was primarily in Spanish she’d write the daily letter in English on one day and Spanish the next. Catalina interrupted their reading, and asked them to
wait to read with her because she always began with reading the date. She liked to emphasize the
dates written in Spanish and English to highlight how they differ. The date written in Spanish-
speaking countries is established with the day and month and then the year, whereas in the
United States, it’s the month, the day, and then the year. It was October 12th and the second
Monday in October, a date that has been allotted as Columbus Day, a federal holiday in the U.S.
Catalina addressed the holiday in relation to colonization. The teacher brought the globe from
her desk to show students where Spain and the Americas were located. She went on to explain
the exploratory mission of the Spanish crown to obtain riches from foreign lands and in order to
do so it was done through the process of colonizing indigenous people and their languages.

Catalina: ¡En realidad américa ya tenía un montón de gente, después vinieron los
españoles, [dijeron] “que interesante este lugar,” después vino la
colonización! “¡Ha! Este lugar esta lleno de tanta tierra, vamos a las américas
para buscar el oro y la plata” . . . ¿Ustedes que idioma hablan?
[In reality America had a lot of people, then came the Spanish, [they
proclaimed] “what an interesting place,” then came colonization! “Ha! This
place is full of so much land, let’s go to the Americas to look for gold and
silver” . . . What language do you all speak?]

Student: Español. [Spanish.]

Catalina: ¿Por qué hablan español? [Why do you speak Spanish?]

Damián: Porque somos mexicanos. [Because we are Mexican.]

Catalina: ¿Porque los mexicanos hablan español? [Why do Mexicans speak Spanish?]

Julián: Diosito nos hizo así. [God made us this way.]

Catalina: No, porque España los colonizó. En esta parte de las Américas vinieron los
ingleses, por eso hablan en inglés. Hicieron una colonia y dijeron ¡“Acá se
habla el idioma que yo quiero! ¡Acá se hacen las leyes que yo quiero! El Rey
es el más poderoso y dueño de las Américas y acá se hace la voluntad del
Rey!” ¿Se imaginan?
[No, it’s because Spain colonized them. On this part of the Americas, the
English came, that is why English is spoken here. They established colonies
and said “English is going to be spoken here, because I said so! My laws will
be established here because I said so! The King is the most powerful and
owner of the Americas and everyone must do the King’s will” can you imagine that?

Students: Agh! (Classroom fieldnotes, 10-12-12.)

Although a complex topic to engage, the teacher attempted to explain colonization to her 6- and 7-year-old students. She found ways in which students could engage in the discussion of land and linguistic dispossession by depicting what the colonizers would have said to themselves and others in the moments of taking over other people’s lands and resources and replacing their native languages and religions to Spanish and Catholicism. Catalina believed in students’ ability to think critically about the topic and draw on their own sense making abilities. Through this discussion process two ideas emerged, (a) religion and identity and (b) language and identity. Many of the students in the class had shared their identification with Catholic beliefs in one way or another throughout the year. Julián, the student who stated, God made us this way, was one of the most vocal students about his beliefs about God being the creator of many things on earth and the galaxy. It is important to note that Julián’s comment that Diosito made mexicanos speak Spanish is not farfetched as Spaniards were armed with an essential tool for colonization—the Bible (Collins & Blot, 2003).

Collins and Blot (2003) wrote about how “[t]he colonizing effort was all too often written not as a history of capitalist expansion, but a massive, entirely laudable, educational enterprise bringing enlighten and religion to those left behind in the civilization process” (p. 121). The Spanish language and Catholicism became the vehicles for colonization in the Americas. Language has been historically a marker of colonization, in the way that it has been used to appropriate people and land through religion and economics (Collins & Blott, 2003). Although Catalina attempted to bring this to the students’ attention, they were already actively constructing their own meanings and understandings of what it meant to speak Spanish and ultimately
becoming bilingual. Damian’s remarks reify Anzaldúa’s (1987) concept of language as twin skin with ethnic identity. Anzaldúa also wrote about writing bilingually, codeswitching, \(^{29}\) Spanglish and not accommodating the English speaker through translations. Yet, “we are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness” aptly describes the condition in which many Latinas/os try to make sense. The basic structures of the language tell us where we come from, its origins, and the linguistic shifts illustrate the complexity of language as a cultural phenomenon. In most contexts, “[b]ilingual/bicultural children face daunting challenges in educational settings that not only disregard their home language and culture, but also the wisdom of previous generations” (Díaz-Soto, 2002, p. 604). However, in this classroom, Spanish was the vehicle for instruction and learning to think critically and independently. This example shows how critical and independent thinking was an essential element of teaching for Catalina. Even though English was a part of the everyday exchanges in the classroom, whether through literacy activities, peer interaction, and outside of the classroom, it was not an overbearing factor in learning literacy or required for students to make critical connections with their cultural knowledge and school learning.

**Language, culture and knowledge legitimacy.** Coming from middle class backgrounds and migrating to the U.S. legally, both teachers experienced pressure and ridicule from English speakers for the way they spoke English. This is common for many Latinas/os as explained by Anzaldúa (1987), who described her experience with linguistic terrorism throughout her life, “[i]n childhood we were told our language was wrong. Repeated attacks on our native tongue diminished our sense of self. The attacks continue throughout our lives” (p. 58). González (2005) has also noted how “linguistic terrorism”\(^{30}\) has been inflicted through ideologies that have driven

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\(^{29}\) The use of two linguistic codes simultaneously, either oral or written (Gort, 2006).

\(^{30}\) When linguistic variations are used to maintain hierarchal systems of power (Anzaldúa, 1987).
pedagogical methods and classroom practices making English the panacea for economic security. Due to this, many second or third generation Latinas/os feel *pena*, the shame and uncomfortable feeling that comes when speaking in Spanish to Latin American-born Spanish speakers. As a 1.5-generation 31 Mexican immigrant, I too felt a slight discomfort speaking with the teachers in Spanish. Although I received bilingual instruction from second through sixth grade, grew up speaking Spanish at home, studied abroad in Mexico, majored in Spanish, and secured work because of my Spanish skills, I still felt insecure in my home language. The teachers shared their experience about their own anxieties when speaking English:

Catalina:  Who [was] going to hire somebody who doesn’t know how to speak [English] to be a teacher . . . I can do many things, [but] if I can’t speak [English], how am I going to teach my students to speak or to read or whatever if I don’t speak proper English? (Teacher interview, 11-9-12)

In this excerpt Catalina expressed her concerns that she would be unable to be hired due to her English fluency, regardless of her educational background in her home country. The idea that speaking English will somehow provide academic achievement and economic opportunities is prevalent in discourses regarding the education of children of immigrants and economic opportunities for their parents (Darder, Torres, Gutierrez, 1997; González, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Adela described how she sympathized with students who could not express themselves freely in English for fear of judgment as illustrated below,

Adela:  “Oh what, what do you say?” ¿No había el programa bilingüe, ahí si me sentía mas disminuida, tu te imaginas los niños? Ahí pone a pensar un niño que venga a un clase . . . antes no había bilingual ni ESL, no había nada . . . todo lo que han pasado, te metan a un colegio, no sabes si se están burlando de ti, es horrible, una frustración. [“Oh what, what do you say?” There was no bilingual program, there I felt more belittled, can you imagine the children? Think about a child coming into a classroom . . . there was no bilingual [education] or ESL, there was nothing . . . everything that they have faced, coming into a classroom and you don’t

31 Foreign born children who migrate at a young age to another country (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).
know if they are making fun of you, it’s horrible, it’s frustrating.] (Teaching assistant interview, 8-12-13)

From this excerpt we can see how sharing similar experiences with her students was valuable for Adela. Her frustration became the impetus to work towards a bilingual teaching certificate. She described her experience being shifted around in the district and going from an 8-hour fulltime position as a Special Education teacher’s assistant to a 7-hour teacher’s assistant position in a bilingual program. It was a difficult decision for her, because at the time, her husband had lost his job. She said, “I didn’t know what to do, I was with kids I didn’t know how to help” (Teaching assistant interview, 8-12-13). Adela had not received formal training in special education; therefore, when the position became available in the bilingual program, she decided to apply for the position. Although this meant taking a pay cut and loss of benefits, she felt this was her calling, stating, “even if Stanage [Elementary School] had at least one Spanish speaker [I] would have stayed there.” When she finally moved, Adela recalled feeling that “at least in my heart I felt I was doing something important” (Teaching assistant interview, 8-12-13). By important she meant the ways that she could contribute to society by being a teacher for students who shared a cultural and linguistic background similar to her own. For Adela, the teaching certificate provided her with not only a document but also the voice necessary to make an impact on the lives of bilingual students.

Adela: Definitivamente tengo que seguir estudiando. Ya sé que es un papel más, pero te da una voz. A veces la experiencia vale mucho pero para el que conoce tu trabajo, pero para las personas que te ven como una simple asistente no hay ese reconocimiento de que tu estas aportando algo, te da un estatus diferente. Definitivamente, ser maestro te da un estatus diferente, al nivel de lo que tu voz pueda ser oída. Pero en mi corazón, me siento satisfecha de lo que yo estoy haciendo porque yo sé que hay muchas maestras que yo puedo decirles y mi voz es importante. Porque saben que soy una aportación de trabajo no que soy una asistente más.

32 Pseudonym
[I definitely need to keep studying. I know it’s just a paper, but it gives you voice. Sometimes experience is worth a lot to those who know your work, but those who see you simply as an assistant, there is no recognition for what you have to offer, it gives you a different status. Being a teacher, definitely provides a higher status, where your voice can be heard. But in my heart, I feel satisfied with what I am doing because I know that there are a lot of teachers who I can talk with and what I say is important. Because they know that my work is a contribution and that I’m not simply another assistant.]
(Teaching assistant interview, 8-12-13)

Adela knew that obtaining a teaching certificate to teach in a bilingual classroom would provide her the legitimacy she needed from the larger teaching community. However, with the bilingual staff she felt heard and respected because they saw the ways in which she contributed to the education of bilingual students. Catalina and Adela complemented each other well. They engaged actively in challenging hegemonic school practices. During specials and lunch breaks, the teachers and I would sit and talk about pedagogy, bilingualism, documentaries, food, health, consumerism, socialism, and students’ humor and friendship drama.

**Equity and universality.** One day we were sitting and organizing the writing lesson for that afternoon. A school secretary entered the room carrying a couple of blue T-shirts that had students’ names and the high school graduation date of 2024 printed on them. There were only a couple of T-shirts because only a few students had paid. The teachers recalled how at the previous school, where the bilingual program was housed, if the students’ parents could not pay, either the teachers or administrators would get together to provide the shirts for every student. “¿No es justo, es de dinero, tanto gastas en otras cosas . . . el espíritu de la escuela dónde quedo ahí?” [“It’s not fair, it’s about money, so much is wasted on other things . . . where is the school spirit in that?”] (Teacher and teaching assistant informal conversation, 11-9-12). At first I thought it was symbolic of who was going to graduate and who was not, but Catalina saw it differently. For her, it highlighted class issues: those who could afford to pay for their T-shirts, and those whose families were unable to do so. In the past, to not highlight these class
differentiations, the teachers would pay for the students’ T-shirts themselves. Both teachers strongly believed in providing all students access to the same materials and opportunities for them to be successful and for them to see themselves successful in school.

Burstein and Montaño (2011) write that “Chicana/o [and Latina/o] teachers must have the knowledge and skills to identify unjust pedagogical practices and engage in the collective dismantling of unjust educational policies” (p. 38). For Catalina and Adela, identifying unjust practices was also about reinventing the ways that one thought about social systems that have not appropriately defined the opportunities, challenges and hopes for bilingual, Latina/o children. During a discussion about what it meant to be poor and resourceful, Adela described how Latinas/os find creative ways for economic and cultural survival and sustenance. For instance, a Latina/o home could be a restaurant one day and a beauty salon or a jewelry store another day. What others consider poor circumstances ridden with impossibilities, in the words of Adela, Latinas/os can be resourceful people, and they have the capacity to reinvent these circumstances into something fruitful. Real poverty is when you have absolutely nothing,

pobreza, es no tener nada . . . pobreza en mi país, es la gente que no tiene nada, no tiene nada, trabajo o comida, no tiene nada, eso es pobreza [poverty is having nothing . . . poverty in my country is when people don’t have anything, no work or food, they have nothing, that is poverty]. (Teacher and teaching assistant informal conversation, 11-9-12)

Catalina added to this idea in another interview, about how the capacity to adapt is what strengthens communities, the way that people adapt to their environments while at the same time maintaining their languages and cultural values.

Catalina: I have a system of beliefs, my value system, everybody has a value system . . . it’s a concept, its part of what I believe in . . . that everybody not only deserves opportunities in life, they are entitled to them, I mean everybody has things to offer, everybody needs to have an equal opportunity . . . I try to be fair and fairness is a good concept for me, it is a consequence of my value system. (Teacher interview, 8-14-13)
Throughout the year, there were instances where I saw how equality/equity emerged in both subtle and clear ways in the instruction and interaction with Catalina and her students. For instance, when the teacher provided materials for students, she made sure they were the same for each student. At the same time, when students needed additional help she provided them with one-on-one instruction as often as possible. During classroom math exams she would go around for the first 10 minutes, looking over students’ shoulders. She made mental notes of students’ work. After the 10 minutes she would go around again and point out where students had made a mistake, the student would look up and ask, “¿esta mal?” Catalina would nod; then the student would quickly erase and start again. If after the third attempt students continued making the same mistakes, the teacher would sit with them and go through the problem with them, or if many were making similar mistakes, she would address the problem in whole group. When I asked Catalina why she did this during the test, she answered,

I want them to learn, and they are learning in the moment, they are trying to do their best, pulling resources from wherever they got them, they are trying, and I think it’s a very good opportunity. If it’s cheating, probably it would be considered cheating in a university but I’m not at a university. (Teacher interview, 8-14-13)

I can’t describe how insightful this was to me. When I was a child, I was caught cheating in a spelling test. For the life of me, I could not remember how to spell “window,” so I had written the word on a piece of paper and put it in my cubby under my desk, when the teacher noticed I looked down at it, she humiliated me in front of the class. I was only 7. I was just beginning to learn to speak English; needless to say, I had difficulty spelling words in English. The public shaming of children is an offense to the education profession, parents, and the communities in which students come from. Justice as a universal value has been co-opted to exemplify punishing “harm-doers” (McCaslin & Breton, 2008). There is no denying that schools are also implicated in constructing misbehavior and hence a need for punishment (Meiners & Reyes, 2008).
However, there are educators who are highly aware of these injustices and work actively to prioritize critical thinking as a model for working towards justice. Catalina’s commitment to provide students with opportunities to learn illustrated how they were developing into critical independent thinkers and holders of their own knowledge.

_Estar en Familia_

The sense of _estar en familia_, being with family, emerged during the interview with both Catalina and Adela. In the Latina/o community, _familismo_ (Vega, 1990) has been conceptualized as a cultural feature in which closeness and interdependence, relying and depending on family is valued (Falicov, 2005). Not surprisingly, early research on family juxtaposed culturally diverse families with white, middle class family values and perceptions of functionality and economic mobility (Baca Zinn, 1990). In the sixties and seventies, the prevalent inquiry that guided research on family structures was determined by social achievement. However, a paradigm shift began to question the influence of social achievement with the formation of the family. This shift implicated the ways in which the family unit “acts as a conduit for the mobility of its individual members” rather than responding “passively to the forces it encounters” (Staples & Mirande, 1980, p. 888). In a similar manner, earlier paradigms of bilingual education programs were faulted for students’ lack of academic achievement in bilingual classroom contexts. Bilingual teachers in particular were positioned as solely responsible for students’ failure to achieve English proficiency for academic achievement (Menken & Solorza, 2014). In Chapter 6, I situate my discussion on the theme of _la familia_ based on the parent interviews I collected. However, for the purposes of this chapter, it is important to situate how _estar en familia_, (being with family) emerged in this bilingual classroom.
Durand (2011) defines *familismo* as “family closeness, cohesion, and interdependence, an expectation and reliance on family members—including intergenerational and extended kin—as primary sources of instrumental and emotional support, and the commitment to the family over individual needs and desires” (p. 258). *Consejos, respeto, y educación* [Nurturing advice, regard and rearing] are often included as characteristics that define aspects of the Latina/o family, in particular, Mexican immigrant families (Valdés, 1996). *Consejos*, or nurturing advice, was conceptualized as a cultural approach to Mexican immigrant family expectations, perceptions, and responses to the education of their children (Delgado Gaitan, 1994). *Consejos* become a critical tool for preparing children to become self-sufficient, learn to stay safe, and make good decisions. As an advocacy tool, *consejos* provide an empowerment process in which families could strengthen their children’s agency for solving school dilemmas. At the same time I saw the ways in which Catalina also provided *consejos* to the children at school.

