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# From Limited-English-Proficient to Educator: Perspectives on Three Spanish-English Biliteracy Journeys

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From Limited-English-Proficient to Educator:  
Perspectives on Three Spanish-English Biliteracy Journeys

by

Elizabeth Visedo

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in Second Language Acquisition and Instructional Technology  
College of Education  
and  
College of Arts & Sciences  
University of South Florida

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Keywords: academic achievement, culturally and linguistically diverse, empowerment, Latino,  
online qualitative research methods

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DEDICATION

Para Pettita

Todo a fuerza de madre

To Pettita

Mother-powered, through it all

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	All but dissertation
C1	Original culture
C2	New culture
CBET	Community-based English tutoring
CLD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CV	Curriculum vitae
E	Email message
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELL	English-language learner
ESL	English as a second language
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
f2f	Face-to-face interview
G	Group interview
GPA	Grade point average
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IT	Instructional technology
J	e-Journal entry
L1	Native language
L2	Second language
LEP	Limited English proficient
LESA	Limited English-speaking ability
NASBE	National Association of State Boards of Education
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NCTE	National Council of Teachers of English
PHC	Pew Hispanic Center
TESOL	Teaching English to speakers of other languages
UG	University of Greatness (a pseudonym)
UHH	University of High Hopes
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
UTT	University of Tough Toil (a pseudonym)



## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this multicase study was to describe and explain the perceptions of three Spanish-English culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) high achievers on their biliteracy journeys to become educators in the United States (U.S.), by answering: What elements constitute the perspectives of three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers on the relevance of their biliteracy experience in order to become educators in the U.S.?; What factors do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive as key to describe their biliteracy experience?; What relevance, if any, do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive their biliteracy experience had for them to become educators in the U.S.?; From the perspectives of these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high-achiever educators, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on their biliteracy experience? With a critical-pedagogy approach to multicase-study (Stake, 2006) inquiry, I used online methods to collect data on three high-achieving (GPA > 3.01) L1-Spanish graduates initially identified as limited-English-proficient by the American school system. For data collection, I used a participant-selection questionnaire, individual and group semi-structured interviews via Skype, e-journals for biliteracy autobiographies, artifact e-portfolios, my reflective e-journal, and one face-to-face unstructured interview with one participant only. Concurrently, I engaged in on-going data analysis to build meaning inductively and guide further data collection, analysis, and interpretation, until saturation, in an application of the dialectical method into research (Ollman, 2008). I included the email communications with the participants and their member checks. Two external auditors reviewed all data-collection and analytic procedures. I analyzed each case individually followed by the cross-case analysis. The findings indicated the importance of family and L1-community support, host-culture insiders as mentors, access to information, empowerment by means of conscientization, and the participants' advocacy of others by becoming educators. In this way, the study identified how the participants escaped

the statistics of doom, which helps understand how to better serve growing L2-English student populations. The study closed with a discussion from the viewpoint of reviewed literature and critical pedagogy, my interpretation of the findings, and suggestions for future praxis in education and research.

**Keywords:** academic achievement, culturally and linguistically diverse, empowerment, Latino, online qualitative research methods

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Literacy, a process some take for granted, provides a human being with membership status in the always dominant literate society (Bown, 2009). For immigrants who live immersed in a linguistic context different from their native language (L1), literacy in the second language (L2) becomes as crucial as L1 literacy. They are embarked in the difficult journey from L1 to L2 literacy, while trying never to leave the port of origin, since there is no return unless biliteracy is maintained.

As a Spanish-English biliterate bilingual myself, I am interested in the transition from L1-Spanish illiteracy to becoming an educator in an English-speaking country, which some culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD, García & Cuéllar, 2006) learners in the United States (U.S.) manage to traverse. In particular, what in their biliteracy journey helps them become educators in the U.S.? Statistics say over 75% Hispanics add to academic drop-out in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). However, research does not say much about those who have successfully breeched the multiple barriers of literacy and biliteracy. How and why do these excel while most lag behind? What in their biliteracy experience empowered them as learners in such a profound way as to choose to become educational agents and serve children who—just as they themselves once did—bear the “stigma” (Valenzuela, 1999, pp. 134 and 139; also see Murillo & Flores, 2002, p. 96) of educational labels such as limited English proficient (LEP)? In order to approach those unanswered questions—how and why some succeed—this study inquired into the perspectives of three front-runners in such distinctive journey.

This introductory chapter frames the study in its contextual background and specifies the theoretical framework. Next, it presents my positioning in biliteracy research, discusses the research problem behind this study, and states the purpose and importance of this inquiry. Then, it includes some necessary definitions of terms and the statement of the questions the

study intended to answer. The chapter concludes with a brief organizational outline of the present report.

### **Contextual Background**

In this section, I delineate the contextual background that made this study worth pursuing. Such background includes the United Nations (U.N.) literacy decade and some national statistics on Spanish and Hispanics, including academic underachievement, i.e., poorer-than-expected academic performance.

#### **At the End of the Literacy Decade**

With the 2003-2012 period designed by the U. N. as the literacy decade over, “literacy for all remains an elusive target,” (UNESCO, 2010, ¶2). One in five adults cannot read or write; there are 776 million illiterate adults; two thirds of them are women, and 75 million children have never attended school (UNESCO, 2009). The U.N.’s literacy decade proposed a renewed vision of literacy more akin to the extended concept of literacy than to the traditional encoding-decoding skills approach (UNESCO, 2005).

At the International Literacy Day Lecture 2009, Dr. Lalage J. Bown, Professor Emeritus at the University of Glasgow, started her opening speech with the story of twelve-year-old Jamillah from Egypt with her own words,

My father promised me that I would have a better chance than my older sisters and he had decided to send me to school. I was so excited and dreamed of the day when I’d have a school uniform and go to school to study. When the time came to enroll, the school rejected me because I had no birth certificate. I missed that year at school but I didn’t give up hope. My father tried to register me in the birth records and get me a birth certificate. But when we started, we discovered it was much more difficult than we expected, as my father doesn’t have a birth certificate either. I’ve never been able to attend school, but I still have one dream: to get a birth certificate and attend literacy classes. (Bown, 2009, Part 1)

With Jamillah’s story, Bown illustrates the barriers imposed on illiterate persons in a mostly literate society directed by literate bureaucrats and “the way in which the non-

literate are both powerless and disempowered” (Bown, 2009). She explains how the literate establishment viewed Jamillah and her father as non-persons because they were not literate. Undeniably, the slogan of the U.N. literacy decade, “literacy as freedom,” is at the base of what free, democratic societies should uphold. Making sure “sectarian schooling does not convert education into a prison rather than being a passport to the wide world” (Sen, 2003, p. 30).

### **Some National Statistics**

Figures show the importance of Spanish is large and growing in the U.S. They also indicate, regrettably, L1-Spanish learners—the population of interest in this study—top underachievement and drop-out rates in America. Some of those statistics follow.

**Spanish in America.** L1-Spanish speakers have been the largest minority group in the U.S. since late 2002. In the first year of the 21st century, the numbers for Hispanic population grew by 4.7% to become 13% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Those 35.5 million constitute 62% of the people aged five or older who speak a language other than English at home in the U.S. (American Community Survey, 2009, Table S1601). Most importantly, the “Projections of the Hispanic Population (Any Race) by Age and Sex for the United States: 2010 to 2050” by the U. S. Census Bureau National Population Projections (2008) anticipates the Hispanic population of the U.S. to be close to 133 million in 2050 (Table 20), which will make the U.S. the country with the largest Spanish-speaking population in the world in less than four decades.

**Educational achievement.** Despite these figures, L1-Spanish speakers are still far from the full exercise of their educational rights. The U.S. Census Bureau (2007) numbers suggest less than 25% of the Hispanic students who enter college obtain a bachelor’s degree. In 2007, almost 12 million of the nearly 30 million Hispanic adults in America had not obtained a high-school diploma, and 0.4 million had no formal education of any kind. Out of the 8.7 million who did finish high school, almost 4.5 million dropped out of college with no degree, only 1.7 million obtained an associate’s degree, fewer than 2.4 million got a bachelor’s degree, less than 0.75 million attained a master’s or professional degree, and just 76 thousand completed

a doctoral degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Similarly, the latest numbers published by NCES (Radford, Berkner, Wheelless, & Shepherd, 2010) for 2003-2004 beginning post-secondary students show, by spring 2009 (i.e. after six years) only 15.9% of Hispanics had achieved a certificate degree, 8.4% had attained an associate's degree, and 16.9%, a bachelor's degree; while 7.5% remained enrolled in a four-year institution; 9.2%, in a less-than-four-year institution; and the remaining 42.1% had dropped out. It seems evident L1-Spanish speakers lag behind in educational achievement in America.