Catalina provided different opportunities for students to work independently. For Catalina, independence was a way for students to empower themselves by learning and finding joy and satisfaction in coming to school and the ability to stand up for themselves by speaking up (Teacher interview, 6-26-13). Catalina used *consejos* to advise, inform, and protect students from impending deportation threats against them and their families. She did not address these threats in a moralizing manner, in terms of what may be correct or should or should not happen to undocumented people. She recognized that the threats that students discussed were real; she trusted the interpretation of the students and directed them to stay with their family. The following excerpt exemplifies this dilemma:

Kira: Salieron en las noticias que se están llevando a nosotros a México. [I saw in the news that they are taking us to Mexico.]

Catalina: ¿ . . . usted como se entero? [ . . . how do you know that?]
Various issues arose in classroom discussions regarding documentation status, gender roles, ethnic, and national identity. In this particular discussion, students explained what they saw on the news that provided them, as children of immigrants, with threatening information regarding people being taken away by la migra [immigration officers]. The teacher aconsejó, advised children to stay inside their homes if they saw that people were being taken away. Her advice shows that she recognized the dilemmas that as children of immigrants her students face, and therefore, the need to help them navigate such a threat. Maintaining an intact family has become imperative for immigrant communities. Through Catalina’s consejos about what to do in the case of an emergency involving la migra, I believe created a sense of solidarity between them. The threat of families being separated due to citizenship status is real. According to a 2012 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, more than 46,000 undocumented parents of U.S.-citizen children were deported.33 Although undocumented immigrants account for only one-fourth of all immigrants in the U.S., they are the focal point in heated immigration debates (Chavez, 2008).

About 4.5 million U.S.-born children face their own threat of deportation (Passel & Cohn, 2011). This phenomenon has led to what is termed “mixed-status” families (Passel, 2006), where at least one family member is unauthorized to live and work in the U.S. Many of the unauthorized immigrants do not begin to have families until after 2-5 years, debunking the common misconception that immigrants only come to this country to have children that become their “anchor,” protection against deportation or path to citizenship (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). As described in Chapter 4, students were clearly aware of where they stood in terms of their parents’ and their own documentation status.

As the teacher provided her own counsel to students, she also provided a space where they could articulate their own consejos to others in the classroom. These recommendations emerged from their own personal experiences at home and at school. Their participation in constructing consejos shaped the ways in which students interacted with one another in the classroom. In the following classroom excerpt, Cesar, a student who was known to be talkative, had been moved several times to different tables to facilitate a balance between his talkative personality and the academic expectations of the classroom. The teacher had moved Cesar the day before to a new table, and students were talking amongst themselves as to why Cesar had been moved. As the teacher heard the commentary, she felt it was necessary to discuss the topic as a whole class to insure that Cesar succeeded in his new seat. Before the daily morning read aloud, as students were getting situated on the carpet, Catalina sat on her chair and called on Cesar to come up and stand next to her. As students began to get quieter, the teacher asked “¿Qué podemos hacer para ayudar a Cesar?” [What can we do to help Cesar?]. Many immediately started to raise their hands, shouting out their opinions, others promised they would help him by not talking and then came up to interlock pinkies with Cesar for a “pinky promise”
that signified that they were going to promise to help him by not talking to him when the teacher was instructing. Not talking was not the goal of the teacher, so she asked for other input from the class:

Abril: [Ponerlo] en una silla para que no hable. [Put him alone on a chair so he won’t talk.]

Catalina: ¿Así solo? [All alone?]

Cristian: Lo puedes poner en la mesa redonda. [You can put him at the round table.]

Kamila: En una mesa solito. [All alone at a table.]

Damián: Castigarlo. [Punish him.]

Abel: Para siempre. [Forever.]

Cesar: Eso es para cuando esta viejo. [That is for old age.]

Damián: Que no vaya a la escuela por tres días. [Get suspended from school for three days.]

Cesar: Casi no me gusta la escuela. [I really don’t like school.]

Catalina: ¿El asunto es aislarlo? [So, the point is to isolate him?]

Julián: Ponerle tape. [Put tape on him.]

Catalina: La verdad, verdadera, eso es como tortura, un tape imaginario, ninguna persona tiene derecho de ponerle tape. [The real truth is, that seems like torture, an imaginary tape, no one has the right to put tape on him.]

(Cesar is quiet, listening with intention, he looks serious and quiet, he is not smiling like he usually does)

Catalina: ¿Con quien va hablar en esa mesa? [Who is he going to talk to at that table?]

Jovan: ¡Con yo! ¡Con yo! [With me! With me!]

(Catalina looks over at Adela and me, and everyone starts laughing.) (Classroom fieldnotes, 11-9-12)
During a plática, an informal conversation of what occurred that day, Adela told the teacher and I about how another student, Clemente, had suggested to put donkey ears on him, which is commonly known as a public humiliation tactic. This imagery had surfaced many times during a popular Mexican show “El Chavo del Ocho,” that the children would watch with their parents (Elgueta Ruiz et al., no date). El Chavo del Ocho is a comedic Mexican television series for adults, played by adults impersonating children. The premise of the show is about the tribulations of an orphan child and the people who he engages with in the vecindad, a poor working class Mexican neighborhood. There are also episodes set in a classroom where el Chavo attends school with the children of the vecindad. There were episodes where the teacher scorned the children for interrupting or not doing their work.

It is important to examine how students verbalized ideas of humiliation, constraint, and isolation as solutions to talking too much in the classroom, which was formulated to be a “problem” in classroom management discourse (Olivo, 2008). During an interview with Adela, I came to realize where students could have possibly conceived some of their suggestions regarding isolating students if they talked too much. Adela, who had also been their teacher assistant in kindergarten, described how Abel and Cesar were separated from the class for either talking too much or getting into arguments with other students. Abel tended to get into quarrels with others, and so in kindergarten he was moved to sit at a single desk facing the wall near the smart board. The way that his body was located meant that he could only face forward comfortably. Adela remembered how he would constantly turn around to see his classmates. He would have to elevate his voice for others to hear him, and then would be reprimanded for it. Cesar, on the other hand, worked well with others, but tended to talk too much. To find a balance for Cesar, the teacher placed him with another student who was very quiet. Adela thought that

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34 See http://www.chavodel8.com
the teacher was trying to achieve some sort of balance by placing a talkative and quiet student together. The point here is not to criticize the kindergarten teacher, but to demonstrate how students utilize their personal and prior experiences to actively participate in constructing possible solutions for perceived problems in school. In the case of finding solutions for “talkative” students, the class made their recommendations for helping Abel and Cesar. However, what is important to note is how Catalina responded to their propositions, by highlighting how certain recommendations were cruel and would lead to seclusion. As students observed Cesar’s usual joyous self slowly transform into a quiet and shy boy that no longer liked school, Jovan shouted out that he would likely be the one talking with him. In this way, neither Cesar nor Abel were constructed as the only talkative students in the class. The teachers looked at each other and started to laugh, and soon after, their laughter became contagious to the entire class, illustrating how they all realized that they were no different than Cesar and Abel.

**Noise and humor.** Catalina said it best when she stated; “yo nunca he tenido clases silenciosas” [“I’ve never had quiet classrooms”], and Adela confirmed that Catalina was known for having noisy classrooms, and joked that she probably had experienced some hearing loss (Teacher and teaching assistant interview, 11-9-12). This example illustrated how the noise in the classroom was not perceived as a problem to be eradicated but rather indicative of a productive and positive atmosphere. Traditionally, it is believed that a quiet classroom is one in which learning is taking place, whereas a loud classroom is afflicted with misbehaving students and a teacher with poor classroom management skills (Kasten, 1997). Disruption has been described to be a contributing factor to classroom mismanagement, where certain student behaviors are perceived as disrespectful or acting out (Hurd, 2004). However, cultural synchronization has been utilized to help explain how teachers utilize nontraditional techniques
that consider the cultural context in which certain behaviors or actions become either appropriate or inappropriate between students and teachers (Monroe & Obidah, 2004). The majority of studies on classroom instruction have addressed the disconnect between home and school practices through a curricular lens rather than through a classroom management approach. Even fewer studies have observed classroom environments through a Chicana feminist approach of *sitios y lenguas* where social and discursive practices adhere to all voices counting, no single truth, and where interruptions are read as interjections of new knowledge. By cultivating these practices in an educational context, the classroom becomes an extension of home, *estar en familia*, being with family.

Later that same afternoon in November, the three of us were sitting at the half moon table having a plática about student dynamics and the noticeably elevated noise in the classroom. Adela was recalling how students felt very comfortable in the class, enough to tell jokes, funny stories, and speak loudly without being chastised. The following excerpt is taken from that plática:

Adela: ¿Sabes de lo que me doy cuenta? De que se sienten en confianza con nosotros . . . con nosotros se sienten muy en familia. [You know what I’m noticing? That they feel comfortable with us . . . with us they feel like they are with family.]

Catalina: Es que lo que tenemos que hacer, es que el grupo social modifique la actitud de los niños. Lo que tiene fuerza es el grupo social, eso es lo que tenemos que crear, pero nos tenemos que dejar de reír, pero como hacerle con el? Es muy difícil dejar de reír de todas las payasadas que hace. [What we have to do, is to have the social group modify the children’s attitude. The strength is within the social group. That is what we have to create, but we have to stop laughing, but how can we do that with him? It’s so difficult not to laugh at the silly things that he does.] (Teacher and teaching assistant interview, 11-9-12)

The teacher felt that perhaps they were encouraging the noise too much, but she could not help but laugh at the payasadas, comedic occurrences from her students, particularly those of
Abel and Cesar. The humor in the classroom was not a prescribed way of attempting to engage students; rather it emerged in the relationship that the teachers developed with the students. Research on humor and Latina/o bilingual students experience in school is very limited, almost nonexistent. What has been researched about humor in Latina/o communities is how it is utilized to ease tensions (Bermudez & Mancini, 2013; Falicov, 2001). However, Rosario Carillo (2006) explored *humor casero mujerista*, womanist humor of the home of a group of Latina women who utilized everyday humor as a way to push back against oppressive public and private sectors by reclaiming their collective knowledge. They did so by playing with linguistic features, *dichos* (sayings) and wit that attributed to their awareness of class and gender relations in their place of work and home. This in turn facilitated their participation in social change through their claim to agency as speaking subjects. The *mujeres* challenged the narratives in which Latina women have been objectified and ridiculed, by claiming spaces at work and at home that highlighted the ways they negotiated to overcome their social class and gendered positions.

Much of the research on humor in education has been in elementary school contexts, the ways in which humor possibly promotes learning, and positive experiences with others in the learning environment (Dowling & Fain, 1999). Most of these studies in elementary contexts began in the 1970s (Hauck & Thomas, 1972; Tamashiro, 1979). Recent studies look at college level settings and take more quantitative quasi-experimental approaches and developmental angles (Dowling, 2014; Garner, 2006; Wanzer, Frymier & Irwin, 2010). Garner’s (2006) study critiqued previous studies based on their anecdotal nature and weak methodology. Weaknesses in methodology were based on the low number of participants and lack of comparison groups. His study consisted of college age students viewing three 40-minute lectures on research and statistics. The participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups with one group viewing
lectures with humor segments inserted at the beginning and periodically throughout the lesson, depending on the content and suitability. He found that the group who viewed the sessions with humor retained more information. The delivery of the content, through asynchronous video, was practical in the sense that more college level courses are being offered through this avenue. However, in an elementary school context, having a real person teach a group of students continues to be ideal for teaching.

Current research with children and their enactment of humor addresses concerns regarding adult researchers interpreting how children’s experience with humor serves as a coping mechanism for life’s stressors (Dowling, 2002; 2014). Dowling’s (2014) qualitative research study employed focus groups to collect students’ perspectives about their use of humor. Most of the participants were of White and middle class background. Her analysis confirmed how children utilized humor to cope with general stress. The older children in the group mentioned how humor was something that made them feel better, while the younger second grade children said that laughing at something funny was humor. The level of complexity in humorous situations depended on the developmental level of the children, as they were able to describe examples that would produce laughter and joy.

My study did not pursue humor as a prescribed teaching tool, nor capture cognitive patterns within students’ use of humor, but rather was part of the lenguas of the everyday that provoked laughter and joy for the teachers and students in the classroom. In the following classroom excerpt, students had been working on a math unit for approximately an hour. They were writing out complete mathematical sentences in Spanish, which started to consume most of that afternoon. The teacher started to rush students to complete their sentences as they had very little time for other afternoon activities. One student was beginning to get exasperated with the
lesson, sharing with the teacher that he had a headache. The teacher’s response to the student made Adela laugh, as they appeared to have a mutual understanding of the daily nuances of teaching, the daily nudging and encouragement that students needed to stay engaged with the material.

Jovan: Maestra me duele la cabeza. [Teacher, I have a headache.]

Catalina: A mi también, me esta dando un dolor tremendo. [So do I, I’m getting a tremendous pain]

(Adela laughs at the teachers comment)

Catalina: Dale niño, dale, dale, hasta que no la escriba no se escriben las cosas, justo cuando usted escribe se terminan de escribir las cosas, dale. [Come along child, go, go, not until you start writing will things get written, as soon as you write things will be written, go.]

Catalina: Dale, seis lápices y tres grapadoras. Déjese de borronear tanto, que esta buscando con la borroneada?...Sígale, ya se le olvido lo que tiene que escribir? [Go on, six pencils and three staplers. Stop scribbling so much, what are you looking for by erasing? Go on, did you forget what you had to write?]

Clemente: Maestra, Adriana te dijo mamí. [Teacher, Adriana called you “mom.”]

Catalina: ¿Dale, que quiero hacer el calendario y los feliz cumpleaños, quien me puede decir como tengo que escribir la tortuga? Digo ... [la pregunta]. [Keep going, I want to do the calendar and sing happy birthday to the birthday girl. Who can tell me how to write the turtle? I mean ... (the question).]

(All laugh)

Damián: La tortuga . . . [The turtle . . .]

(Everyone including the teachers and myself are laughing)

Catalina: Es que parece que están trabajando como tortugas. [It appears as if you are all working like turtles.] (Classroom fieldnotes, 10-15-12)

Throughout her instruction, Catalina would play with complicated linguistic features as she moved students along curriculum units. In this example, the teacher inadvertently had a Freudian slip from her growing impatience from either the prescribed mathematics unit and/or
students short attention span, something common for 6 and 7 year olds after an already long
school day. For students, the replacement of tortuga [turtle], for the word question was funny in
the sense that it was a “humorous response to incongruence actions and objects” (Dowling, 2014,
p. 122). In other words, the word turtle in place of question was incongruent within the context
of the math lesson. The teacher had the need to explain her slip of the tongue, her unconscious
thoughts produced by growing tired of the speed of the lesson and urgency to continue on to
other tasks.

Instances of the humor in the classroom were also evident in the interaction between the
teachers as mentioned at the beginning of the excerpt. Humor contributed to the sense of estar en
familia, in that it facilitated a positive mood in the classroom environment (Garner, 2006). Adela
shared her perspective on another factor that may have contributed to the elevated noise in the
classroom; she described how it felt to be part of a big family.