***L1-Spanish students and college.*** As compared with the other minority groups in the U.S., Hispanics have the lowest college-graduation rate. According to the Pew Hispanic Center (PHC, 2004), 16% of Hispanic high-school graduates earn a bachelor's degree by age 29, compared with 37% of non-Hispanic whites and 21% of African Americans. Apart from the assumed lack of role models and educational advice at home, Hispanic students struggle with additional linguistic and cultural issues that make their situation more challenging than for other minorities. Their attachment to the extended family, for instance, weighs more at the time of attending college than the prospects of a degree, owing to expectations to contribute to the family finances and, in the case of females, the tradition to marry young or to stay at the parental home until marriage (PHC, 2004).

***College choices.*** Moreover, Hispanic students are more likely to attend college part-time—a prologue to quitting, according to the PHC—than non-Hispanic black or white populations (defined as self-identification categories by the U.S. Census Bureau). The lower cost and work-compatible schedules of community colleges also make them the preferred choice for Hispanics, especially for quick-employment paths, such as computers and nursing. Noticeably, multiple institutional factors conspire to the poorer secondary-school achievement and lower levels of academic literacy of Hispanics as compared with other minority counterparts (PHC, 2004).

**Implications of L1-Spanish learners' achievement for America.** Research shows connections between underachievement and school-dropout rates, behavior issues in adolescents, and lower job-related standing and socioeconomic status in adults (Hammond,

Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007; Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson, 2000; Stearns & Glennie, 2006). The results of studies looking into college grade-point average (GPA) as a predictor of later achievement, in particular, are controversial. However, a meta-analysis (Bretz, 1989) states “subgroup analyses of success in business and success in teaching suggest that significant relationships do exist” (p. 11). Moreover, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts Hispanics will keep growing as the largest minority group in the U.S. This makes further research related to the academic achievement of L1-Spanish students crucial to prevent eventual psychological, social, and economic consequences, as well as to support the empowerment of these learners towards the full exercise of their educational rights.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The contextual background of L1-Spanish CLD learners’ underachievement and the oppressive impact it bears on their adult lives urge educators and researchers to find paths of empowerment for our growing L1-Spanish student population. Because of its appropriacy to frame empowerment experiences that lead the oppressed to be the writers of their own history, the main educational theory behind this study is critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1972a, 1972b, 1973, 2005; Giroux, 1988a, 1988b; McLaren, 1994, 2002, 2003, 2009)—the educational theory that “helps students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action” (Giroux, 2010, ¶ 1). This section presents the main antecedents of critical pedagogy, its major exponents, and a discussion of the adjournment of critical pedagogy in the L2-English field.

#### **Antecedents: John Dewey and the Frankfurt School**

Dewey and the Frankfurt School are the primary roots of the approach later known as critical pedagogy. Dewey contributed critical thinking and attention to the social context; the Frankfurt School, the frame of critical theory (Greene, 1986). An early critic of modernity and modernism, Dewey (1903/1967) adhered to the view that any proposition recognized as knowledge depends on its adequacy to provide a coherent understanding of the world of human

action. Human action is central in Dewey's thought to the point that a proposition is true (i.e., agrees with reality) if and only if it leads to the resolution of a problematic situation (Dewey, 1907). Likewise, educational pragmatism is about practices that lead to the resolution of educational problems.

In Dewey's (1903/1967) naturalistic logic, human experience of the world derives from transactions with the environment motivated by their practical importance for human action. His theory of inquiry (Dewey, 1938) does not focus on knowing reality but on the practical contextual demands that produce a change in organism-environment transactions. Sensations and ideas mediate human experience only until active inquiry resolves the problematic situation. He recognizes the richness of human experience and its social nature, which symbolic activity—mainly that of language—facilitates. Dewey (1925/1958) believes natural processes and transactions with the environment and cooperative human action mediated by language explain the genesis of the human mind.

Dewey (1922/1950, 1934/2005) also discusses experience as resolution of conflict through variety and creativity. His method of intelligence rests on a flexible, open-ended, experimental, and critical approach to human action. Born in New England in 1859—the same year Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published—Dewey belongs with an era of transformative approaches to science, philosophy, and religion. His advocacy for pluralism and liberation makes him not only a pioneer of the philosophical change in American public education but also a precursor of critical pedagogical thought.

Dewey's creed upholds education should be available to all members of society. He sees the purpose of education is to gain knowledge useful for real life and for the development of the person as a whole, in its ethical, intellectual, professional, personal, and social dimensions. Dewey maintains people learn by doing, through social activity, when they are aware of the relevance of instruction to practical situations. The Deweyan curriculum revolves around daily activities rather than book readings, and Deweyan teachers are responsible for “guiding instead of lecturing and their central role is to assist learning rather than deliver instruction” (Dewey & Dewey, 1915/1962, p. 210).



In Dewey's times, immigration was at a peak but immigrants had no access to education. Dewey advocated the "elimination of caste, class, race, or culture barriers to education" (Dearborn, 1988, p. 64), with a focus on vocational education that would allow immigrants to become productive and support their families. Among other revolutionary concepts, he got rid of the classical Comenius's bench rows to encourage spontaneous groupings around experiment tables or learning guides. Students assumed responsibility for their own learning by selecting contents for which their learning guide would develop whatever was necessary to assist their learning. Dewey's concept of educating the whole person became the founding stone for Freirean critical literacy.

The term critical pedagogy—introduced by Giroux and Purpel (1983)—originated in the work of the Western neo-Marxist critical theorists known as the Frankfurt School, since many of its members were affiliates to the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. Exponents such as Theodor Adorno, Louis Althusser, Bertolt Brecht, Erich Fromm, Antonio Gramsci, Jürgen Habermas, Fredric Jameson, Herbert Marcuse, Antonio Negri, Nicos Poulantzas, and Raymond Williams, made dialectical thought their main analytical tool. As Siegel and Fernandez (2000) explain, "Dialectical thought was a style of analysis that attempted to trace out the historical mediation of facts and their mediation by social forces," (p. 142). Thus, critical scholars, theorists, and pedagogues approach their problems with the method of dialectical thinking, which aids their understanding of mutually interdependent and changing processes, such as multi-literacy, critical thinking, and the construction of knowledge in general.

#### **Exponents: Freire, Giroux, and McLaren**

Consistently, these main exponents of critical pedagogy consider their discipline is a multifaceted and developing critical theory of education, within a view of education for transformation and emancipation (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Burbules & Berk, 1999), as well as a pedagogy of "seeing beyond" (Wink, 2005, p. 25). They are social constructivists for whom all knowledge is contingent to a particular cultural, linguistic, ecological, and temporal context of reference and to particular class, racial, gender, sexual, religious, and physical-ability relations

in a determined society. Critical pedagogy examines the legitimation of certain knowledge as hegemonic for its subsequent distribution at schools as “the” knowledge and into the parallel disempowerment and illegitimacy of all “other” knowledge (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Fernández Aguerre, 2007; Schechter, 2005).

According to Freire, Giroux, and McLaren, critical pedagogy responds to three core principles: (1) Education is never neutral; (2) Critical awareness transforms society; and (3) Praxis links emancipatory education to social transformation. In view of that, critical pedagogues (e.g., Freire, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c; Giroux, 1988a, 1988b; Giroux & Purpel, 1983; McLaren, 1994, 2002, 2003, 2009) uphold a political outlook on education and consider both learners and educators should function as cultural workers (Freire, 2005) or transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1988a), committed to disputing inequity and striving for social justice. Thus, Freire (1972a, 1972b) conceives education as either domesticating or liberating and supports conscientization—which he defines as a process of critical thinking to allow for reading the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987), identifying contradictions, and resisting oppression (Freire, 1970b) with the objective of emancipation, seen as liberation from oppression through interactive participation.

The first of those goals, conscientization (Freire, 1970b), can be reached through many routes, some of which are problem posing (based on the premise that all subject matter is a debatable historical product), dialogue (which embodies equality between learner and teacher), codifications (concrete expressions of representations), and generative themes (topics of concern or importance to learners). Conscientization is the means by which learners and educators can engage in praxis, i.e. the transformation of the oppressive elements of their reality (Freire, 1970b), or as Kincheloe (2008) defines praxis, “action that is informed by social theory for emancipatory outcomes” (p. 67).

With the goal of emancipation in sight, Freire (1970b) depicts oppression as a situation in which either one is exploited by another, or one’s self-affirmation as a responsible person is impeded—symbolic violence in Bourdieu’s terms (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The oppressed are, then, dehumanized individuals, deprived of their vocation to be fully human. While the

oppressors see themselves as human, oppression traps them as well in the status of oppressor. For this reason, Freire regards freedom of oppression as just as emancipatory for the oppressor as for the oppressed and, thus, grants the oppressed the mission of liberating themselves as well as their oppressors.

In oppressive education, learners are empty accounts the teacher fills with knowledge validated for its distribution by the hegemonic class. By means of this banking concept (Freire & Freire, 1994), oppressive education silences the learners' voices and devalues their cultural capital. In contrast, critical pedagogy proposes dialogue based on respect (Freire, 1973), genuine communication (Spener, 1990), collaborative learning (Goulah, 2007; Ochoa & Pineda, 2008), and trust (Heaney, 1995). The oppressor uses hegemony as a domination tool. Conversely, Freirean dialogue is the counter-hegemonic tool for liberation and equity (Apple, 1996).

Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Gramsci, Hoare, & Nowell-Smith, 1971) comprises the infiltration throughout society of a complete system of values, attitudes, beliefs, and ethics, which maintains the status-quo of power relations. Hegemony entails the oppressed's acceptance of the oppressor's leadership as the only possibility (Boggs, 1976). At schools, this is explainable because hegemony becomes invisible through the charms of the hidden curriculum (Giroux & Purpel, 1983)—school structures, practices, procedures, rules, and relationships that ensure the reproduction of the dominant culture (Apple, 1990); or as McLaren (2009) puts it, “the central values, interests and concerns of the social class in control of the material and symbolic wealth of society” (p. 65). By means of critical pedagogy, resistance and empowerment are always possible when teachers and students are aware of their capacity for action and determined to act on the concrete project to be the writers of their own history.

### **Postponements: Critical Pedagogy in L2 English**

Finding ways to explain why critical pedagogy took longer to influence L2-English teaching than other disciplines is not straightforward. Before the late 1970's, L2 teaching and learning focused on the grammatical, lexical, and phonetic aspects of “the” L2 considered as

a single, self-contained whole, i.e. on linguistic proficiency. Since the 1980's, other factors entered the L2 teaching and learning realm, such as culture, identity, learning environment, social roles and status, and ideological, historical, and political contexts (Hinkel, 1999) and, with them, concomitant critical pedagogical perspectives. Canagarajah (2005) explains the delay in critical pedagogy's arrival in the L2-English scene as related to the methods L2 teachers used before the 1980's. Those methods seemed more neutral than the ones that followed, which led to ignoring L2 teaching as linked to geopolitical contexts within the power structure. In any case, with modernism, critical pedagogy found a way into L2 teaching and learning, and critical perspectives multiplied to become almost undistinguishable as critical pedagogy.

Like no other, the concept of critical literacy let critical pedagogy into the L2-English world through several intersecting paths: learners' identities, L2-education research, and the "critical" in teaching and learning and L2-teacher education (Norton & Toohey, 2004). The sociocultural dimensions of teacher and learner identity are rooted in the critical conception of knowledge and self as social constructions. This enables insights into the pre-eminence of the native-speaker ideal (Kramsch, 1993) in L2 teaching and learning, and spotlights the empowerment of non-native English teachers (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1992) in reply to the marked bias against hiring them.

Similarly, the study of learner identity has come to include dialectic relations with their contexts and away from linguistic, racial, religious, or national stereotypes to explain immigrant, multilingual, and gender identities (e.g., Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991; Kubota, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pavlenko, 2001; Ricento, 2005). These authors consider the interrelations at play in learner identity have many connotations for L2 teaching and learning; for example, that the assumption L2 learners are willing to assimilate the L2 culture and lose their linguistic and cultural identities is false, and that their membership in distinct communities needs to be taken into account in order to permit L2 teaching effectiveness and learner empowerment.

While deficiency-marked labels like “non-native speaker” persist, critical pedagogy has supported the inclusion of alternative concepts into L2 teaching, learning, and research; e.g., language expertise, inheritance, affiliation, linguistic repertoire (Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997; Hall, 2002), othering (Kubota, 2001), code-switching (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001), and L2-learner experiences in different settings (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Canagarajah, 2000; Chung, 2006; Flowerdew, 2000; Kubota, 2001; Liu, 1999; Morgan, 2002; Pavlenko, 2001; Pennycook, 1998; Spack, 1997).

Critical pedagogy encourages teachers’ explicit social critique and teachers’ work as a way to change inequity and its understanding. Pennycook (2004) calls this effect emancipatory modernism and finds a weak side of it, namely, reproducing—while critiquing—issues of dominance, inequity, and injustice. In an exemplary self-examination of critical pedagogy, Pennycook believes emancipatory modernism dominated critical L2-English teaching, critical language policy and critical discourse analysis in the 1990’s (e.g., Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 1999). Still, critical approaches to L2 education bring awareness on ideology issues in L2-English teaching (e.g., Ashworth, 1984; Benesch, 1991, 2001), so that both accommodation (product and accuracy approaches) and resistance (process and fluency approaches) are challenged critically in order to unveil ideological factors in L2-English pedagogy (Howard & Dedo, 1989).

Critical educators will always have to reflect on all variables of a teaching situation for their practices to become praxis. Pennycook (1989) proposes a postmethod order for the empowerment of peripheral practitioners to create appropriate methods for their specific contexts, in what sounds like a healthy echo of Deweyan pragmatism.

### **Applying Critical Pedagogy to Educational Research on Biliteracy**

The section above serves the double purpose of framing the study’s philosophical outlook and its methodological principles. This section explains what critical pedagogy contributes to the purpose and methodology of the study; namely, a political approach to literacy and a critical research methodology.

### A Political Approach to L1-Literacy, L2-Literacy, and Biliteracy

Critical pedagogues—entrenched in Dewey’s pragmatism—focus their attention on social justice and emancipation from oppression by means of education. Their conception of literacy reaches further, to a truthful appreciation of “what the written word is, the language, its relationship with the reality of one who speaks and of one who reads and writes, an understanding, then, of the relationship between reading of the world and reading of the word”(Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 45). Subsequently, literacy is seen as both a form of cultural politics that acknowledges difference and also as a form of political solidarity among the diverse. Critical literacy (Giroux, 1988b) allows for critical analysis of the dominant culture and the possibility of transformation. It is, then, a type of cultural politics, one of difference and solidarity. Horning (2004) proposes an updated definition of critical literacy as

the psycholinguistic processes of getting meaning from or putting meaning into print and/or sound, images, and movement, on a page or screen, used for the purposes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation ... [developed] in childhood and across the lifespan and ... essential to human functioning in a democratic society. (pp. 135-136)

Although Horning’s definition suits the digital era, Shor’s (2009) notion of critical literacy as “language use that questions the social construction of the self” (p. 282) allows more interesting connections. In critical pedagogy, teacher education is oriented to empower both teacher and student autonomy within the political context of class struggle, so that they build their identities not only as teachers and students but also in solidarity with the oppressed. Fischman and McLaren (2005) say it clearly,

Teacher education needs to meet the educational tasks demanded by the challenge of the global informational age: from the development of new Marxian, feminist, and anticolonial inspired languages of criticism and interpretation to a praxis that refuses to compromise its commitment to the imperatives of emancipation and social justice. (p. 351)

Like Dewey, Freire (1970b) defines education as freedom. In Freirean thought, conscientization implies opening empowerment paths for the learner to evaluate structures of

power. Hence, Pennycook (1999) promotes a critical approach to teaching English for speakers of other—or “othered?” (p. 332)—languages (TESOL). Another critical pedagogue, Kincheloe (2008), sees the promotion of emancipatory change and the cultivation of the intellect not as conflicting but as compatible roles of education. Thus, critical literacy involves the engagement of higher cognitive functions to achieve connections in oppressor-oppressed terms. Giroux (1988a, 1988b) extends the concept to embrace the historical and social aspects that allow for engagement in the dominant discursive mode, and defines critical pedagogy as a type of cultural politics, “a politics of and for democratic struggles” (Giroux & McLaren, 1994, p. x). Hence, critical literacy provides a fertile starting point to consider the conflictive forces involved in biliteracy, both in instructional and research contexts.

### **Critical-Pedagogy Research**

Following critical pedagogy, new research methodologies, such as personal narratives (e.g. Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), life histories (e.g. Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, & Riazi, 2002), auto-ethnographies, autobiographies, collective stories, in-depth interviews, and qualitative research on task-based learning are growing in presence and appreciation. Canagarajah (2005) points out interesting differences between descriptive and critical approaches to L2-teaching research. Where descriptive approaches isolate each construct in the pairs below and prefer the second component in the pair, critical approaches considers them inseparable. Thus, in critical research, “theory and method” are one because methods are ideological; “interpretation and data” are blended because data collection presumes interpretation, which is never neutral; and “subjectivity and objectivity” are both immersed in the values, intentions, and attitudes of the researchers. The same holds true for the pairs “contextual and universal,” and “applied and disinterested.” Canagarajah adds examples of critical ethnography, action research, participant action research, self-reflexive studies, and critical language socialization as specific critical-pedagogy-based approaches to L2 teaching and learning research with specific genres of research reporting, such as reflexivity, narrativity, multivocality, authorial collaboration, and open-endedness.

### **The Dialectical Method as a Research Approach**

Critical pedagogy embodies the dialectical method not only in its didactics but also in its research outlook. Rooted in a critical framework, this study followed the dialectical method (Ollman, 2008) for data collection and analysis. (1) Ontological moment, i.e., to perceive reality, “an infinite number of mutually dependent processes that coalesce to form a structured whole or totality,” (p.10); (2) Epistemological moment, i.e. to organize thinking for understanding, “opting for a philosophy of internal relations and abstracting out the main patterns in which change and interaction occur,” (p. 10); (3) Moment of inquiry, i.e., to find the relations among parts, “where, based on an assumption of internal relations among all parts, one uses the categories that convey these patterns as aids to investigation,” p. 10); (4) Intellectual reconstruction or self-clarification, i.e., to bring those parts back into a whole, “where one puts together the results of such research for oneself,” (pp. 10-11); (5) Exposition, i.e., to explain the facts taking into account how others think and what they know and “one tries to explain this dialectical grasp of the ‘facts’ to a particular audience,” (p.11); and (6) Praxis, i.e., “based on whatever clarification has been reached, one consciously acts in the world, changing it and testing it and deepening one’s understanding of it all at the same time” (p. 11). I expand on the specific application of such cyclical method in this study in Chapter 3.