Tu cuando estas en tu casa, como te sientes? [Yo me siento] confortable, feliz, grito, lloro, porque estoy en mi casa, los niños se sienten so comfortable . . . y todos hablamos al mismo tiempo, todos conversamos, y reímos al mismo tiempo entonces yo creo que ellos se sentían muy confortables, muy felices. [When you are at home, how do you feel? [I feel] comfortable, happy, yell, cry, because I’m at home, the children feel so comfortable . . . that we all talk at the same time, we all talk and laugh at the same time, so then I think that they felt so comfortable and happy.] (Teaching Assistant interview, 8-12-13)

This level of comfort also emerged for Catalina when she described how having a
positive relationship with students enabled her to hold students accountable for their own
learning.

Catalina: Que tengo tanta relación positiva que yo puedo gritar, que me puedo enojar, yo tengo que establecer una relación positiva [con los niños]. No la establezco solamente el primer día, tengo que mantener una relación positiva para tener el derecho de decir “no, eso esta mal, no, hace me esto, no haz lo otro, estoy super enojada con voz” entonces lo sienten.

[I have a very strong positive relationship that I can yell, get upset, I have to establish a positive relationship (with students). I don’t only establish that the first day, but maintain that positive relationship that I have earned the right to
say, “no, that is wrong, no do this or do that, I’m very upset with you” and they feel it.] (Teacher Interview, 6-26-13)

For the teacher, teaching was a commitment that she was making to her students. This commitment was not without expectations from the teacher, students, and parents. Teaching was a complex endeavor for Catalina and Adela. Adela described that being a teacher meant being a psychologist and a social worker:

Adela: Muchos vienen con problemas diferentes, yo creo que todas nos sentimos muy involucradas en eso, conocemos la cultura, nuestras propias experiencias, es como una gran familia. Eso vi en casi todas las maestras lo he visto, somos muy consciente, al menos yo lo percibo así. El problema de uno es el problema de todos, que eso paso pero vamos a seguir para delante o vamos hacer esto, estamos siempre ahí escuchando. Estamos abiertas para que ellos se sientan bien hablar de lo que quieren.

[Many come with different problems. I think that we all feel involved in that, we know the culture, (from) our own experiences, and it’s like a big family. I have seen that in many teachers, we are very conscious, at least that is how I see it. A problem for one is a problem for everyone. If something happened, we are going to move forward or we are going to do something about it. We are always listening, available for them, so that they feel comfortable to talk to us about anything.] (Teacher interview, 8-12-13)

The commitment to teaching became synonymous to estar en familia, being with family.

Catalina described her own commitment to students and the families through her teaching:

Catalina: Creo que lo que hago tiene algún valor y puede contribuir a que los chicos encuentren su voz, se puedan desarrollar, aprender a leer a escribir en ingles y español, y aprendan a defenderse, a valorarse.

[I think that what I do has some value and can contribute to how children can find their voice, where they can grow, learn to read and write in English and Spanish, and learn to defend themselves, to value themselves.] (Teacher interview, 11-16-12)

The teachers’ fierce commitment at times may have come across a bit abrasive to outsiders and students themselves. She explained to me that when she scorned them for not paying attention, it was not because she was upset with them; rather, she was frustrated with herself because she was not reaching them. She found fault in herself, not them. One of the main concerns that Catalina had was that she felt that aside from kindergarten, first grade was the
definitive time where they would get the majority of literacy instruction in Spanish. By the second semester in the second grade they would be getting all English instruction and literacy. If students demonstrated an advanced level of English proficiency they would be “exited” from the bilingual program and go into the regular classroom regardless of the grade level. For this reason, she valued the elevated noise and humor because it illustrated a sense of estar en familia. She felt it was essential that they use their language skills and knowledge to prepare them for when they may not have the opportunity to access them.

**Humor and tension.** Similarly to Prieto’s (2013) critique of familismo, as a “simultaneous source of strength and oppression” (Unpublished dissertation, p. 71), estar en familia is a site of struggle and affirmation, where some voices are heard and others silenced, deliberately and unintentionally. As classroom members, the teachers and students experienced and dealt with these conflicts in various ways. I came to know later that Adela and Catalina had not always gotten along the way they did when I was in the classroom. I interviewed Adela at the end of the school year, where she elaborated more on her relationship with Catalina.

Adela:  
[A Catalina] le toma mucho tiempo para adaptarse a las personas, y te lo digo por experiencia. A mi me tomo ¡Uf! Al comienzo muy mal . . . se me hacia tan difícil, años me ha tomado entender, como es su personalidad, es como rudamente, un ogro pero con un corazón de panda. ¿Me entiendes? Creo que todo el mundo no ve eso.  
[It takes Catalina a long time to adapt to people, I tell you from experience. It took me, ugh! At the beginning it was very bad . . . she seemed so difficult, it took me years to understand her personality. She’s rough, like an ogre but with a heart of a Panda. Do you understand?]  
(Teacher Assistant interview, 8-12-13)

There were times in the classroom when I could see and sense the tension that Adela described, and I felt uncomfortable writing details as I tried to respect those moments and not utilize them to make assumptions about their personality or relationship. What I can say is that on numerous instances, the use of humor alleviated these frictions. Other tensions arose at the
beginning of the year due to conflicting schedules with Reading Recovery,\textsuperscript{35} and the “enrichment” program. Students who had scored the lowest in reading would go every morning with the literacy specialist. For the enrichment program, approximately one third of the students went with Adela to work on phonics. The remaining two-thirds of the class, including a third from the bilingual kindergarten class, worked with Catalina on phonics, word play, and sing alongs. On one particular day the teacher had asked students why they came to school. A kindergartener said he came to be quiet. The first graders quickly interjected by stating that kids come to school to learn. Learning was a way of life in this class and the teacher’s relationship varied with each student. I noticed that Catalina had an instant connection with students who tended to be more vocal, but felt somewhat uncomfortable with the quieter ones. One student in particular really pushed Catalina out of her comfort zone, as she explains below,

Catalina: Me costó porque me ponía muy nerviosa que no me contestara, sobre todo porque es un juego de poder, así lo interpreté yo. Quizás yo me tengo que salir de mis zapatos y pensar de otras maneras, otras maneras que se puede, y eso mejoró cuando Emma empezó a leer mejor y hacer mejor en la escuela, y en ese momento empezó a levantar la mano . . . supongo que lo que ella necesitaba era tener confianza, era sentirse capaz de hacerlo, y yo no supe darle suficientes oportunidades como para hacerlo.

[It took me awhile because I would get nervous that she would not respond, especially because it was a power dynamic, that is how I interpreted it. Perhaps I have to get out of my own shoes and think in other ways, other possibilities. That is when Emma started to read and do better in school, that is when she started to raise her hand . . . I suppose what she needed was to have confidence, to feel that she was capable and I did not know how to provide her with opportunities do that.] (Teacher Informal Interview, 6-26-13)

The teacher attributed Emma’s improved academic performance to her newfound participation in the classroom. For instance, Emma exerted more confidence and demonstrated it by volunteering to go up to the board and work on math problems, or by actively participating during whole class discussions. The teacher also realized that what she had done with Abel during the astronaut

\textsuperscript{35} Reading Recovery is a short-term reading intervention program designed to help students with reading difficulties.
discussion, she also needed to do with Emma. She needed to create opportunities for Emma to feel confident, accomplished, and validated. The teacher was cognizant of the fact that doing so would require a different tactic that would appeal to Emma’s personality:

Catalina: Les voy a decir una cosa, Emma va saber tanto, que todo lo que sabe, van a ser como brillantes, van a decir “¡Ah! ¡Esa muchacha es brillante! Le salen brillos en la cabeza porque sabe tanto, pero tanto, que todo lo que le sale, son brillitos en el pelo!”
[The teacher was trying to motivate Emma by calling attention to her “brillitos” that were coming out of her head from thinking and learning so much. Students bought into the idea that brillitos came from learning because they could see a brillito on her hair. Little by little the teacher’s relationship with Emma improved, as did her relationships with the other quiet students in the class. Speaking up became an important theme for all members of the classroom.]

David: Tiene mucho pelo. [She has a lot of hair.]

Students looking at Emma’s hair, perhaps looking for the sparkles

Catalina: Va ver usted, ¿se acuerdan que ella dijo en la mañanita que no sabia que era “winter,” pero ya aprendió que quiere decir “summer?” Fíjese, uno de esos ya lo aprendió. . . . los brillitos que le van a salir de tanto pensar en la cabeza. [You will see, remember that she said in the morning that she did not know what "winter," was in Spanish] but she learned what “summer” means? Notice that she just learned one [of the seasons], glitter will come out of her head for thinking so much.]

Student: ¡Wow, si, si yo veo uno chiquito! [Wow, yeah, I see a little one!]

(Everyone laughs) (Classroom fieldnotes, 1-18-13)
members engaged in the construction of *estar en familia*. Through my observations I began to see how the classroom participants slowly developed as *familia* unit, in which everyone had an important role to play and how each relied on each other for learning.

The theoretical lens of *sitios y lenguas* allowed me to see the ways in which the bilingual teachers’ agency materialized through a common theme of maintaining *compromiso*, a strong commitment to each other and their students by highlighting elements of being a teacher, *ser maestra* and creating a space of belonging, *estar en familia* for students. The commitment that the teachers had towards students’ learning was not limited to teaching them how to do math or learn how to read, but to speak up, stand confidently, and engage in alternative possibilities of knowledge production. In *ser maestra*, the teachers’ practices of equity and universality guided the ways in which they were able to provide opportunities to encourage critical and independent thinking that in turn legitimized students’ language and cultural knowledge. Constructing a sense of *estar en familia* facilitated learning; students felt comfortable to express, play and joke as they engaged in daily activities. The elevated noise in the classroom would sway back and forth, as equilibrium was achieved by the humor that alleviated the tensions between all classroom members.

Through teachers’ *consejos* and mutual *respeto*, the *educación* was also transformed in the classroom by creating a *sitio*, a space created by specific ways of participation, interactions and response to students’ *lenguas*. By cultivating *lenguas* in the classroom, the teachers supported students sharing their cultural and home knowledge, by connecting their personal experience to knowledge, and by extending on alternative and plausible ideas of such knowledge. In the following findings chapter, Chapter 6: *Parental Knowledge*, I examine the
ways in which *sitios y lenguas* helped me see how parents understood their role in the education of their children.
Chapter 6

Parent and Knowledge

Utilizing sitios y lenguas in my study enabled me to see and identify the ways in which students, teachers, and families created spaces that were conducive to producing knowledge situated in the experiences of the every day. In Chapter 4, I discussed how the classroom culture provided ample opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning through their home language and by connecting their cultural knowledge with academic knowledge. Chapter 5 highlighted the ways in which the teachers facilitated these opportunities for students. In this chapter, I introduce the interview data from the focal children’s parents, which I outlined in Chapter 3. I conducted a cross data analysis of the parent data with the classroom and teacher interview data to arrive at the four major themes that I present below.

The parents’ community and home became vehicles for their children’s learning. Sitios y lenguas as a framework allowed me to see how parents understood their subject positions as immigrant working class individuals with U.S.-born children. Interviews with parents were conducted to acquire a glimpse of their home norms and practices described in their own lenguas. Lenguas refers to the ways in which parents discussed the home language as a tool for teaching social and cultural values to their children, which included the importance of bilingualism for communication purposes and identity formation. The sitios in the home were established by their parental practices that facilitated lenguas in the home. These functioned to bring voice to consejos, cultural knowledge and family history, education and academic support. In other words, sitios at home materialized in ways that parents made sense of; it allowed for them to inculcate social and cultural values, and practices to their children. In many ways, these values
were in a constant flux and adaptation based on their own experiences and understandings as immigrants living in the U.S.

All of the parents that I interviewed articulated the importance of inculcating and passing on family values and practices to their children. They emphasized that their home language was utilized as the central vehicle in transferring these values and practices. Moreover, the parents’ \textit{sitios y lenguas} came through by how they spoke their truth about their experiences, and how these shaped their ideas about family, education, and citizenship. The four major themes that emerged from this study are interlaced with class, gender, race/ethnicity and language, and include: (a) \textit{La Familia y la Educación [Family and Schooling]}; (b) \textit{Educación y los Papeles [Schooling and Legalization]}; (c) \textit{Los Papeles y la Lengua [Legalization and Language]}; and (d) \textit{Inculcar Valores [Instill Values]}. In the following section, I discuss these themes and explain how they overlapped, thus, revealing the complex ways in which race, class, and gender identity constructions informed parents’ experiences in the U.S. Specifically, I show through their narratives how they supported their children’s schoolwork, and their emergent bilingualism and biliteracy, in non-traditional ways.

\textit{La Familia y la Educación}

An analysis guided by \textit{sitios y lenguas} helped me conceptualize the notion of \textit{la familia [the family]} and how parents taught their children the value of \textit{la educación [schooling]}. In other words, the home \textit{sitios} for which \textit{la familia y la educación} were constructed became foundational to how they understood and responded to their classed, raced, and gendered experiences as mixed status families.\textsuperscript{36} In both the Mexican and U.S. contexts, \textit{la familia} was a complicated and contradictory unit for the parents. During the interviews, some of the parents discussed their relationship with their own fathers and mothers, their experiences with schooling, and low-

\textsuperscript{36} Definition: mixed status.
income status. Economic mobility and obtaining public education became a major conduit for coming to the U.S. for many parents. Attaining an education became synonymous with upward mobility. In this section, I begin by discussing the parents’ testimonios regarding their schooling experiences in Mexico and development of la educación, as well as how their own schooling experiences served as consejos for their children in the U.S. (Valdés, 1996). These consejos were identified by how the home knowledge, de la casa a la escuela [from home to school], emerged in the classroom. Other prominent values that emerged were respeto, respect for others, in particular for adults and those with authority (i.e., teachers) and tareas, the ways in which parents participated in the education of their children was by helping them with their schoolwork (Valdés, 1996).

La escuela en México [Schooling experiences in Mexico]. The majority of the parents interviewed in this study talked about their lack of opportunities to attend school in Mexico. Specifically, they shared how they did not have the economic support or encouragement to continue with their schooling pursuits. Out of the five fathers I interviewed, three of them referred to their schooling experiences with economic issues. They shared how their schooling was disrupted because of little family support and dire economic circumstances. Elementary and junior high education is free in Mexico; however, students are expected to pay for their own school textbooks and any essential materials, including school supplies. For students who cannot afford to cover these costs, some have access to the “libro gratuito”37 Subsequent programs have included a wide national push for “Hacia un país de lectores” [Towards a nation of readers], and an expansion of school libraries that provide high quality literature. Education beyond the

37 A program implemented through the Comisión Nacional de Libros de Texto Gratuitos (CONALITEG), [National Commission for Free Textbooks]. The program is funded by the Mexican federal government and provides free textbooks (in over thirty-seven indigenous languages and braille), to public and private elementary schools across the country. See: http://www.conaliteg.gob.mx/
primary levels is divided into two sectors, either high school or vocational school. In vocational school, many students learn a special trade, where as a traditional high school education prepares them for a university education.

The lack of schooling access was painfully evident in their testimonios. Adriana’s father, for instance, came from Oaxaca, a state in which children receive an average of 6 years of education, and where more than 20% of the population over the age of 15 is illiterate (Juárez, 2008). In the state of Hidalgo, where Abel’s dad grew up, the corruption of the Mexican education system garnered worldwide attention in 2013, when the former teachers’ union representative, Elba Esther Gordillo earned the title of Mexico’s most corrupt individual. There were many instances during the interviews that parents referred to Mexico as having a bad economy and corrupt politicians. The excerpts below come from two of the fathers who had closely similar experiences where their schooling was interrupted due to their family’s financial situation.