#### **My Positioning in Biliteracy Research**

In this section, I disclose my personal background in terms of how it relates to the choice of topic and theoretical framework for my research.

#### **Personal Background**

On February 16, 1960, I was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, into an L1-Spanish home with two different varieties of Spanish, the Castilian Spanish spoken by my father and the Rioplatense Spanish spoken by my mother and the surrounding community. My father was an avid reader and had obtained a technical degree in Madrid. Using newspapers as reading materials and a pen, penholder, and inkpot as writing tools, he taught me how to read, write, and calculate at age three. My mother, an Argentinian, attended only first grade, but she learned how to read, write, and calculate in Spanish. Her literacy skills progressively allowed



her to attain a high level of self-education, and gave me the opportunity to witness her forever on-going development process throughout my life. This situation provided me with perspicuous appreciation of the importance of literacy and of the different literacies involved in two varieties of the same language.

School and learning in general were top priorities in my household, with high standards enforced by the stern vigilance of my father, and celebrated with joy and pride by my mother. I loved school so much that for my secondary studies I managed to enter a technical school with high admittance requirements for mathematics and language. In turn, that solid secondary-education base allowed me to obtain several higher-education degrees, including two degrees in chemistry, one in journalism, three in the teaching of English as a foreign language, one in psychology, and one in education sciences, plus learning additional languages (Portuguese, Catalan, Danish, Italian, French, and a little Basque and Chinese), all long before embarking into a doctoral degree much later in life at age 47.

**Biliteracy experience.** At age seven, when I could already read and write well in my L1 (Spanish), I became a student in an English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) class with a private tutor in my neighborhood, with the double purpose of (1) being able to read the Colliers Encyclopedia my father had bought for my sixth birthday, and (2) understanding The Beatles' songs. This started my L2-English literacy process. The development was more intense during my childhood and teenage years, but it is still ongoing in my fifties. In my personal experience, biliteracy is a life-long process in which I can easily identify key events that contributed to boost—or hinder—its development. Examples of boosters are, for Spanish, the permanent presence of my father's books and for English, reading Oscar Wilde's comedies with my private tutor and sharing my English discoveries with my mother by translating them into Spanish for her. Examples of hindrances are the disdain of my second grade teacher at my Castilian accent, still influenced by my father's Spanish variety, when I read out loud in front of the class; and the day my father called me "inglesita" ("young English lady") jokingly, and I took it as something that drove me away from him. What events can other L1-Spanish bilinguals identify as crucial in their biliteracy lived experience?

An American citizen since 2009, I belong to the 12.4% of the American population five years or older that speak Spanish or Spanish Creole at home, and I am included in the 54.3% that speaks English “very well” (American Community Survey, 2009). I have survived the passage from English illiterate to English proficient successfully with a strong L1 background, an EFL context for my L2-literacy development, and an English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) context entering the picture only in my late forties. Circumstances worked in my favor. However, I wonder what that passage was like for those who emigrated earlier in life, were classified as LEP by the American school system, and managed to escape the statistics that still doom them to academic underachievement and drop-out. How did they endure and excel?

**Teaching experience.** I was thirteen when I became a volunteer literacy instructor in the adult literacy program organized by the Secondary-School Student Federation of Argentina. Twice a week in the evenings, I would visit adult groups in their homes and work with them on how to read and write with Paulo Freire’s approach (Freire, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c; Mayo, 2004). Witnessing how the lives and identities of my adult students changed through literacy, in turn, filled my life with purpose. Later, a thirty-year long professional EFL-teaching career in Argentina confirmed me as what I still am—an advocate and practitioner of educational pragmatism in the Deweyan tradition, a deliberate supporter of critical theory in general, and admittedly and openly Freirean. For these reasons, critical pedagogy is the major theoretical foundation of my approach to education, L2 instruction, and educational research.

After three decades as an EFL practitioner and teacher educator in Argentina, I worked in Elementary education as an English-for-Speakers-of-Other-Languages (ESOL) teacher in California for one year. Later, in 2009, I became a teaching assistant in the ESOL Office at the College of Education of my doctoral university. That opportunity allowed me to become further acquainted with the American ESOL context through professional immersion, which added valuable insights to the knowledge constructed during my doctoral coursework.

### **Discursive Mode Exposé**

According to Piantanida and Garman (1999), to display a qualitative researcher’s chosen discursive mode from the start has the benefit of preventing misunderstandings and

disappointments. While qualitative researchers do not usually occupy themselves proving the suitability of one definition over another in view of its aptness for operationalization and measurement, they do distinguish different “discursive modes” (Piantanida & Garman, 1999, p. xvi) of epistemological engagement. Therefore, each qualitative-inquiry discourse community has its own foci of interest and assumptions, which its members express in recognizable ways. In this subsection, I disclose what Pozzebon (2004) calls “ontological affinity ... a property of the relationship between a researcher and a given theoretical account of social phenomena” (p. 250).

With Bourdieu and Giddens (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Giddens, 1984; Giddens & Pierson, 1998), I prefer approaches that avoid classical dichotomies (such as quantitative versus qualitative research) and embrace pluralism. I uphold an emancipatory approach to educational issues and a conception of literacy as a situated social practice (Heath, 1983; Prinsloo, 2005; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 1993, 1995). Consequently, I take on the responsibility, as life-long educator and novice researcher, to open paths of empowerment for those like Jamillah and her father—whose story I presented at the beginning of this chapter—by overturning those barriers with emancipatory education.

My thirty years as an EFL educator in my homeland, Argentina, showed me how crucial in-service and preservice teachers’ beliefs are for their classroom practices—many a time more decisive than the contents and practices in teacher education and development programs. However, sometimes, my students told me their empowerment as teachers implied their firm determination to respond to the educational needs of the weakest by making a difference in their classrooms. This is, still today, my professional goal. With Reyes and Ríos (2005), I hope to “give voice to a silenced discourse that is often concealed for fear of appearing weak, confrontational, self-pitying, or unscholarly or for fear of numerous other labels that restrain Latina academics and others from discussing issues that need to be examined” (p. 378). I adhere to a critical approach to teaching and research in the hope oppression and inequality will be included in the L2-English picture, not for their reproduction but for their change.

## The Problem

Educational statistics clearly indicate L1-Spanish CLD learners as academic underachievers. The third millennium finds 1.33% of Hispanic adults in America have no education at all, roughly 40% have not attained a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007), and out of those who have, only 16% finish college by age 29—57% less than for non-Hispanic whites and 24% less than African Americans (PHC, 2004). The projections of 113 million Hispanics in America for 2050 (U. S. Census Bureau National Population Projections, 2008, Table 20) show how crucial it is for teacher educators to prepare teachers not only for growing diversity but also for growing numbers of L1-Spanish speakers in American classrooms (American Community Survey, 2009). Although educational research explains the underachievement and drop-out of L1-Spanish CLD learners in American schools from different angles, the question remains how and why some L1-Spanish CLD learners succeed. Research has frequently disregarded the above-average data in the statistical studies, i.e. those L1-Spanish CLD learners that do graduate from college and are high achievers.

With technologies added to the mix, research is even scarcer. The report of the NASBE e-Learning Group (NASBE, 2001) and the Virtual Schools Forum Report (U.S. Department of Education & Converge Magazine, 2002) remark on how digital technologies are transforming the educational process from school centered to student centered. The reports observe both public-policy makers and private-education businesses recognize the potentials of digital technologies and e-learning to improve educational access, options, and equity. However, as we focus on the biliteracy development of those L1-Spanish CLD learners who excelled academically and decided to become educators in the U.S., we still do not know how, if at all, digital technologies impact those L1-Spanish CLD educators' perceptions of their biliteracy experience.

The experience of biliteracy as lived by those high achievers in a way that led them to pursue careers in education was a compelling source of evidence for clues on decisive elements to their academic achievement. This gap in research claimed for studies to advance our understanding of the Spanish-English biliteracy experience. What this type of research revealed

adds to the existent knowledge on how to improve the educational experience of L1-Spanish CLD learners in American schools.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this multicase study was to describe and explain the perceptions of three Spanish-English CLD high achievers on their biliteracy journeys to become educators in the U.S. I sought to identify what allowed them to escape the statistics of doom so as to inform additional ways to serve growing L2-English student populations.

### **Exploratory Questions Guiding the Study**

The focus of the study was the experience of biliteracy from the perspective of three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD learners who graduated as high achievers and became educators in the U.S. The main exploratory question that guides the study is: What elements constitute the perspectives of three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers on the relevance of their biliteracy experience in order to become educators in the U.S.? The exploratory sub-questions are: (1) What factors do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive as key to describe their biliteracy experience?; (2) What relevance, if any, do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive their biliteracy experience had for them to become educators in the U.S.?; (3) From the perspectives of these three L1-Spanish/ L2-English CLD high-achiever educators, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on their biliteracy experience?

### **Importance of the Study**

Although theory, method, and praxis are dialectically intertwined in critical pedagogy, I present the theoretical, methodological, and practical importance of the study below and focus on each separately for explanatory purposes.

#### **Theoretical Importance**

The study expanded and deepened previous research on Spanish-English biliteracy, CLD learners, the connections between L1-Spanish CLD learners and academic attainment, and their empowerment from the perspective of critical pedagogy. It also intended to consolidate critical pedagogy as an appropriate theoretical framework for the understanding of literacy and

biliteracy issues. Likewise, it envisioned to ratify the relevance of critical pedagogical principles for CLD instruction. It postulated if L1-Spanish CLD educators perceived their biliteracy experience as meaningful for their identity and empowerment, the study would provide critical pedagogy with a powerful enactment against oppression and in favor of emancipatory biliteracy.

### **Methodological Importance**

In order to do that, this inquiry employed qualitative methods so as to provide richer investigative contributions to education. In particular, the study showed the potential advantages and disadvantages of applying digital technologies as qualitative data collection techniques, which provide case-study methodology with rich data collection and on-going analysis tools. In this respect, the use of e-journals in the form of blogs, e-portfolios for artifact collection, digital recording and transcription software, teleconference for interviews, and a researcher's reflective e-journal illustrated new avenues for technology-infused qualitative research methods. As regards analytical methods, the critical interpretive approach used as on-going data analysis endorsed the application of the dialectical method (Ollman, 2008) in qualitative educational inquiry.

### **Practical Importance**

The insights contributed by this study of the perspectives of three L1-Spanish CLD educators on their biliteracy experience may serve to open a path for more equitable research on L2-English bilingual and biliterate educators. The study intended to make instructional designers, literacy instructors, and L2-English teacher educators aware of the advantages and drawbacks of the biliteracy experience, and of how that experience may impact CLD learners' academic attainment and their adult lives. Furthermore, it intended to inform policymakers in their decisions about educational issues, such as the funding, design, and evaluation of CLD identification, instruction, and assessment.

### **Definitions**

In this section, I provide definitions of some terms used in this study in alphabetical order. These definitions are in tune with the pragmatic approach exposed above, which means

the definitions hold on as truths as long as they work in service of the study. I examine these concepts more extensively in Chapter 2.

### **Biliteracy**

In accordance with the continua of biliteracy model (Hornberger, 1989, 1990, 2002, 2004, 2007) presented in Chapter 2, Cahnmann (2003) defines biliteracy as “any and all micro instances of communication that take place along a continuum of bilingual-monolingual norms within oral-literate modes and traditions that can change and be changed by macro social structural contexts” (p. 188). This is the definition of biliteracy adopted in this study.

### **Code-Switching**

Following Gardner-Chloros (1995), I use this term not as a binary choice speakers make between two available codes (in this study, Spanish and English) at a given time, but as the overlap of codes, difficult to identify, in a bilingual mixture, in which both codes have “fuzzy” (p. 40) boundaries.

### **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners**

In this study, I employ CLD to refer to those learners who have a home language other than English in the U.S.

### **Culture Shock**

Following Hofstede (1997), I understand culture shock as a “state of distress following the transfer of a person to an unfamiliar cultural environment” (p. 260).

### **Educator**

In this study, an educator is a teacher, an administrator in education, or a graduate student in the field of education, who has obtained a four-year college degree and is working or planning to work with learners in the U.S.

### **High Achievers**

I use this term to refer to those who graduate public college with a grade point average (GPA) that is above the national mean of 3.01 (Rojstaczer, 2009; Rojstaczer & Healy, in press), i.e., GPA>3.01.

## **Identity**

Following Phinney (2004), I consider identity formation is more complex for persons in minority groups, as they lack the status, power, and representation of the majority group, and face prejudice and discrimination. For this reason, in this study, I restrict the term identity to the concept of ethnic identity as the understanding of ethnic group differences, the implications of those differences, and of strategies to relate to those in and out of their group with self-worth in response to prejudice.

## **L1-Spanish**

I use L1-Spanish as a general term for the home language and culture of the Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**The need for an unbiased term.** I purposefully avoid the use of the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino/a*, when possible, to avoid misperceptions. From a critical-pedagogy perspective, Hispanic may be seen as the term chosen by the dominant culture in the U.S. to refer to an ambiguous population—sometimes those whose L1 is Spanish, sometimes those born in a Spanish-speaking country in the Americas. At the same time, members of that population prefer to call themselves *Latinos/as*, a term with a positive connotation as perceived by those who speak Spanish as their L1 in the U.S. (Acuña, 1981; Shorris, 1992). For the U. S. Census Bureau, Hispanics are those who self-identify as such, so the term seems to be associated more with cultural aspects than with language, race, or origin—thus, the need to introduce L1-Spanish as a denotative term with no connotative implications.

## **L2-English**

Here, L2-English refers to those who learn English after an L1 has been developed, even if English has since become the main language for communication.

## **Language Shock**

Following Washburn (2008), language shock is a feeling of confusion, frustration, and alienation in response to unexpected linguistic features that hinder communication. Its characteristic components are self-blame (e.g., for not understanding), hopelessness (e.g., when efforts do not seem to work), and boredom (e.g., loss of interest).



### **Organization**

This dissertation follows a traditional organization. In Chapter 1, I have presented the contextual background, the theoretical framework, my positioning in biliteracy research, the research problem, the purpose of the study and its importance, definitions of terms, and the exploratory questions. This organizational outline closes Chapter 1. Next, in Chapter 2, I review literature relevant to the study. In Chapter 3, I explain the design and methods I used in order to collect data and analyze them. Then, in Chapter 4, I present the three individual cases and findings for each. In Chapter 5, I present the cross-case analysis, and my interpretation of the analysis to address the exploratory questions, discussion with selected literature, conclusions, and suggestions for educational implications and future research.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The purpose of this multicase study was to describe and explain the perceptions of three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers on their biliteracy journeys to become educators in the U.S. The main exploratory question was: What elements constitute the perspectives of three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers on the relevance of their biliteracy experience in order to become educators in the U.S.? The exploratory sub-questions were: (1) What factors do these three L1-Spanish/ /L2-English CLD high achievers perceive as key to describe their biliteracy experience?; (2) What relevance, if any, do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive their biliteracy experience had for them to become educators in the U.S.?; and (3) From the perspectives of these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high-achiever educators, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on their biliteracy experience?

This chapter presents a review of literature relevant to the study, divided into four sections. The first section, on literacy, offers an overview of the concept of literacy for the 21st century and identifies L1 literacy and L2 literacy as synergetic elements in the biliteracy spectrum. The second section deals with biliteracy specifically. It presents the continua of biliteracy model and relevant research connected to the contexts, media, content, and development of biliteracy. The third section exposes relevant literature on the population of interest for this study, i.e., L1-Spanish CLD learners. The chapter closes with the identification of the research gap the study intends to fill.

### **Literacy in the 21st Century**

The concept of literacy—understood as the ability to read and write until recently—has come a long way since its redefinition by Scribner and Cole (1981) and Heath (1980, 1983). It is apparent various fields see literacy in diverse ways, with dissimilar emphases on different aspects of literacy in accordance with the discipline. On the word of Kucer and Silva (2006),

linguists emphasize language and text; cognitivists look into the mental processes involved in making meaning around text; developmentalists investigate the processes implicated in learning to read and write; while socio-cultural theorists focus on the cultural context in which children make meaning of the world around them (e.g., Pérez & McCarty, 2004). However, Kucer and Silva believe all these are aspects of literacy, and none should be overlooked.

Among the contributors to a new concept of literacy for the 21st century, new literacies (Barton, 1994; Coiro & Dobler, 2007; Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008; Gee, 1991, 1996; Lankshear, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1997, 1998; Lankshear & Lawler, 1987; Street, 1993, 1995), the New London Group (Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, et al, 1996), and biliteracy research (e.g., Escamilla, Geisler, Hopewell, & Ruiz, 2006; Escamilla, Hopewell, Geisler, & Ruiz, 2007; Hornberger, 2003; Pérez & Torres-Guzmán, 2002) have made the most impact.

Practices such as chatting, instant messaging, blogging, twitting, emailing, social networking, and podcasting fall under the study of new literacies (Black, 2008; Coiro, 2003; Gee, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Kist, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Lessig, 2005; Leu, 2001; Leu, Coiro, Castek, Hartman, Henry, & Reinking, 2008; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004; Leu, Zawilinski, Castek, Banerjee, Housand, Liu, & O'Neil, 2007; Prensky, 2006); which, although conceptualized in different ways by different scholars, usually “refer to phenomena we would see as falling broadly under a new literacies umbrella” (Coiro, et al, 2008, p. 10). Stemming from the seminal works of Heath (1983) and Street (1984), new literacy studies maintain reading and writing should be studied in their social and cultural contexts of which they are nothing but practices. Therefore, in the new literacies view, meaning making only makes sense when contextually situated.