P. Adriana: Yo me acuerdo que yo quería seguir estudiando pero la economía de México no me lo permitió. Yo iba bien en la primaria y secundaria pero uno mismo va viendo cómo está la situación y al ver lo que te vas a enfrentar y ves que no hay ayuda por eso no pude salir adelante. Tenía hermanos pero no tuve apoyo de ellos.
[I remember that I wanted to continue my studies but the Mexican economy did not permit that. I did well in elementary and middle school, but you see how the situation is and you see what you will have to confront and there is no help that is why I could not get ahead. I have brothers but they did not support me.]

P. Abel: A los doce años en la primaria trabajaba para comprar libros. Allá [en México] los papas no son como aquí que [dejen que los hijos solo] estudien, los papas quieren que ya trabajen.
[At the age of twelve I worked to buy books for school. Over there [in Mexico] the parents are not like here [U.S] who [let their children just] study, parents want them to work.]

Adriana’s father described how even though he had siblings who could have helped finance his education they did not support him. He strongly believed that education could have provided him with economic advancement. The lack of family support for his schooling and the poor Mexican economy propelled him to come to the U.S. I came to learn through their testimonios that their experiences comprised of a lot of hard work to obtain an education in Mexico. Although there are several examples of people of color in the U.S. living in poverty, working multiple jobs still provides little relief for families and their children (Pérez & De la Rosa Salazar, 1997); the fathers saw hope for their children in the U.S. As a 12-year-old, Abel’s father had to work to buy his own textbooks and school supplies. For him, the U.S. represented different opportunities; children were not required to work for their own school supplies, at least as long as working parents had the means to provide their children with the necessary list of materials that are required at the beginning of each academic year.39

In the following excerpts, a theme that emerged from the interviews with the mothers was how they attributed the lack of support they received for their schooling to their fathers’ cultural and ideological formations of gender, specifically in regards to how these women perceived their father-daughter relationships with their respective fathers.

M. David: [En México] uno de mujer y las esposas son para que se queden en la casa con los hijos y pues no es igual que aquí, que uno de mujer, si quiere, uno trabaja. Se escucha mal decirlo pero mi papá fue un hombre como que no le daba mucho importancia a eso, a la escuela. El no quería que estudiáramos. [(In Mexico) one as a woman and the wives are [expected] to stay at home with the kids and well it’s not the same here, that if one is a woman, if you want, you can work . . . It sounds bad to say, my dad was a man who did not give much importance to school. He did not want us to study.]

M. Emma: Yo iba muy bien. Tenía buenas calificaciones. Nunca llegué a estar en el cuadro de honor, pero me hubiera gustado seguir estudiando. Lo que pasa es

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39 According to the United Stated Department of labor, anyone under 16 years of age is protected against employment that is detrimental to the safety, health and that denies access to educational opportunities. See http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/youthlabor/
que mi papá era muy machista y él miraba a otras niñas besándose con sus
novios afuera de la secundaria y el no quería eso para nosotros entonces por
eso nos lo prohibía [ir a la escuela].
[I did very well. I had good grades. I was never in the honor roll, but I wish I
had continued studying. What happened was that my dad was very chauvinist.
He saw other girls kissing their boyfriends in high school and did not want
that for us, which is why he prohibited (us from going to school).]

Both mothers attributed their limited schooling to their fathers’ position regarding the
role, appropriate behavior, and place of women in society. Rather than the substitution of modern
ideologies over traditional values, there is an array of underlying circumstances and adaptations
that contribute to the ever-changing roles of family members (Baca Zinn, 1980). Damian’s
mother talked about her fathers’ alcoholism and its affect on her childhood and although she
indicated that it was uncomfortable to speak negatively about her father, she felt that she spoke
truth to her experience. She described how in Mexico, women were only to be wives and
mothers, whereas in the U.S., a woman could decide whether or not she wanted to work in order
to provide for her children. From her ideological framework, a woman in the U.S. could take on
many roles and not be limited to that of wife and/or mother; she could also become a provider, a
role usually reserved for men (Valdés, 1996). However, for many working class families, these
gender assignations for work within and outside the household become more nuanced, as both
parents have to work to get by financially in an ever-changing economy (Baca Zinn, 1990;

As Sofia Villenas and Melissa Moreno (2001) explain, the female body and sexuality are
restrained under a belief system that women are a man’s property. Additionally, there is a high
value placed on a woman’s virginity. Mothers and fathers provide their daughters with consejos
to refrain from libertinaje, promiscuity. Emma’s mother had a tenuous relationship with her
father, as she got older he did not permit her to continue to go to school. According to her, her
father perceived school as a site that encouraged inappropriate behavior with boys. Proper
behavior was required and this message was communicated through *consejos* and by confining her to the home. Although obtaining a formal education appeared to promise economic sustenance for Emma’s mother, the risk of “improper behavior” outweighed the benefits of obtaining a formal education. For Emma’s mother, school was a contradictory place, one where she sought refuge from home but also feared because of the violence towards children. She recalled how a teacher struck her cousin on the arm, (to the extent that he/she made her bleed), because she had not completed a homework assignment.

*De la casa a la escuela* [Home knowledge in the classroom]. It was evident in the classroom that parents talked to their children about their schooling experiences in Mexico. Children would often share *consejos* from home in whole group and small group discussions. One morning, as students were working on their journal prompt entries, Catalina started to give them a countdown to finish their entries. Adriana had been using a ruler to make lines to write her entries. A student at Adriana’s table asked his classmates if they knew what teachers in Mexico did to students with rulers. All students nodded indicating their awareness that teachers in Mexico used rulers to hit students who were disobedient. Adriana signaled Catalina to come over so that she could tell her what they had been discussing at her table. In the following classroom fieldnotes, Adriana and other students explained to Catalina their parents’ experiences of what had happened to them in school in Mexico when they had misbehaved.

Catalina:  ¿Ah, que bueno, podemos importar esa costumbre de México? [Ah, sounds good, can we implement that Mexican custom?]

(Adela laughs)

Catalina:  Quiero compartir una cosa que dijo Adriana, que a lo mejor lo podemos instituir en la clase. [I want to share something that Adriana said, that we might be able to establish in the class.]
Catalina: Los titulares para el día dice, acá me viene Adriana que en la casa, aquí quedese parada, los titulares del día dicen... que la mamá, [que] le dijo? [The current events for today are, we have Adriana here that has information from home, stand here, the current events for today... what did your mom tell you?]

Adriana: En México si no trabajas te pegan con esta cosa (points at the ruler). [In Mexico if you don’t do your work they hit you with this thing.]

(Students talking)

Catalina: ¿Bien sentados, fíjense, y quien le pega a quien? [Ok, stay seated, look, and who hits who?]

Adriana: No, si no trabajas le pegan. [No, if you don’t work, they hit you.]

Jacobo: La maestra. [The teacher.]

Catalina: ¿El director le pega a la maestra? [The principal hits the teacher?] Adriana: No, la maestra pega.[No, the teacher hits.]

Catalina: Guao, son malas las de México. [Wow, teachers are mean in Mexico.]

Whether or not all parents experienced this form of corporal punishment in school, students were being told about these experiences as a way of contrasting their schooling experiences in the U.S. to those endured by their parents in the Mexican schools they attended. I recall how my parents told me similar stories when I was young to motivate me to do well in school, and to appreciate that I had the opportunity to attend school in the U.S.

The stories that parents told their children about student discipline in Mexican schools served as a form of consejo, which I will address momentarily. The parents’ schooling experiences compelled them to seek better educational opportunities for their children’s education. During one particularly noisy day in March, Catalina was reading a story aloud; however, during the read aloud students were talking to each other, getting up and not paying much attention. Catalina initially warned them that if they continued with their inattentiveness that they were going to be sent to sit at their tables with their heads down. David interjected by
stating that he wanted to learn instead, while another student added that he too wanted to learn because his mother asked him everyday what he did at school. A motivating factor for their statements may have been that neither student wanted to tell their parents that they had been reprimanded for not being respectful. When Adela came back to the classroom from another teaching commitment, Catalina told her that they were acting like mariposas, or butterflies, moving about during the read aloud. Rather than having them sit at their tables and remain unproductive, Catalina passed out a piece of paper and began dictating a letter to their parents about how their behavior prevented them from learning and participating in the Tiendita. The Tiendita [little store] was the First Grade Store. It taught students how money was earned (and spent) through the different classroom duties each student performed throughout the week. At the end of each “work” week students could purchase items at the Tiendita. (Classroom fieldnotes, 3-1-13). During an interview with Julián’s mom, notes sent home like the one Catalina had students write above, detailing student behavior and academic performance, surfaced in the conversation,

M. Julián: Yo le digo a Julián de que se la voy a firmar pero es la única y que ya no quiero que me traiga más malas notas, (le digo) “trata de portarte bien,” “si, es que yo platico mucho,” y que juega y que por eso lo regañan. Y entonces yo le digo que en cuanto la maestra le de su hoja de trabajo que agarre su lápiz y se ponga hacer su tarea y que no se ponga a jugar, o platicar para que a él le sobre tiempo y que la maestra no [lo] regañe. Que la maestra diga “guao Julián si hizo su tarea rápido” que la maestra diga de que tú le estás echando ganas, pero si te agarras la hoja y el lápiz y te pones a platicar pues la maestra se enoja.

[I tell Julián that I will sign [the note] but it’s the only time and that I do not want him to bring me more bad notes, (I tell him) "try to behave," "yes, it’s just that I talk a lot," and that he plays and that is why he gets scolded. And then I tell him that once the teacher gives him the worksheet, for him to grab his pencil and get to work and not to start playing or talk[ing] so that he has time and that the teacher won’t have to scold (him). Instead, the teacher will say "wow, Julián quickly completed his task" that the teacher will feel that you're putting effort, but if you get the worksheet and pencil and you [continue] talking that is why the teacher gets angry.]
She began to explain how she reminds Julián that he has to do his work and demonstrate to the teacher that he can do well in school. Rather than defend Julián talkative behavior, she interpreted the teachers note as an opportunity to provide Julián with a *consejo*. Concha Delgado Gaitán’s (1994) research with Latina/o families examines how *consejos* is an “informal narrative mode of supporting their children . . . that held them responsible for respectful and cooperative behavior and for good academic performance” (p. 305). In other words, children were just as accountable to their learning as was the teacher. Other parents held the teacher with high regard as well; for instance, Damián’s mother had a positive perception of her son’s teacher, she explains,

M. Damián: Fíjese que es una cosa de admirar, porque cuando uno es de edad, no tienen la paciencia, pero ella ya se ve que esta grande, todavía tiene paciencia con niños chiquitos, que son bien inquietos a esta edad, y pues yo admiro su fortaleza de que este navegando con estos niños. [It’s something to be admired, because when someone is that age, they do not have the patience, she looks older, and she still has patience with children so small, who are very unsettling at that age, and well, I admire her strength to deal with these children]

She explained in the excerpt above how she admired the teacher’s work with very young and lively children and the patience that one must have to be able to reach out to and teach them. The parents supported the role of the teacher, as she constituted an important authoritative figure who had their children’s best interest at heart. For most of the parents, living in the U.S. represented a new beginning, a chance to reshape future opportunities for their children. Their own limited opportunities for an education drove them to instill in their children a desire to go to college (Delgado Gaitan, 1994).

*Respeto.* While parents agreed that their children had better educational opportunities in the U.S., they disapproved of the ways in which living in the U.S. socialized their children. For example, Abel’s parents felt that children in this country had many opportunities, and they did
not understand why many were “lazy” or disrespectful to their parents and elders. In the Latina/o community, *respeto* defines “a set of attitudes towards individuals and/or the roles they occupy,” in particular, family members (Valdés, 1996). In other words, *respeto* encapsulates deep regard, obedience, consideration, and an appreciation for those who contribute to the household. Different family members had specific roles to perform, depending on their gender, order of birth, natural abilities, and personality. For instance, the father may be the sole provider, while the mother is responsible for the upkeep of the home, and the children are expected to do well in school. Disrespecting or disobeying their parents or elders was unfathomable to most of the parents I interviewed. Both of Abel’s parents were the eldest children in their families, and that came with great responsibility. They were expected to either work to help provide for the family, or stay at home to take care of their younger siblings. Abel’s mother explained,

M. Abel: Lo que pasa ser la mayor es difícil, yo tenía que cuidar a mis hermanitos, tenía unos doce años y a los doce años tenía que cuidarlos, es difícil, y también a él le toco ser el mayor. [It’s difficult being the eldest, I had to take care of my younger siblings, I was twelve years old and at twelve I had to take care of them, it was difficult, and he too was the eldest]

However, in the U.S., their children had their own set of responsibilities and expectations. For example, they were expected to perform any of the following: help their younger siblings with homework, do chores and clean the house, and translate for parents and/or other adults (Orellana, 2009). Living in the U.S. alters the kinds of responsibilities that children of immigrants have to perform. Kira’s older brother was responsible for helping her since he was the eldest and assumed to have knowledge of first grade academic content. The mother described how she delegated the task of helping Kira with her homework to her oldest son,

M. Kira: Como empieza a leer un poquito, entonces ella se pone [hacer su tarea], si no entiende me dice o le digo al niño. Le digo “enséñale a tu hermana que ya sabes un poco más,” y ya se pone, le ayuda hacer su tarea porque hay veces que yo no entiendo las matemáticas.
She has started to read a little bit, so then she does (her own homework), if she doesn’t understand, she asks me or I tell the boy. I tell him ‘show your sister, since you know a little more,’ and he helps her with her homework because there are times I don’t understand the math homework.]

**Tarea [Schoolwork].** Kira’s mother did not complete elementary school. She only reached the fifth grade, one year shy of completing her elementary school education. Completion of at least elementary school is regarded as an achievement for many Mexican immigrants (Valdés, 1996). Due to her limited schooling, Kira’s mother did not feel confident with all of the schoolwork sent home and relied on her oldest son to help Kira. At the time of the interview, she was pregnant with twins. Before becoming pregnant with the twins, Kira’s mom had worked as a housekeeper and at a fast-food franchise. Her husband worked in construction. He also did not finish his schooling. Kira’s mom wanted more for her children. She worked tirelessly. During the summers she had to take both of her children with her to work, because she could not afford daycare, nor did she have anyone to look after them. Her employer gave her permission to keep them in the laundry room while she finished her shift. She would check on them during her breaks. They would get restless, and so she reminded them to do well in school so that they would not have to work as hard as her and their father. In the following excerpt, the mother explained what she told her children about hard work and getting an education,

M. Kira: Le digo como “tu papá que también no estudio mucho, tiene que trabajar en construcción, en cosas pesadas.” Entonces igual el mismo vio cuando trabajaba en un hotel, no tenia quien me lo cuidara, entonces pues yo me lo llevaba al trabajo. Me daban permiso, de tenerlo ahí en la lavandería, me esperaba, desde las nueve de la mañana a las cuatro o cinco de la tarde y pues él se desesperaba ahí abajo. Pero tenia que salir tarde hasta que acabara mi trabajo. Le digo eso es lo que tu tienes que ver para que tu no trabajes así como yo trabajaba. Igual mi hija también fue conmigo y se daban cuenta, les digo que tienen que estudiar mucho “para que trabajen en un lugar que este bien, que no sea muy dificil.” [Que] no batale. [I tell him “your father did not study much, and now has to work in construction, [lifting/carrying] heavy things.” So he saw for himself that I worked really hard at the hotel, I did not have anyone to look after him, so I had to take him to work. They gave me permission to keep him in the laundry
room; he would wait from 9 in the morning until I finished with my work. I tell him that he has to see that, so that he doesn’t have to work as hard, like I used to work. Same with my daughter, she too went with me and they realized, I tell them they have to study “so that you work in a nice place that is not too difficult.” So he doesn’t have to struggle.]