In addition, the New London Group coins the term multiliteracies (Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, et al, 1996) to incorporate the changes in communication originated by the use of digital technologies through “the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity” (¶ 11). Finally, biliteracy research (Escamilla, Geisler, Hopewell, & Ruiz, 2006; Escamilla, Hopewell, Geisler, & Ruiz,

2007; Hornberger, 2003; Pérez & Torres-Guzmán, 2002; among others) proposes there is more to biliteracy than literacy in two languages, and takes into account the complex synergy produced by L1 and L2 literacies.

As a result, in the 21st century, the study of literacy includes new literacy studies (Street, 1984), multiliteracies (Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, et al, 1996), and biliteracy. Although in the literature the term literacy usually refers to L1-literacy, in this section (honoring my belonging to the second language acquisition field), I include and distinguish L1 literacy and L2 literacy and consider both social practice, as above.

### **L1 Literacy**

First or native language (L1) literacy brings about a cognitive and affective revolution (Bown, 2009) regardless of age and circumstances. In the past few decades, leading researchers (Scollon & Scollon, 1981, 2002; Street, 1984, 1993, 1995) focused much of their work on L1-literacy development. Research has shown becoming literate is a complex process, which engages not only the learners' cognition, affect, and emotions, but also their identities and backgrounds as a whole (Bean & Moni, 2003). What is more, the 21st century has expanded the literacy discussion. Included in the documents for the literacy decade, the UNESCO definition of literacy comprises context, use, and participation,

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts.

Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and potential and participate fully in community and wider society. (UNESCO, 2005, p. 21)

The U.N. is well aware of how literacy policies have a potential for liberation or domination. "Literacy is not in itself liberating—that depends on the way it is acquired and used, aspects that are socially determined" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 15). A fundamental element of interest in the U.N. definition of literacy is the concept of a continuum of learning, especially because it moves away from the literate-illiterate dichotomy and its oppressive effects.

Notwithstanding that, it seems to leave out 21st century liabilities such as digital technologies and cross-cultural issues.

That shortcoming is what the National Council of Teachers of English address in the extended, complex, and contextualized definition of literacy adopted by their Executive Committee on February 15, 2008. Literacy is:

a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups ... [that entails] ... a wide range of abilities and competencies ... [which] ... are multiple, dynamic, and malleable ... [and enable] ... [t]wenty-first century readers and writers ... to [d]evelop proficiency with the tools of technology; [b]uild relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally; [d]esign and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes; [m]anage, analyze and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information; [c]reate, critique, analyze, and evaluate multi-media texts; [and] [a]ttend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments. (NCTE, 2008 b, ¶1)

**Digital technologies and L1 literacy.** From carving on stone to digital technologies, literacy has evolved with the tools it employed. Scholars at the University of York state the connection between information and communication technologies (ICT) and literacy clearly, Technology has an intimate relationship with literacy: the ability to make marks on rock, the invention of the stylus and of parchment, the printing revolution, the more recent ICT revolution. All these stages in the development of what it means to be literate (and, by implication, illiterate) are tied up with the means by which literacy is expressed. (Andrews, Robinson, & Torgerson, 2004, p.3)

Clemmitt (2008) warns “research data could be a bit off base because the meaning of literacy is changing so fast that young adults may not identify themselves as readers and writers even when they read and write daily” (p. 171). In the same vein, the CIBER research team at University College London (David Nicholas, Ian Rowlands, David Clark, Peter Williams, David Brown, Anthony Watkinson, and Tom Nicholas) have been studying the Google generation for

several years. One of their recent reports on online library reading behavior (Rowlands, et al, 2007) recounts observational studies on how future male researchers scan online pages rapidly and make extensive use of hyperlinks rather than sequential reading. Most online library users in their studies do not use advanced search options but rely on search engines understanding their requests. More importantly, the team has found users spend so little time reading or understanding information that they find it hard to judge the relevance of the material they retrieve.

While recent research at Harvard University tends to demystify any particularities in the learning, technological literacy, or personality traits in the digital era (Bullen, Morgan, Qayyum, Belfer, & Fuller, 2009), others still claim the nature of learning, acting, and thinking has changed (Reeves & Oh, 2007; Rickes, 2009; Tapscott, 1998, 2009). These conflicting assertions demand further educational research on digital technologies and literacy. The infusion of digital technologies in the literacy field has brought about numerous complexities, clearly reflected in the diversity of research in the literature, with examples of dissimilar designs, from action research (e.g., de Almeida Soares, 2008), through other qualitative inquiries (e.g., Buck, 2008) and mixed methods (e.g., Englert, Manalo, & Zhao, 2004), to rigorous experimental designs (e.g., Breland & Lee, 2007).

As regards the findings of such studies, it is of interest that digitally assisted writing (Englert, et al., 2004) seems to encourage longer written products, more careful draft revision, slightly improved writing quality, and increased motivation and collaboration when elementary writers use computer-based assistance; which also relates to the incorporation of more genre specific characteristics. Those findings support previous research (Rüschhoff & Ritter, 2001) and are, in turn, supported by research that followed (Krentler & Willis-Flurry, 2005). There also seems to be consensus in the crucial role of the teacher in scaffolding and monitoring their students' use of technology (Murray, 2005), which points to pedagogy as more relevant to effective use of technology than technology itself.

Other researchers found some discomfort reading on the monitor (Ho & Savignon, 2007), while Buck (2008) revealed inappropriate use of available technologies. Matsumura and

Hann (2004) saw that given the choice between computer-based and face-to-face feedback, students choose according to the level of their computer anxiety, while online indirect feedback was effective, and receiving any form of feedback was better than no feedback at all. Discussion and reflection on their writing processes (Sullivan & Lindgren, 2002) made writers more confident; and struggling writers profited more from computer writing assistance than other populations.

Research on multimedia and literacy expresses the need for understanding the processes involved in the use of multimedia for writing. Nelson (2006) investigates what forces impact the design of multimodal texts and what happens to meaning and semiotic awareness in multimodal contexts. Nelson's study found genre was the most robust feature in multimodal writing because the writer feels a multimodal, multi-generic text does not respect conventions. At the same time, dissonance shows emergent semiotic awareness and the writer's accommodation to the expectations of the audience. Other findings include some benefits of multimodal writing, namely, resemiotization via repetition, recognition of language topology, and amplification of authorship; and also an obstacle to the expression of agentive voices.

## **L2 Literacy**

Becoming literate in L2-English is as complex a process as L1-literacy development and, likewise, engages learners cognition, affect, and emotions (Chung, 2006; Cranitch, 2010; Fu, Houser, & Huang, 2007; García, McCardle, & Nixon, 2007; Paquette & Rieg, 2008; Rieg & Paquette, 2009). As early as 1981, Scollon and Scollon draw attention to L2-English literacy as interethnic communication, and warn literacy instruction should reflect the out-of-school needs of the learners. Street (2005) supports a critical approach to L2-English, despite the literacy or biliteracy level of the learners. Many educators of adults (Auerbach, 1996; Ferguson, 1998; Purcell-Gates & Waterman, 2000) show how to include the basics of language while empowering students culturally, socially, and politically. After many articles and books, a few years before his death, Ron Scollon (2004) still emphasizes language pedagogy as a powerful political tool.

Taking both contextual and developmental factors into account, Bertha Pérez (2004) points out children need to “observe literate behaviors and have experiences with literate others around print” (p. 25) in order to develop literacy. When L1 literacy is developed through that means, most children have already mastered their L1. For CLD children, however, Pérez remarks the requirement to develop L2 literacy comes at a time when their L1 literacy is not fully developed and when the L2 is not fully mastered, which adds complexity to the literacy context and development of CLD children. “Learning to read and write is not as natural a process of acquisition when you are confronted with these tasks in a language you have not fully mastered” (p 25).

A close look at L2-English literacy development (Kim, 2005) shows how multifaceted and transforming the process is for CLD children. In her doctoral dissertation, Kim studied how four second- and third-grade CLD students developed their L2 literacy in an elementary school in the U.S. She found interactions and engagement in meaningful tasks are crucial for the construction of meaning. CLD learners use different strategies that vary with the level of the task and the tools available and stem from the learner’s culture.

**Digital technologies and L2 literacy.** With the addition of technology, the acquisition of L1 literacy and L2-English literacy incorporates new complexities and challenges (Kasper, 2002; Rance-Roney, 2010; Rose, 2004). Computer-assisted language learning has been a major attempt to integrate technology into L2 learning, L2-English in particular, where its development expands over 40 years. The distinctive characteristics of reading materials available via digital technologies have made scholars suspect of their potential effects on literacy. Differences in format and syntax, semantic features and lingo, as well as expanded possibilities for hyperlinks, navigation, audio, visuals, and the emergence of new genres have prompted studies on the impact of digital technologies on L1 and L2 literacy. Thus, research on L2 literacy and technology has grown lately, mostly focusing on computers, multimedia, and the internet.

Such research seems to reveal, when it comes to the impact of online technologies on L2-English literacy, success appears more linked to pedagogical grounds than to technological



ones—as the role of the teacher becomes essential for effective infusion of digital technologies into the classroom. For example, only after practicing with blogs in class (de Almeida Soares, 2008), did students become active outside the classroom and see blogs as a learning tool. Similarly, students conducting online research under teacher guidance (Kasper, 2002) raised their awareness of the need to evaluate online resources carefully and critically, which raised their confidence to use the Internet for research. At the same time, students felt they developed linguistic, academic, social, and technical skills, useful for their academic and professional performance. Moreover, in a study on how the Internet may influence literacy, Stapleton (2005) concludes the Internet may be a determinant of students' interests, mainly dependent on the language of the online source. The students in his study misidentified website genres and quality, and still used keywords as their almost exclusive approach to searching the Internet, which shows the intricacies of digital literacies.

Still, the authors of the studies reviewed for this section seem to agree technology offers benefits for students' L2-English literacy when the learning objectives are clear and students are trained in the use of the tools for educational purposes. The role of the teacher is constantly highlighted in the discussion sections: being informed about technologies, encouraging students to use appropriate tools, training them to do so, evaluating tool reliability and appropriateness, teaching students appropriate strategies to judge technology by themselves, and the ethical issues involved, for example, in netiquette and plagiarism. These are exposed as new responsibilities educators need to face in the digital age.

In the last decade, the meaning of literacy itself has evolved side by side with new technological developments (Clemmitt, 2008; Rowlands, Nicholas, Huntington, Gunter, Withey, et al., 2007). Moreover, when new technologies enter the educational realm, cultural differences may stand out (Downey, Wentling, Wentling, & Wadsworth, 2005).

### **Biliteracy in the 21st Century**

Although there has been a tendency to approach the concept of biliteracy by applying the concept of literacy to two languages instead of one, there may be more to biliteracy than literacy in two languages. The definitions proposed by Pérez and Torres-Guzmán (2002)

exemplify how the definition of biliteracy is usually derived from the definition of literacy. They define literacy as a “set of cultural practices that includes the encoding and decoding of print...that is used to convey a message that has specific shared meaning for a group of individuals in a particular context” (p. 4). Correspondingly, for them biliteracy is “the acquisition and learning of the decoding and encoding of and around print using two linguistic and cultural systems in order to convey messages in a variety of contexts” (p. 60). In the U.S., one specific characteristic of the context is multiculturalism and immigration, with the resulting culture shock as a likely aspect.

In the neurological realm, recent research shows a bilingual brain does more than just duplicate linguistic skills (Bialystok, 2010; Bialystok, Craik, & Freedman, 2007; Bialystok, Craik, Grady, et al., 2005; Bialystok, Craik, Klein, et al., 2004; Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2008; Bialystok, Luk, & Kwan, 2005; Craik, Bialystok, & Freedman, 2010; Curtin, Byers-Heinlein, & Werker, 2011; Kroll, Van Hell, Tokowicz, et al., 2010; Luk, Anderson, Craik, et al., 2010; Luk & Bialystok, 2008; Martin-Rhee & Bialystok, 2008; Morford, Wilkinson, Villwock, et al., 2011). In a synergic way, the bilingual brain is more plastic and at a lower risk of degenerative diseases. Therefore, understanding and conceptualizing biliteracy may not be so simple as understanding L1 and L2 literacy.

In this section, I present some concepts related to culture shock, and review relevant literature on biliteracy, including the continua of biliteracy model (Hornberger, 1989, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) and current research on biliteracy contexts, media, content, and development, in order to give a conscientious view of biliteracy.

### **Culture Contact**

An additional obstacle CLD students usually face is reacting to culture contact with culture shock. Although the culture contact comprises both within- and between-society types of intercultural contact (Bochner, 1982), the majority of the research on culture shock has looked into the latter. In the U.S., both types of intercultural contact occur. Within-society intercultural contact—which includes African Americans, immigrants, and refugees—is usually

called multiculturalism (Fowers & Richardson, 1996), while between-society intercultural contact (Ady, 1995) also occurs in the case of tourists, missionaries, businessmen, and international students coming to the U.S.

Most culture shock research builds upon Oberg's (1960) seminal work on changes of emotional adjustment over time in short-term visitors nowadays called sojourners. Later research showed the outcomes of intercultural contact are far more complex for those who stay longer in a different host culture, such as most international students, refugees, and immigrants (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Pedersen, 1999; Ward, 1996). Next, I will briefly expose the main assertions in the literature as they relate to the findings in this study.

**Similarity-attraction principle.** Byrne (1969) predicts individuals tend to prefer people who share their characteristics (interests, values, religion, group affiliation, skills, physical attributes, age, language), including cultural aspects (Bochner, 1996).

**Culture-distance principle.** Cultures can be arranged on a continuum where more similar cultures are closer and more different cultures are further apart (Hofstede, 1980; Williams & Best, 1990). The culture-distance principle predicts the greater the cultural distance between individuals, the more difficulties they will experience (Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Ward & Searle, 1991).

**Categorization and stereotyping.** Individuals tend to classify others as members of a group (Abrams & Hogg, 1990): their own (in-group) or other (out-group). Usually, people in the in-group are preferred (Tajfel, 1970, 1981), and people in the out-group are stereotyped, i.e., seen as the holders of traits assigned by the perceiver (Ward, et al., 2005).

**Primary socialization.** The acquisition of primary values in childhood results in the individual's belief system, whose change is highly resistant, used to make meaning of reality and considered as absolute truth (Deaux, 1976). The potential for conflict between different systems is apparent.

**Cultural syndromes.** Cultural syndromes are patterns of attitudes, beliefs, norms, and behaviors that cause difficulties in intercultural interactions (Triandis, 1990). Triandis identifies three major syndromes; namely, degree of cultural complexity, tightness-looseness,

and individualism-collectivism, differences in which are likely to result in difficult intercultural interactions (Hofstede, 1983; Kim et al., 1994; Triandis, 1995a). Thus, since people from tight cultures value certainty, security, and predictability, they may perceive people from loose cultures as unreliable and undisciplined, and consequently reject them.

**Intercultural contact dimensions.** Bochner (1982) identifies the following cultural dimensions as useful for the description of intercultural contacts: time-span (short, e.g., tourists; medium, e.g., international students; and long term, e.g. immigrants and refugees); purpose (recreate, study, and make a life; for the examples above); involvement (e.g., observe or participate).

**Intercultural contact outcomes.** In a cross-cultural situation, individual responses vary along a continuum of accommodation, with varied impacts on the host society (Bochner, 1982; Ward, et al., 2005). The literature includes two maladaptive reactions. When the individual rejects the original culture (C1) and adopts the new culture (C2), the effects on the individual are loss of ethnic identity and self-denigration, while that on the host society is assimilation (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Stonequist, 1937). When the individual rejects C2 and holds on to C1 (Tajfel & Dawson, 1965), the effects on the individual are racism and nationalism, while intergroup friction appears in the host society. In other two cases, the outcomes allow for better adaptation. When the individual fluctuates between C1 and C2, feeling comfortable in neither (Park, 1928) the outcomes on the individual are identity confusion and overcompensation, while the host society presents reform and social change. Lastly, Bochner and Ward present an individual who can synthesize both cultural identities, for integration at the personal level into bicultural or multicultural personalities, and pluralism in the host society. These concepts of culture contact are in the core of the biliteracy experience, since biliteracy deeply relates to biculturalism.

### **Identity**

Of particular interest is Kim's (2005) finding of a reciprocal link between the development of L2 literacy skills and identity, expressed by language choice, shock, preference, and L1-attrition awareness, enforced by home culture and parental beliefs, and

characterized by its unending dynamic adjustment. One of Kim's (2005) participants' nationality identification evolved "from Japanese to Japanese American as his English proficiency increased" (p. 255), which exemplifies how L2 proficiency can influence identity. Another one is, in turn, an instance of the reciprocal, as his cultural identity motivated him to learn Korean better. A third one chose her L1 to establish her self-assertion by means of a forceful "No quiero" (p. 256), used instead of the L2 "I don't want to." Kim's fourth participant—a sufferer of L2 shock—felt isolated and terrified when not being able to communicate with his classmates in English, which hindered his L2 literacy development even further.

A complex process, the development of ethnic identity interests researchers in several fields, such as sociology, psychology, and ethnic studies. One of its most salient scholars, Jean Phinney, describes its different stages and components. Among the components, Phinney (2004) defines commitment as "the strength of one's ties with a particular ethnic group" (¶12), and exploration as "the process of examining and experimenting with alternative directions and beliefs" (¶11). Moreover, commitments appear in two types, without and with exploration, i.e., foreclosure (the unexamined commitment typical of childhood), and achievement, which implies awareness and a close examination of meanings, implications, history, culture, and status (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997).