For these students’ parents, obtaining an education indicated a future with a more manageable workload. If their children pursued an education, they would be more likely to have a lucrative career in place of hard labor (Delgado Gaitan, 1994). These consejos have also been described as protective parenting, where parents warn children that not doing well in school will have serious consequences in their future (see Rodriguez, Donovick, & Crowley, 2009; Saucedo Ramos, 2003). Parents hoped that having a career that paid well would provide them with time to be with family rather than having multiple low paying jobs that barely met their basic needs as Julián’s mom explains,

M. Julián: [Le digo] que le eché muchas ganas al estudio, para que no esté sufriendo como nosotros. Le digo que le tiene que echar muchas ganas al estudio, le digo que yo voy a trabajar y gano bien poquito. Entonces yo no quiero que pase lo mismo, para que él pueda pasar tiempo con sus hijos para que no tenga que trabajar mucho tiempo y pueda ganar mucho dinero. El dice que él quiere ser doctor de animales, un veterinario.

[(I tell him) to make an effort in school, so that he won’t have to suffer like us. I tell him that he has to make an effort in school, I tell him that I go to work and earn very little. So I don’t want him to go through the same thing, so he can spend more time with his children so that he doesn’t have to work so much and earn more money. He says that he wants to be an animal doctor, a veterinarian.]

Arduous work took its toll on the families, but the possibility for a better future for their children kept them motivated to stay in the U.S. despite their economic difficulties. These economic circumstances were evident in the classroom during an academic unit on work. Catalina began the unit by asking students what type of work their parents did, and students answered with jobs consisting mostly of cleaning and cooking (Classroom fieldnotes, 4-29-13). She then took the opportunity to differentiate between “oficio” (job) and “profesión”
(profession). Later in the lesson Catalina created a graph consisting of different jobs and professions, including her own as a teacher and Adela’s teaching assistant position. The chart included hourly pay rates from working at McDonalds to higher paying careers in medicine or government. It goes without saying that the parents who worked in the service sector where at one end of the continuum, while the doctors were at the other end. In the following classroom excerpt, Catalina asked a student who had selected to become the president, what he had to do to achieve that goal.

Catalina: ¿Por qué eligió este trabajo? ¿Usted quiere ser presidente, se habla al publico y se cuida a la gente, como se prepara para ser presidente?
[Why did you select this work? You want to be president, you’ll have to do public speaking and take care of people, how does one prepare [oneself] to become president?]

David: Aprender mucho. [Learning a lot.]

Catalina: ¿Aparte de aprender mucho, que hizo? ¿Usted sabe? ¿La gente fue a votar y lo eligieron, que se supone que hizo para ser presidente?
[Apart from learning a lot, what did he have to do? Do you know? People went to vote and they elected [him], but what does one have to do to become president?]

Student: Ir a la universidad. [Go to the university.]

From the above excerpt it is clear that many of the students understood that one needed to go to college to learn a profession. Although acquiring higher education as a means for a professional career may be evident, both children and parents understood the challenges of gaining entry to college and having the economic ability to pay for a college education. Nevertheless, the notion of going to college was not discouraged (Moll et al., 1992). Although faced with future economic obstacles, Damián’s family remained hopeful for his future. Attending college was always a possibility for his parents as they explain in the following excerpt,

M. Damián: Pues queremos lo mejor, que sea alguien. El cómo tiene la oportunidad que los hermanos no tienen de haber nacido aquí pues que haga lo que a él le guste o lo que quiera escoger ser en esta vida . . . Nosotros que mas
quisiéramos poder apoyarlo en todo, y económicamente pues la verdad con
los trabajos que tenemos no me imagino pagar una universidad. Lo que
tenemos es para pagar la renta, comprar comida, ropa cuando ocupan, ya
para pagar una colegiatura, en eso no podríamos ayudarlo.

[Well we want the best for him, to become somebody. He has an
opportunity that his siblings do not . . . having been born here, so that he
can do what he likes . . . or that he has a choice to become who he wants in
this life . . . What more would we like than to be able to support him in
everything, and economically, well the truth is that with the jobs that we
have, I cannot imagine being able to pay [his] university education. What
we have pays for the rent, buys food, clothes when they need it, but for
tuition, we would not be able to help him with that.]

La Educación y los Papeles [Education and Documentation]

The topic of educación for parents was also intertwined with their children’s citizenship
status, and they articulated these ideas through notions of con o sin papeles, with or without
documentation/authorization. For instance, when parents discussed their children’s access to
educational opportunities it was almost always associated with their U.S. citizenship status. In
other words, some parents perceived that their children con papeles, with documentation or
authorization status, were more likely to have access to higher education. Parents were highly
aware of the circumstances that their children, whether undocumented or unauthorized, would
encounter after graduating high school if they had a desire to attend college. At the same time,
children with documentation were also given more flexibility, in terms of deciding for
themselves what they wanted to pursue in the future in regards to their sustenance. Regardless of
their career choices, parents made certain that they did as much as possible to help prepare their
children for their future. One way they did this was by providing their children with mas tarea,
or more homework, in addition to what they brought home on a weekly basis. In doing so, there
were parents who also reduced their own work, menos trabajo, to attend to the needs of their
children. Other parents who did not have as many jobs, took it upon themselves to provide a
crianza colectiva in the neighborhood that provided a space for other children of the mobile
home community to come share a meal and work on homework. All of these aspects to parent's individual forms of involvement contributed to the overall well-being of the children who attended the bilingual program.

**Sin papeles [Without papers]**. Families with older children not born in the U.S. came to realize the significance of citizenship and class as they began to confront the difficulties of their children’s undocumented/unauthorized status and desire to continue with their education. Studying and doing well in school was inculcated in them since they were young, and now they were faced with legal obstacles. Adriana, David, and Damián all had older siblings who were not born in the U.S. Adriana’s oldest sister was attending a local community college at the time, while the second oldest was still in high school.

David’s family shared the most about their experience with their eldest son, who was born in Mexico and about to graduate from high school. He had hopes to attend college but his unauthorized/undocumented status was making it difficult for him to do so (Olivas, 2008). He had applied for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in order to get his driver’s license and possibly apply to college. According to a 2012 PEW research report, it is estimated that approximately 300,000 U.S.-born Mexican children migrated to Mexico from 2005 and 2012. Many of them were having a difficult time in school because they had not developed literacy skills in Spanish, in addition to teachers not speaking English, or not formally trained to instruct bilingually (Tacelosky, 2013). David’s parents were thinking of sending him back to Mexico to go to school, but as the mother explained, his limited literacy skills in Spanish could have deterred him from passing the entrance exams. In addition to passing these proficiency exams, students entering Mexican educational institutions needed to have proper documentation,
and many times, the schools were the ones determining what were acceptable documents.\footnote{42 See \url{http://www.dallasfed.org/assets/documents/research/swe/2013/swe1304c.pdf}} Navigating the bureaucracy of documentation was difficult for David’s parents, so they to asked me questions regarding the college application process. I provided them with as much information as I could from my own experience and personal knowledge. Having become a legal resident and then a U.S. citizen gave me the privilege of not having to worry about how I was going to apply and pay for a university education. It was inculcated in me since I was very young that attending college was crucial for living a better and happy life, so I was able relate to parents’ hopes regarding their children’s education, as a form of recuperation from poverty.

**Con papeles [With papers].** Parents also expressed concern with other notions of happiness for their children. Iván’s parents, for instance, wanted him to complete a 2-year or 4-year career in something that he enjoyed. In the following excerpt, Iván’s father emphasized how he wanted his son to demonstrate to the U.S. that Latinos were intellectually capable of succeeding academically,

- **M. Iván:** Yo espero que el día de mañana él pueda tener una carrera corta o larga, pero que haga lo que le guste, pero que termine algo. [I hope that tomorrow [making reference to the future] he’ll have a short or long career, but that he does what he enjoys, but that he completes something.]

- **P. Iván:** A mi me gustaría que algún día se gradúe de la universidad y que fuera en esta universidad. Que demostrara a este país que él también puede sacar un honor de parte de los Latinos. Que vean los demás que también los Latinos somos buenos para el estudio porque a veces algunos no creen que somos muy buenos, me gustaría que el hiciera lo que el quiera hacer. [One day I would like [to see] that he graduates from the university and that he goes to this one. [That he] demonstrate to this country that he too can bring honor on behalf of Latinos. That the rest see that Latinos can do well in school because sometimes some don’t think that we’re any good, I would like him to do something he would like.]
Most of the parents did not specify what careers their children should go into, but rather the idea that they should decide for themselves what and if they would want to attend college.

For example, Emma’s mother shared how she would like her to go to college but would not force her into doing something she did not want to do,

M. Emma: Pues a mí sí me gustaría que ella siguiera estudiando y que ella terminara una carrera que le sirviera en su futuro. La verdad nosotros no somos de aquí y no tenemos papeles. Sé que en cualquier momento nos pudieran deportar. Yo estoy muy consciente, porque aquí nosotros no tenemos papeles entonces de que me lleguen a agarrar sin papeles y que me quedé sin mis hijas, pues la verdad yo preferiría irme sola, mejor por mi voluntad. Pero la verdad a mí sí me hubiera gustado que ella estudie, y la verdad pues aquí hay mucha ayuda, para ellos que han nacido aquí. Ella es nacida aquí y pues la pueden ayudar en ese aspecto, pero igualmente ellas necesitan de sus padres para salir adelante. [I would like her to keep studying and finish a career that will help her in the future. The truth is that we are not from here and we don’t have documents. I know that at any moment they could deport us. I am very aware, because we don’t have documents and if they get a hold of me without documents and if I’m left without my daughters, well the truth is I would like to leave on my own, by my own will. But, the truth is that I would have liked her to study, because there is a lot of help here for those who were born here. She was born here and they can help her in that aspect, but they also need their parents’ [support] to get ahead.]

As she described, a major concern for her was the constant threat of deportation and possible separation from her children. Even though she felt that having been born in the U.S. granted her daughters with educational opportunities, she strongly believed that children of immigrants needed their parents to succeed.

**Mas tarea [More schoolwork].** Providing educational support took on many forms for parents. One way was by providing additional homework to students. Generally, schooling in the student’s home language facilitated parents’ involvement in their children’s education, since they understood the teacher’s expectations and subject matter. For instance, Emma’s mother described her daily routine consisting of coming home from work to prepare dinner and Emma sitting in the dining room table doing her homework while she cooked. On days when Emma had
mainly language arts for homework, her mother explained how she would take out their homemade math book, which consisted of a spiral notebook with hand written math problems for Emma to do, mas tarea, in addition to her regular homework.

M. Emma: Muchas veces es puro español, y le digo vamos hacer un poco de español y en tu libreta vamos hacer sumas. Le batalla mas en matemáticas, y si no me mandan en matemáticas yo le pongo en su libreta, le pongo y ella lo hace. [Many times it’s language arts, and I tell her lets do a little bit of language arts and in your notebook let’s do additions. She has a difficult time with math, and if they don’t send her math work, I put some in her notebook, I write them and she does them.]

She also explained how she bought all sorts of books in English at a second hand store and used a dictionary to help her understand the words when reading to Emma. Emma’s mother would translate the English text into Spanish as she read to her. I recall when I was younger my mother would do the same with me; she would read English texts in Spanish or make up stories based on the illustrations. Marie-Anne Suizzo and colleagues (2012) found that children who internalized their parents’ high expectations regarding academic achievement, in turn, were motivated to meet those expectations.

Menos trabajo [Less work]. Parents were in constant negotiation with their work schedules and desire to make sure that their children were well cared for. For instance, Damián’s mother had to rearrange her work hours to make sure that she was home to see her kids off to school. Earlier in the year, during the fall, both parents would leave to work before their children left for school. The school had contacted them to see whether Damián had a coat to wear for the upcoming chilly mornings in the fall. The mother explained that he did have a coat; he would just forget to take it with him. To make sure that her children were adequately dressed and prepared for school she reduced her work hours outside the home. In the evenings she prepared dinner and they all sat at the dinner table. No one was allowed to eat their dinner in front of the television. The underlying gender roles were implicit in the ways that each member of the family
contributed to the household. In other words, in addition to the traditional gender roles, the mother also participated in other roles as well, by contributing economically, in addition to the organization of the home.

*Crianza colectiva [Collective parenting]*. Iván’s parents partook in caring for other familias’ (families’) children. There were several kids who would come over to his home after school to eat and play, but before they could play, they all had to do their homework at the table while Iván’s mother would check their work. I also learned how Iván’s mother was an advocate for the children in the neighborhood. Coming to the U.S. as a teenager and going to a U.S. high school, she learned more English than most of the other immigrant parents I interviewed. Speaking English facilitated agency for her to call attention to issues that were affecting the Latina/o children. For example, she told me about how the school bus that would come by to pick up the children at the mobile home community was perpetually too early or late in picking them up for school. This was problematic as the winters in the Midwest are anything but pleasant. She was able to get the district to provide one bus that picked up the children in their neighborhood, as they were a significant number of the children who attended Green School. She understood the power that came with speaking English in this country, and the access to information it provided, which made her adamant about her children learning English at school over their children being taught in their home language.

*Los Papeles y La Lengua [Papers and Language]*

For Abel’s mother, speaking English fluently and being documented worked jointly when it came to obtaining opportunities in the U.S. I also learned that she was not happy with Abel’s gradual academic progress. She explained how she originally did not want him in the bilingual program, but apparently the bilingual teachers had convinced her husband to enroll him in the
program. Abel’s mom placed more emphasis in learning English, as she deemed it vital for success in the U.S. She explained her doubts regarding the bilingual program being the best option for Abel’s academic development. She explained that she believed that students who generally had difficulty learning were going to have a difficult time becoming biliterate,

M. Abel:  Lo que pasa yo nunca he estado muy contenta que a él lo hayan puesto en español, es que yo ya lo viví, yo tengo dos hermanos que nacieron aquí, los dos fueron [al programa bilingüe]. Uno fue más inteligente que el otro, porque aprendió bien a escribir inglés y español y ya no tuvo ESL. El otro que no fue tan inteligente, pues le costó más aprender el inglés y hasta la fecha no sabe bien. [The thing is that I’ve never been really happy that they placed him in Spanish, because I’ve already lived it, I have brothers who were born here and both went (to a bilingual program). One was more intelligent than the other, because he learned how to write in English and Spanish and he didn’t need ESL. The other one was not as intelligent, well it took him longer to learn English and to this day he does not know [it] very well.]

The description above regarding her brothers’ experiences informed her beliefs regarding English proficiency and citizenship as elements that constituted success in the U.S. It is as if a U.S. citizen without English proficiency was equivalent to a fluent English speaker without documentation/authorization. In other words, one without the other was not in tandem with future economic success. Consequently, the mother felt that the bilingual program was responsible for Abel’s academic difficulties in school, particularly in reading and math. She also feared that he was not going to be able to learn English well if he remained in the program. At the time of the interview Abel was being tested for his eyesight and auditory as possible factors for his difficulties before being assessed for a learning disability. Catalina was hesitant with having Abel individually assessed and be diagnosed precipitately with a learning disability, which would truncate his potential to demonstrate his knowledge through other means. Catalina took it upon herself to do everything possible for Abel to participate actively in his own learning. Regardless of whether or not Abel had a learning disability, at the time, the mother said that she
firmly believed that learning English was more imperative than learning in their home language at school. She explained:

M. Abel: Sirve mucho aquí en E.E.U.U. de que sepas hacer las cosas bien en inglés, porque no te van a dar un examen en la universidad en español, tienes que aprender bien, y si no sabes no vas a pasarlos.
[It’s useful here in the U.S. that you know how to do things well in English, because they are not going to give you a university exam in Spanish, you have to learn well, and if you don’t you won’t pass.]

It is not that Abel’s mother did not value bilingualism or biliteracy; it is that she was under the impression that her children could become literate in Spanish at home, especially because her oldest daughter had been developing literacy in Spanish without participating in a bilingual program. However, I also learned that her daughter was studying catechism and was regarded as exceptionally studious by her teachers. She furthered explained that if it were the other way around, if they spoke English at home, they would be learning Spanish at school. However, like many parents and the general public, there is a common misperception of how bilingualism is developed cognitively, as a social practice and the political nature of multilingualism. For example, languages other than English are perpetually disregarded in the early years (English-only instruction) and then highly desired in the latter years of schooling (i.e., foreign languages in middle and high school; García & Sylvan, 2011; Murillo, 2012). Other parents articulated their perspective in regards to bilingual and biliteracy development as essential for active participation in society and educational opportunities. For instance, David and Damián’s parents were aware that other parents only wanted their children to learn English at school; however, they understood that kids learned English quickly because it was all around them. In order to support their children’s bilingual development, most parents enrolled all of their children in the bilingual program. In terms of their children’s citizenship status, as a marker of access to opportunities, Damián’s parents recognized that having been born in the U.S, it
provided him with privilege. In the words of the mother, “él cómo tiene la oportunidad que los hermanos no tienen de haber nacido aquí” [he has opportunities that his siblings do not have, being born here”] (Parent Interview, 12-19-12). Damián’s family members were avid soccer fans. His older brother was also an exceptionally talented soccer player and was dealing with coming to terms with his undocumented status and dream of playing soccer professionally. Their experiences with their older undocumented children made Damián’s parents recognize how educational opportunities were contingent upon citizenship. For them, Damián would be able to apply for scholarships or earn an athletic scholarship to help fund his education in the future, unlike his undocumented brother. Despite these realities, parents demonstrated a high value for education and supported bilingual education programs that allowed them access to their children’s schooling, even if only in the early years. The support for bilingual programs also stemmed from the accessibility it provided parents to support their children with schoolwork they understood and being able to communicate with their bilingual teachers.

*Nuestra lengua [Our language].* With the exception of Abel and Emma’s mother, all of the parents that I interviewed supported the bilingual program wholeheartedly, without reservations, in particularly the maintenance of nuestra lengua, our home language. Emma’s mother did not want her in the bilingual program initially because she felt that she could maintain Spanish, their lengua at home and learn English at school. However, what deterred her from making that decision were the speech issues that Emma was diagnosed with in pre-school. For a long time, Emma did not speak extensively. The mother believed that if Emma were to be placed in an English only classroom, consequently, in the long term she would not be able to communicate with her own daughter in their home language. She recognized the importance of maintaining their home language, as it was used to communicate/transmit home and family
knowledge and values. Many of the parents talked about the benefits of their children being able to communicate in two languages. Iván’s parents thought it was important for him to maintain his Spanish if they ever went back to Mexico, driven from the ongoing threat of deportations (PEW, 2013). They also regarded Spanish as an indicator of their identity, and they wanted Iván to be proud of where he came from. The mother stated “[p]uede que pasen varios años para que vayamos a México pero que él sepa que nosotros somos de allá y él no tiene que avergonzarse de las raíces de sus papás.” “[i]t may be years before we can go to Mexico but he needs to know that we are from there and that he doesn’t have to feel ashamed of his parents’ roots” (Parent Interview, 12-14-12). As with other parents, the home language was a link to their ethnic and national identity. Maintaining their home language was important in transferring a sense of self. Nevertheless, they also understood that speaking English was necessary to their everyday life in the U.S. (Murrillo, 2012).

**Me interpreta: Language brokering.** Many of the parents that I spoke with discussed how their children were able to translate or interpret for them and other adults (Orellana, 2009). It has become a common phenomenon for young Latina/o children of immigrants to take on such tasks. These tasks include but are not limited to text and oral communications (Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003). The term *para-phrasing* that Orellana and colleagues (2003) used in her work encompass what children do at school and at home in terms of summarizing things into their own words for specific purposes when translating or interpreting. I gathered information on parental perspectives on their children’s translating or interpreting for them and found that parents spoke highly of their children’s sociolinguistic abilities. For instance, Julián’s mother spoke avidly about his bilingualism. She was pleased in how he readily helped people

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43 [http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/12/19/on-immigration-policy-deportation-relief-seen-as-more-important-than-citizenship/](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/12/19/on-immigration-policy-deportation-relief-seen-as-more-important-than-citizenship/)
with translating and paraphrasing. However, she was surprised with other Latina/o children who
did not possess these skills (Murrillo, 2012). Julián’s mother and Damián’s father also agreed
with the importance of being able to translate and explained so in the following excerpt,

M. Julián: Le digo [a] Julián, que a mi me da gusto que de repente que el me ayuda, es
un gusto que el pueda ayudar a mas personas . . . cuando él quiere traducir si
puede . . . la otra ves yo le pedí a su niña prestada a mi vecina para ir al
dentista, porque yo no sé mucho [inglés], y ella me dijo que ella no podía
traducir, que ella solamente había ido a inglés y que no había ido a español,
y pues no se lo creía.
[I tell Julián, that I’m very happy that he is able to help me, it’s a joy that he
can help other people . . . when he wants to translate he can . . . the other
day I asked a friend if I could take her daughter to the dentist because I
don’t know a lot of (English), and she told me that she could not translate,
that she only went to English and that she did not go to Spanish, and I could
not believe it.]

P. Damián: Aquí también, piden los dos, tiene que saber los dos, [saber] traducir, van a
un lugar, “Y que dijo?” Y no saben [traducir], no saben en español, saben en
ingles pero no saben explicarte en español.
[They ask for both, you have to know both, knowing how to translate if you
go somewhere, ‘What did they say?’ And if they don’t know how (to
translate), they don’t know Spanish, they know English but they don’t know
how to explain it to you in Spanish.]

To some parents, Latina/o children who spoke only one language were perceived as
unfortunate, especially because they believed that bilingualism brought economic mobility
(Murillo, 2012). Iván’s parents believed that his bilingualism would provide many employment
opportunities; they even encouraged him to learn a third language. At the time, the school
offered Mandarin as the foreign language special, once a week. His mom described a
conversation that she had with Iván regarding the benefits of being multilingual,

M. Iván: Me pregunta, “mami porque no me pones en la clase de inglés,” le digo “papí,
porque si no se te va olvidar el español,” le digo, “el día de mañana que tu
vayas a otro país y busques un trabajo, imaginate tres personas, uno habla
inglés, el otro español y tu vas hablar inglés y español, quien crees de ellos
tres que va tener mas oportunidad de trabajo? El que habla inglés, el que habla
español o el que habla dos idiomas, inglés y español?” “Pues, yo porque voy
hablar inglés y español” “Ya vez, por eso es importante aprender mas de un
idioma, porque en un futuro cuando crezcas vas a tener mas oportunidad de
trabajo tu que el que habla solo un idioma.” “Ah, entonces tengo que aprender chino?” “Si tienes que, y vas a saber tres idiomas, español, inglés y chino.”

[He asks me, “how come you don’t put me in English, mom?” I tell him “sweetheart, because then you will forget Spanish,” I tell him, “the day after tomorrow you’ll go to another country to look for a job, imagine three people, one speaks English, the other Spanish and you will be able to speak English and Spanish, who do you think will have a greater chance of getting the job? The one who speaks English, the one who speaks Spanish or the one who speaks both, English and Spanish?” “Well, me because I’ll speak English and Spanish” “You see, that is why it’s important that you learn more than one language, because in the future when you grow up you are going to have more opportunities for work than another who only speaks one language” “Oh, so I have to learn Chinese?” “Yes, you have to and then you will speak three languages, Spanish, English and Chinese.”]

Knowing multiple languages was seen as a valuable resource that made it possible to overcome the stagnant social economic condition of the families. Iván’s mother used “papí” a sweet endearing name, like sweetheart, as she provided guidance to the importance of multilingualism in an ever-changing global economy. Her maternal warmth and concern for Iván’s well-being was evident (Halgunesth, Ispa & Rudy, 2006), within the values being instilled regarding multilingualism.

**Inculcar Valores [Instill Values]**

Parents discussed how bilingual programs allowed them access and open communication with teachers regarding the academic progress of their children. During the interview with Iván’s parents, they shared that they had also come to speak with Catalina because although they acknowledged that Iván’s lack of focus in class may have been due to him waiting up for his father to get home from work and watching too much television at night, they wanted Catalina to recognize that he was making an effort with his tarea [schoolwork]. Apparently, they had received a note from Catalina stating that Iván needed to do his own homework, which caused the mother to get upset because Catalina did not believe he was doing the illustrations himself, so they both decided to come to school and speak with her. Unlike contexts in which parents do not
feel comfortable with coming to school (Worthy, 2006), the bilingual program model at the school facilitated parents’ participation. Schools with a bilingual program and staff bridge this disconnect between home and school, at least for the Latina/o community in this context. There has been substantial research on the nontraditional forms Latina/o parent involvement (Delgado-Gaitán, 1990; González et al., 1993; López, Scribner, & Mahitvanichcha, 2001; Valdés, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002). Valencia and Black (2002) described the difficulty in capturing “the attitudes and practices concerning school that are initiated by the family and found exclusively in the home” (p. 97).

**Involucrase [Parent involvement]**. Most of the ways in which parental involvement practices, *involucrase*, occurred in the home, included *consejos* deriving from parents’ own school experiences as young children, and their current experiences as immigrant working class adults. Other practices of *involucrase*, parent involvement was helping with homework as much as they could or delegating the task to older siblings. These practices outside the home included going to parent-teacher conferences in the fall and spring semesters, attending the writers workshops during the school day, celebrating birthdays in the classroom, and making sure that all fieldtrip fees were paid for their children to attend. In the following excerpt, Adriana’s mom described how having parent and teacher conferences in Spanish was extremely helpful for them as parents, because they felt comfortable with Catalina and understood what they had to do to help their daughter,

M. Adriana: Si, nosotros nos ponemos a leer con ella, yo a veces le veo si están bien las letras . . . cuando hay conferencia, siempre voy para ver qué le falta, pero así que le hable [al la maestra] no, pues. Pero en las reuniones sí voy, y lo que me dice [la maestra], sí trato de apoyarla.

[Yes, we read to her, sometimes I check to see if her letters are correct . . . when there are conferences, I always go to see what she needs, I don’t call (the teacher) but when there are meetings I go, and what she (the teacher) tells me, I try to support her.]
Even though the mother said that she did not have constant communication with Catalina, she had seen how Adriana had gone from being floja,\textsuperscript{44} or lazy, to really wanting to learn and putting more effort into her studies. She told me how Adriana wrote her letter to Santa ‘Clos’ all by herself! In class I observed how Adriana developed academically. Initially, Adriana was one of the students who came into the first grade without knowing their ABCs, which were explicitly taught in kindergarten. Adela had told me during a conversation that she had lost hope in Adriana retaining much of what she was being taught. Adela had worked with her in kindergarten and could not get her to learn the alphabet or numbers. However, over time, Adela began to see how Catalina worked with students and witnessed how students who were in the “lowest” reading levels were progressing and reaching grade level reading in Spanish.

Con Catalina aprendí eso, ella se enfocaba con los que no aprendían mucho, como Abel, [darles] un tiempo específico . . . darles ese tiempo me imaginaba que era duro, pero aprendí este año a darle tiempo a ese niño para que tenga una educación individualizada a pesar de que tengo que darle todo el grupo (de niños).

[With Catalina I learned that she focused on those [students] who did not learn much, like Abel. (Giving them) a specified amount of time I thought was difficult to do, but I learned this year that giving them that individualized teaching despite having to work with a whole group (of students)]. (Teaching Assistant Interview, 8-12-13)

Adela learned that with patience, persistence, consistency, and creativity students achieved high levels of literacy. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the ability to read at high levels allowed students to feel confident about their knowledge and learning potential.

\textit{Ya lo sabemos [We already know].} There were times when Catalina purposefully repeated certain information to students, even though the majority were prepared and made it known to the rest of the class by saying “yo, ya se” (I already know) or “ya lo sabemos” (we already know). However, in the reiteration, I saw that Catalina was directing the information to students like Abel, Adriana and Iván, who tended to be more distracted or quieter. To engage

\textsuperscript{44} Valdez (1996) explains these kinds of labels for children, in that they reflect the ways, in which family members perceive differences and therefore established roles and interaction with children.
these students, she called on them and did not allow discouraging messages from other
“advanced” students to deter their participation as illustrated in the following excerpt:

Catalina: Ok, vamos a ver la próxima pagina, Adriana esta mirando para allá para saber lo que tiene que hacer? Siéntese en ese cuadro verde y mire para acá, que dice acá? Las oraciones tienen muchas palabras. [Ok, lets go to the next page, Adriana are you looking over there, to know what to do? Sit on this green square and look over here, what does it say here? Sentences have many words.]

David: Maestra ya lo sabemos hacer. [Teacher we already know how to do it.]

Catalina: Cuantas hay acá? [How many are here?] (to Cesar)

Cesar: Cuatro, cuatro. [Four, four.]

Catalina: Venga acá cuéntelo. [Come up and count.]

Cesar: Una, dos, tres. [One, two, three.]


Adriana: Seis. [Six.]

Catalina: Cuente de vuelta. [Count again.]

Adriana goes up and counts to five, then sits back down

Catalina: Abel?

Abel: Siete. [Seven.]

Jacobo: Clemente le dijo. [Clemente told him.]

T: Cuente. [Count.] (to Abel)

(Abel counts to seven)

Catalina: Perfecto. Iván, cuantas palabras? [Perfect, Iván, how many letters?]

(Iván goes up to count.) (Classroom fieldnotes, 10-18-12)

There were students who eagerly provided responses to straightforward questions that Catalina posed. However, there were other students who required a little more nudging with
focusing and participating in class discussions so that Catalina could assess their understanding of the activity or content. This particular activity outlined above was not a math lesson. Catalina was going over what constituted a sentence. Catalina was getting them to go from one-word replies to complete sentences. While both teachers were with a guided reading group during the morning literacy period, the rest of the class was expected to read independently and complete a series of literacy tasks. For instance, they had to note how many books they had read, write down the most interesting words from texts and complete sentences of their favorite part of the story. Catalina also provided these kinds of exercises in the weekly homework packets. Helping their children with homework resonated with a lot of the parents. It made them feel that they were contributing to their child’s academic development, that they were doing their part to help Catalina and ultimately, their children’s academic development. Parents found creative ways to motivate their children at home. They also came to realize certain factors that were affecting their children’s progress in school and they took active steps to resolving these issues.

For instance, Iván had a hard time concentrating at school. He would seem distracted and at times aloof to classroom activities. However, with time he began to demonstrate improvement in his homework and overall school work. His parents admitted that they had disconnected the cable network so that Iván would devote more time and effort to his work, which became evident through better homework grades. Throughout the year, I, too, began to worry about Iván, because he was the most exhausted looking student; he would yawn, place his head down on the table while others worked around him, procrastinated and did not put much effort into his work. Sometimes I thought he drifted off excessively. I felt comfortable discussing my observations with Catalina and then began to notice how she pulled students like Iván into the classroom discussions much more. The following excerpt came from the classroom fieldnotes. Adela had
showed me Iván’s homework; she was concerned that he was not advancing as other students. She called Catalina to come over to review his homework. As Catalina examined his work, she frowned and called him up. She showed Iván his homework and asked him if she should move him to a lower reading level. Iván looked alarmed and quickly shook his head. Then she asked him if he was going to make a better effort; he quickly affirmed with nodding. It was interesting to observe this moment because I came to learn that no student wanted to remain in a “lower” reading level from where they had advanced. For the most part students wanted to be in the higher reading groups; no one wanted to be left behind (Classroom fieldnotes, 11-6-12).

_Todas las niñas son bonitas: Gendered identity._ Even though the few girls in the classroom were not as boisterous about affirming their knowledge the way in which the majority of boys did, it did not mean that they did not engage in their own knowledge production. Most girls readily offered their input in whole group discussion without having to assert that they knew; they simply remarked on what they knew. However, Emma was much more quiet about her knowledge, and yet she was quite popular with the girls who partook in the performance of their gendered femininity. Emma actively constructed her femininity at school and at home. Her mother described her concerns about Emma, in particular her fixation about being pretty.

M. Emma: Pues el otro día ella me estaba diciendo que porque le puse esa ropa que porque las otras niñas se ven más bonitas que ella y pues yo le digo que todas las niñas son bonitas . . . pues la verdad no me gusta que tampoco ella se esté comparando con nadie. Porque pues yo pienso que cada quien es diferente y como es.

[The other day she was telling me why I had put those clothes on her because the other girls looked prettier than she and I told her that all girls are pretty . . . the truth is that I don’t like how she compares herself to others. Because I think that everyone is different in who they are.]

Even as Emma’s mother participated in Emma’s construction of femininity by buying her boots and shoes with heels and many pink, sparkling dresses (Martin, 1998), she was also practical in that she did not want Emma to wear her boots to school because she could fall during P.E. or
recess. She simply wanted Emma to be happy and confident, not only with her ideas about
gender and beauty but with her schoolwork as well. The mother described how she would try to
encourage her when she did not want to do her schoolwork,

M. Emma: Tiene muchas ganas de aprender, [pero] a veces me dice “ya no quiero hacer
tarea, ya no quiero, no me gusta” y le digo “ok, vete a la escuela y los niños te
van a decir “mira que niña, no sabe.” ¿Te gustaría que eso te digan los niños?
O si la maestra te pregunta y vas a decir “no se,” “todos se van a burlar de ti,
porque tu ya estas grande, vas en su mismo grado, tienes que aprender, no lo
hagas por mi, hazlo por ti” y ya que la animo un poco mas, [me contesta] “ok,
vamos hacer esto.”
[She has a lot of desire to learn (but) sometimes she tells me “I don’t want to
do my homework, I don’t like it” and I tell her “ok, go to school and the kids
will say ‘look, that girl doesn’t know.’ Would you like them to say that to
you? Or if the teacher asks you a question and you respond, ‘I don’t know,’
everyone will make fun of you, because you are grown, you’re in the same
grade, you have to learn, don’t do it for me, do it for yourself’ and that is how
I motivate her (she responds), “ok, lets do it.”]

Emma’s mother wanted her to be more concerned with her academic development than
with other girls in the class looking prettier than her. However, she used Emma’s preoccupation
over notions of beauty and shift her attention to learning, by not being cast as the only student
that didn’t know or couldn’t learn. If she wanted to be the prettiest girl, she also had to be smart.
The boys in the class in many ways asserted their own gender by positioning themselves against
what being a girl meant. Many times they would make comments such as, girls get more scared
than boys, or girls are not as strong as boys. Consequently, Catalina began to reflect on how she
could challenge or bring forth the visibility of women in the classroom content:

Catalina: I should bring more females [into the curriculum units]. The problem is that I
really want them to know that it’s not the [gender] that makes the difference,
it’s what you are going to accomplish as a person . . . I like when they bring
nice dress[es], it’s ok being pretty . . . being able to play this or that not
because you are a female or male, the thing is, because you are male you need
to be this way. That is what bothers me. (Teacher Interview, 6-26-13)

What troubled Catalina were not so much the socially constructed attributes of femininity and
masculinity, but the assumptions that gender defined and constricted abilities. I also observed the
ways in which Catalina paid more attention to students’ individual personalities when selecting partners, and many times she let them decide whom they wanted to partner with. The only time she would select for them was when it was evident that the partnership was not working cooperatively. There were at least two girls in each of the four tables except for one table. There were many pairs and trios that worked really well together, and the teacher focused on that aspect. One trio in particular made up of boys consisted of Damián, David, and Julián. Coming into the first grade they were in the lowest reading groups, but by the end of the year, they were reading at grade level. Aside from their measured reading progress, each student knew the value of learning, and many parents expressed these sentiments as well.

**Yo leo, también: Modeling literacy practices.** Julián’s parents approach to *involucrarse*, parent involvement, focused on modeling their own literacy practices. They did so by demonstrating that learning came from reading with the goal of working towards achieving new perspectives and understandings. More importantly, they wanted to break the vicious cycle that they found themselves living everyday. Such as, the draining routine of going to work, then home, and then back to work again. Work in the U.S. is an imperfect necessity. Making a living is not without its battle with indignities. These parents wanted more for themselves and their children, something beyond what they described as the monotony of their working class experience. They explained how they did not want their work to define them.

P. Julián: Igual nosotros nos ponemos a ver libros para que el mire que también nos estamos capacitando [We read so that he sees that we are also learning]

M. Julián: Pues son cosas de superación personal, miramos libros de ejemplos de otras personas que han padecido alguna tragedia . . . nos dimos cuenta de cómo nosotros estamos completos y nomas nos quedábamos cerrados. Del trabajo a la casa y ya nunca superarnos, [pero] hay que tratar de superarnos y es lo que estamos tratando de enseñarle. Tanto tiempo estamos aquí y todavía en lo mismo, de casa a trabajo y de ahí no salimos, y apenas nos dimos cuenta que nosotros estábamos metidos en la rutina.
As Julián’s parents explained how they modeled learning by reading texts about overcoming a tragedy through resiliency, it inspired their own desire to overcome what they perceived a debilitating state of consciousness and place. Catalina also tried to break with singular perspectives and expanded students’ ways of thinking through probing and guiding the discussion as reviewed in Chapter 5. For instance, during a class discussion about affection, Catalina began to discuss the uncertainties that many people may feel at times regarding others caring for them. Students started to say that they were loved because their parents bought them things. Catalina questioned whether gifts were the only way that parents showed affection. A student responded by saying that her mother kissed her everyday before going to school. Damián mentioned how he showed his affection to his mom by helping her clean. Other students said that parents bought them books and read to them. Catalina explained to them the reciprocal nature of affection that parents demonstrated towards them. (Classroom fieldnotes, 10-15-12).

**Discussion**

This chapter outlined the ways in which *sitios y lenguas*, as a theoretical frame, identified parental involvement practices to understand how the home of these families constituted spaces of knowledge production that grappled with the challenges of mixed status families. The parents’ approach to teaching their children values were embedded with their social, racial, and class positions. In emigrating from Mexico and having U.S.-born children in the U.S., the parents’ social, cultural values, and practices were instilled in the home *sitio* in their *lenguas*. The parents’ *lenguas* encapsulated their truth about their experiences at home and work that were
utilized for providing insight for their children. The experiences that parents shared were informed by their ideas about family, education, and citizenship, and as parents of U.S. born and immigrant children. These ideas came through in the classroom as students utilized their parents’ *consejos* and *modelos* [role models] as markers of knowledge that were recognized as sources for learning.
Chapter 7

 Sithios y Lenguas: Possibilities for Translenguas

The current approach to educating emergent bilinguals, particularly those who share Spanish as a home language, varies across contexts, specifically the resources available in schools and the philosophical orientations of the programs regarding bilingualism (García, 2014). Additionally, schools that implement transitional bilingual education programs typically also place benchmarks enforced by scripted curriculum standards, such as the Common Core State Standards initiative. For instance, since 2010, CCSS has contributed significantly to a basic skills approach to college readiness. This approach has had a tremendous impact on students’ “[s]ocial agency, along with imagination and flexibility” (Dyson, 2015, p. 205). The CCSS provide outlines to what students should know and be able to accomplish at the end of each grade level. These academic standards ignore the complexity of in which emergent bilingual children utilize their home and cultural knowledge for learning.45 Due to these mandates teachers’ pedagogical freedom is then limited by these mandates by limiting their instructional practices and silence that would have otherwise demonstrated the creativity and flexibility that is required in facilitating classroom learning (Ortiz & Fránquiz, 2013). This dissertation focused on examining the opportunities that teachers created for emergent bilinguals to draw on their cultural and linguistic resources for meaningful learning experiences. The bilingual teachers in this study found themselves navigating between ideological discourses regarding the value of English acquisition and bilingualism, and their own pedagogical practices and beliefs regarding educating emergent bilinguals (Gonzalez, 1997; 2013). Exploring learning at the classroom level through sitios y lenguas as a theoretical lens sought to illuminate the ways that emergent

45 http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/
bilinguals, teachers, and parents challenged deficit-oriented discourses that have demeaned bilingual and bicultural practices cultivated at home and utilized in school.

This case study addresses a gap in educational research regarding the education of emergent bilingual children, specifically in regards to the ways in which teachers incorporate the student’s linguistic and cultural knowledge in the classroom (Delgado Bernal, 2001). Examining learning from these perspectives in a bilingual classroom context through *sitios y lenguas* allowed me to see the dynamic ways that children used their languages. By not erasing their cultural and linguistics strengths, the teachers in this classroom made it possible for students to make meaning of their lived experiences as children of immigrants. I believe that this dynamic further speaks to critiques of English only instruction and language separation models to language learning, or the use of the home language as only a means to English acquisition (Pennycook, 2001). Through *sitios y lenguas* new opportunities arose for understanding the relationship between culture, language and learning. As a theoretical lens, *sitios y lenguas* (re)conceptualized the learning of bilingual children and pedagogical practices of bilingual teachers by (re)shifting the deficit perspective of remedial instruction to one that encompassed students’ cultural and linguistic resources.

This (re)shifting in perspective illuminated the ways that bilingual and bicultural individuals employed cultural and linguistic practices to overcome traditions of silence enacted by the hegemony of the English language in the U.S. (Carrillo, et al. 2010). In other words, by resisting English as the only mode of instruction and learning, this study extends upon Chicana/Latina feminist educational research and language and literacy education (Burdick-Will & Gomez, 2006). For instance, pedagogies of the home, *consejos*, and cultural funds of knowledge have been utilized to speak back to educational institutions that frame the home language(s) and
cultural knowledge as illegitimate or an impediment to learning (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Moll et al. 2001; Valdés, 1996). The teachers, students, and parents’ counter narratives and testimonios in this study highlighted these ruptures of silence that have been imposed by deficit descriptions of Latina/o families and communities (Latina Feminist Group, 2001). Bilingual classrooms have been contested terrains for fostering the use of the home language as a source for thinking and learning (Menken, 2006, 2009, 2010; Menken & Solorza, 2014).

In this chapter, I summarize the primary findings and discuss the implications for classroom instruction, teacher education, and future research based on the research questions that guided this study: How were the teacher’s beliefs and instructional practices enacted in the classroom to support student voice? What were the ways that students’ home knowledge was incorporated into the classroom? The findings in this research uncovered ways in which the home language and cultural knowledge were evident in the everyday classroom experience, despite prevalent discourses and educational policy regarding English acquisition. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I discussed the opportunities for students’ knowledge production in the classroom, the teacher’s unwavering commitment to her students, and parents’ participation in their children’s learning development. I also highlighted how knowledge was constructed in the classroom, and the ways in which students made critical connections from their home to school learning. In addition, I closely observed the ways in which Catalina’s commitment to teaching was exemplified through her modeling critical thinking and formulating questions. I documented the ways in which parents discussed their participation in their children’s education. Throughout this dissertation, the cross data analysis revealed the interconnectedness of these findings and how they worked to inform each other regarding a broader understanding of instruction and learning of emergent bilinguals.
Summary of Findings

This case study examined how the teacher’s beliefs and instructional practices in the classroom supported student voice and uncovered the ways that students’ home languages and cultural knowledge were incorporated in the classroom. Students’ language practices and knowledge from home aligned with the instructional methods provided a context for emergent (Spanish-English) bilinguals and their teachers to elevate their voices and decolonize their experiences by providing a space in which to engage in discussions related to their experiences as children of immigrants in the classroom. Through *sitios y lenguas*, different aspects of student’s cultural knowledge and home language were identified and supported notions of third space, the rupture of dominant narratives and possibilities to rewrite our own (Perez, 1998; Gutiérrez et al., 1995). For instance, the classroom findings in Chapter 4 detailed how *sitios* were established by the norms and practices that structured the discourse and interaction between classroom participants. *Sitios* became a location for student agency whether it was to express their knowledge production (Carmona, 2012) by calling out ¡Yo, sí se! [I know!], or remain silent. Students chose how they participated in the classroom. *Lenguas* refered to the ways in which students used their home language and voice as tools for learning, self expression, and making *conexiones*, critical connections. These critical connections, supported notions of children as organic intellectuals, in which they theorized from their own localities to make interpretations of their own for meaning-making (Saavedra, 2011). Students’ *lenguas* were cultivated as the medium for home knowledge to become an essential tool for learning in a bilingual classroom, especially when making *conexiones* with the texts and general discussions regarding their lives as children of immigrants.
In Chapter 5, the discussion addresses how both bilingual teachers enacted their own *sitios y lenguas* to obtain agency and voice in their commitment to ideas of social justice and educational equity for the children that they engaged with every day. In a nonphysical sense, the teacher’s *sitios* emerged in the day-to-day experiences of being a bilingual teacher, which represented being subjected to a myriad of conflicting messages regarding the value and role that student’s home language played in school knowledge (García, 2009; 2014). Their work and commitment of *ser maestra* involved being informed and critical about unjust systems and the ways that their teaching challenging those systems by supporting student voice by cultivating critical and independent thinking (Prieto, 2013). The *maestras* cultivated a sense of *familia* (Prieto, 2013), exemplified in what I identified as *estar en familia*. *Estar en familia* was constructed through *consejos y humor*, which in many ways emanated the cultural practices from the home (Carillo, 2006). *Consejos* generally as an empowerment method strengthen families and their children by providing tools for solving school dilemmas. Catalina used consejos to advise and inform students of their human rights. The instances of *humor* that the teachers and students experienced together emerged in the relationship that they developed over time.

Additionally, *humor* was part of the *lenguas* of the everyday that provoked laughter and joy and many times served to alleviate tension (Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013; Falicov, 2001), between classroom members.

In Chapter 6, I illustrate how the parents’ *sitios y lenguas* illuminated the ways in which they chose to resist ideologies of monolingualism and sought ways to cultivate their children’s emergent bilingualism at home (González et al., 1995). The parents’ status as immigrant working class individuals, with U.S.-born children, provided an understanding of central issues that I identified through *familia* [family], *educación* [education], *papeles* [legalization] and *lengua*
Through their *lengua*, the parents described how the home language was a tool for teaching social and cultural values to their children (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Moll et al. 2001; Valdés, 1996). Their *lengua* also functioned to provide *consejos*, cultural knowledge to support their education by providing academic and emotional support (Valdés, 1996). The foundation of *consejos* that were established in the home was also reinforced in the classroom as illustrated in Chapter 4. The following summaries are organized by the central findings discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, which I have outlined above and arranged in the following themes: (student) knowledge, teaching (knowledge) and (parental) participation.

**Opportunities for knowledge production in the classroom.** Learning took on multiple dimensions in this classroom, particularly for emergent bilinguals who require a supportive environment where their home language is valued as a tool for learning. The main points that highlight the significance of this finding focus on how students drew knowledge from home, thus, enacting alternative ways of knowing and illustrating their understandings by forming critical connections between their personal experiences outside of school and their learning in the classroom. Catalina and Adela, as demonstrated in Chapter 4 and 5, facilitated these opportunities. They acknowledged students’ home languages and cultural knowledge as a foundation to build on, rather than as problematic or in need of being replaced by English. Catalina’s hands-on approach to teaching provided students with alternative possibilities and nudges for expanding their contributions. The construction of this space opened the path for knowledge production to occur in a cyclical and dynamic form. Knowledge was produced by a continuous flow of questions, thoughts, and discussion maintained to support understanding. By accessing home and community knowledge, students were able to demonstrate alternative ways of knowing and show how they were building on what they already knew.
Catalina’s enactment of her teaching philosophy had a profound impact on the classroom culture. She provided an explicit and consistent platform for students to voice their opinions and claim agency for themselves. This is apparent in the example where Catalina asked students why they came to school. Some students demonstrated their own agency by asserting their knowledge and themselves as knowers while simultaneously teasing peers by referring to them as not knowing. The teasing in this classroom illustrated the ways these students used language to build relationships and participate with each other. Dyson (2015) reminds us that we must pay attention to these kinds of social participation or “we may severely limit our ability to help children build new capacities on the foundation of children’s everyday practices” (p. 202).

Catalina guided students to find their own voice by building on their knowledge base in order for them to feel confident to speak up for themselves and not allow others to determine or define their abilities. Catalina paid attention to their language use and interactions to build new capacities by drawing from multiple sources to make learning engaging and relevant to all students regardless of their learning style or personality. For instance, she explained how one could not learn how to fly an airplane without knowing how to read, do math, and develop an understanding of geography. She made content areas relevant to real life experiences and imaginable opportunities like flying an airplane. Catalina created opportunities for all students to engage with these ideas, whether they were “talkative” or “quiet.”

Throughout the academic year, I closely observed the ways in which students shared stories from home, their family and community, especially the social dilemmas that they faced as children of immigrant parents. This was possible because Catalina had created a platform for students to share their experiences in their own words that related to work and immigration. In numerous class discussions, the students brought up issues of immigration. Although they ranged
in age from 6 to 7 years old, students discussed issues that were very real to them and their families (e.g., Damian’s comments regarding Obama and deportation). On other occasions, with Catalina’s guidance, they made sense of their multiple identities; they were U.S. citizens, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Peruvian, or Guatemalan, and bilingual. Their linguistic and cultural background was central for establishing students’ prior knowledge in order to make new meaning. For example, the discussion about Easter brought to light students’ knowledge of Catholicism and popular culture representations. However, the act of Catalina modeling her own thinking aloud led students to engage in higher order thinking and differentiate why we do the things we do from how we do things. To get to the why, Catalina reiterated the tools students had for inquiring about what they did not know. In this classroom, students’ ability to build new knowledge came in the form of making critical connections from what they learned from personal experience, family and with peers, and teachers at school.

**Unwavering commitment to teaching.** The significance of critical and independent thinking emerged in the testimonios and platicas from both Catalina and Adela. These themes were evident during whole class discussions, where students had the opportunity to engage with one another, and build on each other’s contribution for a collective foundation. The Columbus Day discussion (discussed in detail in Chapter 5) was an illustrative example of how Catalina’s’ belief system aligned with her instructional practices. In Latin American countries, the arrival of Europeans to the Americas is characterized differently. For example, in Argentina, where Catalina was born, the holiday is referred to as *Día del Respeto a la Diversidad Cultural* (Day of Respect for Cultural Diversity). During this discussion another theme of primary importance arose from students’ home language, although a colonial language became the medium of instruction and learning to think critically and independently. Maintaining Spanish for many
Latina/o communities has become a form of resistance to the hegemony of the English language in the U.S. Furthermore, cultivating bilingualism and biliteracy is not only a refusal to assimilate but also a call for establishing spaces for cultural knowledge and expression.

For Catalina and Adela, their heightened critical thinking skills were a result of their personal experiences growing up in tumultuous political governments. Their experiences informed their participation in discussions that challenged hegemonic educational practices. Their ideas of universality were also closely tied to equity and the resourcefulness of Latina/o communities. Although both Catalina and Adela came from economically privileged backgrounds, and had obtained higher levels of education than many of their students’ families, they too had experienced marginalization based on their ethnic identity and language in the U.S. These commonalities that the teachers shared with the students and families created a sense of estar en familia, being with family. These shared experiences allowed them to see the ways in which families had the capacity to adapt to new environments. They also shared the families’ commitment to maintaining their home language. The teachers and parents’ experiences living in the U.S. shaped their cultural knowledge in the form of consejos [advice], respeto [respect] and educación [education].

**Parental participation in the learning process.** The home was the primary vehicle for children’s learning. The interviews with parents provided me with insights into parents’ experiences as immigrant working class individuals with U.S.-born children. I learned that the home language was a tool for teaching their children social and cultural values. These values were being modified based on these parents’ experiences and understandings of living in the U.S. as immigrants. Through consejos, parents shared their schooling experiences to encourage their children to do well in school and to appreciate the opportunity of being educated in the U.S. For
instance, the example of Adriana sharing her parents’ childhood experiences with corporal punishment in Mexico illustrated how they internalized their parents’ *consejos*. Parents often advised children to be attentive and respectful of their teachers, as teachers were perceived as knowledgeable and highly regarded by the families. Making sure that their children completed their *tarea*, homework assignments was also important to parents. Getting an education represented an opportunity for a better future, especially since many of the children were born in the U.S. *Tarea* was seen as a key step in this process. When parents could not take the lead in overseeing their children’s homework, they structured time, or ensured that someone in the family provided support. Julian’s parents discussed how they modeled their own literacy practices to encourage their children to learn from the texts that they read. Being literate allowed parents, including Julian’s, to engage in overcoming social and economic obstacles.

**Implications**

Viewing classroom instruction through a lens informed by *sitios y lenguas* identifies the ways in which emergent bilinguals’ home languages and cultural knowledge is vital for their overall social, economic and political participation. Teaching is not only social practice, but also a mechanism with the potential to reproduce inequalities. *Sitios y lenguas* as an alternative frame of reference works towards eradicating “the hierarchy of languaging practices that deem some more valuable than others,” which in turn becomes a transformative practice (García & Leiva, 2014, pp. 200). For Latinas/os in the U.S., and in particular for children of immigrants, home languages and cultural knowledge are vital to their knowledge production; whether it be through colonial languages and schooling institutions. In the following section, I outline specific implications for classroom instruction, teacher education and research.
**Classroom instruction.** The voices that emerge in a bilingual classroom are as diverse as the languages, dialects, and cultural practices that children bring with them from their home. This case study sought to unravel the complex process of teaching and learning in a bilingual classroom. While the findings are not generalizable, just as no teacher, student, or classroom culture are alike, there are several lessons that as educators and researchers we can learn from utilizing *sitios y lenguas* as a lens to see elements that allow students to produce their own knowledge. Applying the theoretical tool of *sitios y lenguas* to an elementary bilingual classroom functioned as a unique lens for identifying specific ways in which *sitios* were created and *lenguas* accessed for learning. The classroom environment allowed the home language to become the central vehicle for learning, through the cultivation of opportunities for students to engage in learning across languages as opposed to only-English instruction. A second lesson from this case study is the organization of instructional units. For instance, sufficient time was given for students to process their learning, talk to each other, and discuss with the teacher the connections they were making between academic content and what they knew from home or other personal experiences. Due to this type of interaction, the teacher became better familiarized with students’ personal lives and the ways in which they made sense of their realities and identities. The regularity with which students shared their experiences was indicative of their comfort in the classroom. A major factor that contributed to their comfort and learning was the way in which Catalina acknowledged them as knowers, not just simply learners. In turn, she learned from them, from their stories and experiences, which then guided her approach to classroom instruction. This case study demonstrated the value of educational contexts situated in local language practices and cultural knowledge that recognize the fluid and dynamic ways that emergent bilinguals accessed language for communication (García, 2009). Through their
lenguas, young students were able to build on their dynamic and complex linguistic repertoires to share their own knowledge production and participate in co-constructing new understandings across their developing languages.

**Teacher education.** Educational paradigms that continue to undergird English acquisition as an end goal for children with the capacity, cultural resources, and tenacity for learning in more than one language is a loud and clear message of subordination through academic standards and mandates (Menken, 2006, 2009, 2010; Menken & Solorza, 2014). Nevertheless, teachers, parents, and children through the cultivation and value placed in bilingual voices are questioning and challenging these messages. This study contributes to the research that shows the academic benefit of tapping into children’s linguistic repertoires for classroom learning (DeNicolo, 2010; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Orellana, 2009). There is a need to prepare teachers to understand how language ideologies function, especially English-only; children need to be recognized for their linguistic repertoires, especially by their teachers. Teachers also need to receive the training to understand the dynamic nature of language learning. This study demonstrates the ways in which the teachers, students, and their parents produced knowledge that thrived in the classroom. This knowledge production was possible by cultivating students’ cultural knowledge and utilizing the home language as a primary vehicle for learning. At the same time learning does not occur entirely in one language (i.e., Spanish or English) but rather, in the languages the child uses (García, 2009, 2010). Bilingual teachers who incorporate more than one language for learning academic content are part of a larger dynamic, in which learning is not restricted to the basics (Dyson & Genishi, 2009). When teachers already have a mind frame that the home language is vital for learning they go far and beyond teaching English acquisition (Orellana, Martinez, & Martinez, 2014). The findings from this study indicate the
ways teachers’ instructional practices are aligned with their beliefs about the role of students’ home languages for literacy learning. This means that acquiring a reflective practice is one that needs to guide teacher preparation programs. If teachers have the capacity to understand how power and inequality function, they will be able to see that there are educational paradigms that are problematic, and as a result, become part of the profession that teaches against the grain (Darder & Mirón, 2004).

The teacher’s pedagogical approach in this case study revealed an interruption\(^\text{46}\) in the discourse, a discourse that has presumed that linguistically diverse children only need English as the medium for learning. An interruption rooted in knowledge of second language acquisition and biliteracy development challenging English only instruction as the most effective path for learning. Children need a *sitio* where they can engage with their *lenguas*. Teacher education programs and educators need to prepare future generations of teachers to create their own *sitios y lenguas* in their classrooms. In order to do so, pre-service teachers need courses that prepare them for understanding how language varieties are effective modes of communicating knowledge and how home languages and dialects are not only a source for learning academic English, but also essential for the preservation of family and community knowledge. I encountered children in a classroom with teachers who acknowledged their home language and cultural knowledge and saw how engaged they were in their own learning. The classroom norms were established by utilizing the home language for learning. This meant that learning did not occur in a linear fashion; instead, overlapping utterances and storytelling were regarded as legitimate for producing knowledge. This in turn provided practices that facilitated collective learning. I observed how the bilingual teachers shared stories of their classroom instruction, the

\(^{46}\) I use the word interruption from women of color’s scholarship to mean their contributions in challenging taken for granted discourses of normality (see Carmona, 2012).
successes, the failures and the unexpected during their lunch breaks. Teachers need their own 
*sitio*, spaces to share their work, concerns, and ideas— spaces where they can discuss and
interject in a nurturing environment. For instance, they can share how their students shape the
classroom culture through their personal experiences and stories, how they make sense of events
in their lives by sharing them with each other, how language practices support students’ *lenguas*
for thinking, and how understanding occurs in the *sitios* of the classroom.

**Research implications.** Through this study and its analysis, I have demonstrated that in a
classroom under a transitional program model\(^{47}\) in the early years of formal education, learning
in the home language allows us to see the range of critical thinking and knowledge production
(e.g., Kira’s discussion regarding the local immigration raids). I am not implying that developing
critical thinking does not occur in other educational settings, but that rather, there are factors that
contribute to students expressing themselves freely and having their voices heard in a classroom
setting. For instance, one of the main goals in dual language classrooms is promoting an
understanding of cultural diversity and cultivating cross-cultural friendships in students (Fitts,
2006). According to Fitts “[dual language] programs provide students with spaces within which
to explore the power and efficacy of their multiple languages” (p. 338). Unlike TBE program
models, dual language programs challenge linguistic ideologies that place languages other than
English as a problem (Fitts, 2006; Ruiz, 1984). At the same time, dual language models have the
capacity to reinforce other ideologies by separating the languages in their “standard” form, hence
ignoring linguistic hybridization (Cummins, 2007; Fitts, 2006).

The more opportunities researchers have to conduct studies in these kinds of contexts and
environments, they will continue to better inform the way in which we design educational

\(^{47}\) I purposefully omitted the term *bilingual*, since TBE program models do not support bilingualism in the long
term.
programs for linguistically diverse children and prepare teachers for multicultural and multilingual diverse classrooms. Dual language classrooms are important sites to examine through alternative paradigms, such as *sitios y lenguas*. In these contexts there are assumptions that need to be addressed. For example, the assumption that students have the opportunity to engage with native-speakers and that all members of the classroom become second language learners in the classroom (Fitts, 2006). This assumption ignores a complex continuum in which children learn languages at home and within their larger communities (Smith, 2001). At the same time, another issue to consider is the growing number of English-dominant Latino/a students, complicating labels of “native” speakers that may not always apply to individuals (Block, 2011). Moreover, multilingual settings pose additional questions to consider regarding the separation of languages for instructional purposes. The need for readjusting ideas of bilingual and multilingual practices as flexible and dynamic dependent upon the contextual spaces in which they emerge (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011).

*Sitios y lenguas* in these multilingual contexts would consider the ways in which students utilize plurallinguistic practices (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011) for learning to negotiate and navigate their learning in these settings. Furthermore, plurallingual capacities encompass a complex maneuvering of languages with the objective of communicating within dynamic intercultural experiences. Whether classroom participants are classified as monolingual, bilingual or multilingual, all exercise multiple protocols derived from their social, historical and political experiences to make sense of school and home knowledge. By identifying how home cultural and linguistic practices and school knowledge converge in the classroom (Moll et al., 2001), educators can design curriculum that takes into account local language practices for teaching and learning (Nieto, 2005). I found that in instances where teachers made learning engaging, while
instilling in students a sense of responsibility for their own learning, students became holders and brokers of their own knowledge. The classroom discourse that I observed demonstrated how students were encouraged to take part in their own learning; this in turn made them collectively responsible for the ways in which they constructed and made sense of their realities.

**Directions for Future Research**

I see parallels between *sitios y lenguas* with translanguaging, particularly how both acknowledge the colonization of intellectual knowledge, including language (García & Leyva, 2014). *Sitios y lenguas* can allow teachers to break from traditional conceptualizations of bilingualism and second language acquisition as a singular, linear process from one language to another, but rather see bilinguals as trans-subjects enacting an alternative discourse to language and subjectivity, one that does not look at language as simply a social practice (García & Leyva, 2014), but as a tool for agency. Hence, translanguaging is a sociopolitical process in which alternative representations are generated to uncover conflicting knowledge regarding subjectivity and this subjectivity being the process in which one becomes an active agent in our identity formation (Elenes, 1997; Flores, 1996). According to García and Leyva translanguaging, “is situated in a space where alternative representations and enunciations can be generated because buried histories are released and alternative, conflicting knowledges are produced” (p. 204). In addition, if teachers have an expansive understanding of language to debunking ideologies that reinforce standardization of languages. In particular, the institution of schooling and *Sitios y lenguas* align with translanguaging in how alternative knowledge is produced by marginalized voices to rewrite history, present and future.

I see the ways in which translanguaging can inform future work in early childhood classrooms, especially in bilingual spaces that are constantly being visited by English speaking
substitutes, bilingual, and or Spanish-speaking parents and other English-speaking community members. From this case study, I have observed the ways in which students react, respond, and engage with substitute teachers and visitors that include family and community members. During these events, I observed how young children engaged in their own translanguage or sitios de translenguas (spaces of translanguage). These spaces of translanguage can further inform the ways in which we think about classroom instruction and teacher education.

Another area of study that needs to be further explored are the homes and communities where students develop their translenguas by documenting further how parents engage in discussions regarding their socioeconomic and political identities with their children. Homes are not only spaces where children develop their home language, but also where they are introduced to multiple social, economic and political experiences.

Conclusion

This case study highlights that while bilingual program models may support one approach to language and literacy instruction, the actual implementation of the program model may vary due to a wide variation in district aims, administration support, parental involvement, teacher preparation, and student population. This case study demonstrated that individual teachers possess knowledge of bilingual pedagogy that surpasses the expectations put forth by program models and school districts. The state of the educational system is defined by what is valued, and what truths continue to hold in the American imagination regarding the education of children of immigrants. As this study demonstrated, bilingual teachers need the space and time to collaborate, discuss instructional materials and methods, construct their own theoretical pedagogies, and share stories of joy when a student makes a critical connection or tells a funny joke. This work privileged the ways in which the teachers, students, and parents claimed and
shaped their own *sitios y lenguas* within social contexts that continue to centralize the importance of English acquisition. The teachers, Catalina and Adela, taught with a conviction that took into account each students’ own resources and capacities. The parents knew what was best for their children and supported them in every way they could. Through *sitios y lenguas* I could see how social and discursive practices adhere to all voices counting, there was no single truth and interruptions were read as interjections of new knowledge. By cultivating these practices in an educational context, the classroom becomes an extension of home, *estar en familia*, being with family. As a *familia*, they all did their part in nurturing children’s voices, knowledge production, and critical thinking.
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