In 1993, Phinney developed a model of ethnic identity development in three stages; namely, unexamined ethnic identity (with no exploration), ethnic identity search (triggered by a crisis to start questioning and exploration), and ethnic identity achievement (characterized by a clear sense of ethnic identity, an understanding of the implications of such membership, the decision to raise children in that culture, and the ability to deal with stereotypes and discrimination). In an application of her measure of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992), Phinney (2004) finds ethnic identity commitment correlates with indicators of psychological wellbeing more than exploration does, while ethnic identity exploration correlates with perceived discrimination more strongly than commitment. Her contributions are valuable in multicultural educational contexts.

## The Continua of Biliteracy

While 40 years ago being biliterate implied just reading and writing proficiently in two languages or more (Hornberger, 2007), in the 21st century biliteracy involves “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing” (Hornberger, 1990, p. 213). The continua of biliteracy model (Hornberger, 1989, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) sheds light on the gray areas between L1-literacy, L2-literacy, and bilingualism. Hornberger reviews extensive literature on these three areas, which results in a comprehensive model to understand biliteracy.

Hornberger (1989, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) uses the concept of continua in order to “convey that, although one can identify (and name) points on the continuum, those points are not finite, static, or discrete” (Hornberger, 2003, p. 5). Based on Corson’s (1999) view of language as the channel and vehicle for the identification, manipulation, and change of power relations for human purposes; Hornberger reckons “an emerging explicit emphasis on power relations in the continua model” (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000, p. 98). The identification of weaker and more powerful ends in each continuum highlights how some types of knowledge are valued by the hegemonic culture while others are devalued.

Hornberger (2004; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) advocates for a critical approach to biliteracy in the belief that biliteracy policies and practices have privileged “one end of the continua over the other such that one end of each continuum is associated with more power than the other” (2004, pp. 158-159). Her considerations become clear in the light of Bourdieu’s concept of critical reflexivity (Bourdieu, 1988; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979; Bourdieu, Passeron, & De Saint Martin, 1996; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), through which scholars become aware of their own social-class prejudices in order to avoid their reproduction. For Street (1996), critical reflexivity becomes a crucial tool for the transformation of existing power relations. Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) agree with the approach Street bases on Foucault and Bourdieu; namely, that power will be different

depending on context, discourse, and symbolic capital; and, therefore, to achieve change, it is more relevant to focus on the process of power than on its quantity.

With this in mind, Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester identify the privileged ends of each continuum, not to maintain oppression, but to show paths of transformation through the critical reflection of policy makers, educators, and researchers—in particular, those involved with CLD learners. The critical approach of their model states biliteracy policies and practices honor one end of each continuum in detriment of the other, thus, linking the privileged end with more power.

**Overview.** Hornberger's (1989, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) perspective depicts biliteracy as four nested sets of continua (see Figure 1 below); namely, (1) Contexts: micro-macro, monolingual-bilingual, and oral- literate intersecting continua; (2) Media: (for two or more languages and literacies), similar-dissimilar linguistic structures, convergent-divergent scripts, and simultaneous- successive exposure intersecting continua; (3) Content: majority-minority perspectives and experiences, literary- vernacular styles and genres, and decontextualized-contextualized texts intersecting continua; and (4) Development: L1-L2, reception-production, and oral-written language skills intersecting continua. She maintains all dimensions represented by the twelve continua need considering, so as to understand any instance of biliteracy fully.

**Contexts.** For Hornberger (2003), the crossing of the micro-macro continuum, the oral- literate continuum, and the monolingual-bilingual continuum makes it possible to understand a specific biliteracy context; for example, what Hornberger (2004) calls “the global/local dilemma” (pp. 160-162), i.e., how educators cater for the global and local needs of bilingual students. (See Figure 2 below.) According to Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000), the macro, literate, and monolingual ends of the context continua are the ones that bear the more power. Thus, they advocate for an emphasis on the oral, bilingual, and micro levels by granting agency and voice to CLD learners.

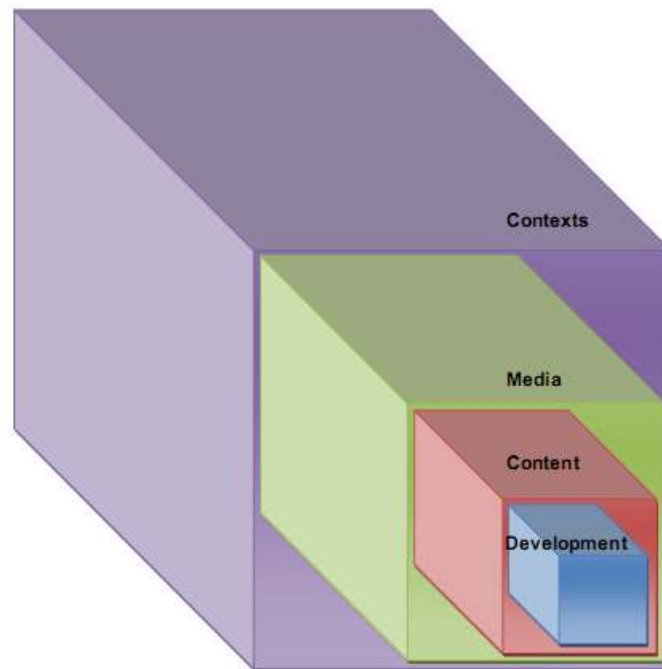


Figure 1. The four nested sets of biliteracy continua

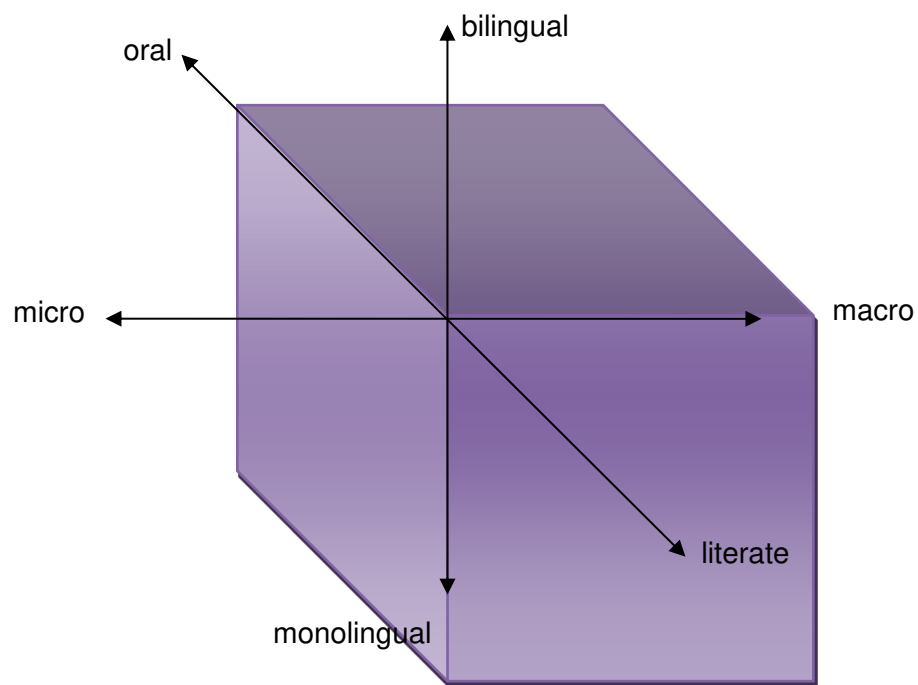


Figure 2. The three defining continua of biliteracy contexts



*The micro-macro continuum.* Taken from sociolinguistics, this continuum (Hornberger, 1989, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) is useful to represent language-use patterns in societies or nations (macro- macro level), a language feature (e.g., rhythm or a phoneme) in a large social unit (micro-macro level), patterns of language in a given speech event or situation (macro-micro level), and a specific language feature in a given piece of discourse (micro-micro level).

*The oral-literate continuum.* This continuum allows for the distinction between orality (i.e., the oral counterpart of literacy) and literacy in societies, cultures, or groups. Heath's (1982, 1983) studies are good examples. The bedtime story (Heath, 1982) can be described as an orality event in mainstream American families. Additionally, Heath (1983) shows how mainstream, black-working-class, and white-working-class American families in the South East all use both oral and literate instances, with divergences in the levels of validation of such literacy instances at school.

*The monolingual-bilingual continuum.* This continuum shows how bilingualism and monolingualism are more alike than unlike if we consider the specialization of language and varieties in use and function (Hornberger, 2003). In the macro level, monolingual societies use diverse language varieties according to context, while bilingual societies use different languages as specialization of function. In the micro level, while a monolingual speaker uses diverse varieties according to context, the bilingual speaker uses diverse languages or code switching subject to context.

**Media.** Hornberger (1989, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) presents three continua (see Figure 3 below) to define relationships between biliteracy media; namely, simultaneous-successive exposure, similar-dissimilar structures, and convergent-divergent scripts. Although all three media continua are related to biliteracy development and transfer, Hornberger warns "Research has not yet clarified which, if either, end of the continuum is the more conducive to positive transfer" (2003, p. 22). These continua also help to understand the relationships among standard and non-standard varieties of L1 and L2 in Spanish-English biliteracy (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Hornberger, 2004; Valdés, 1981, 1983); as

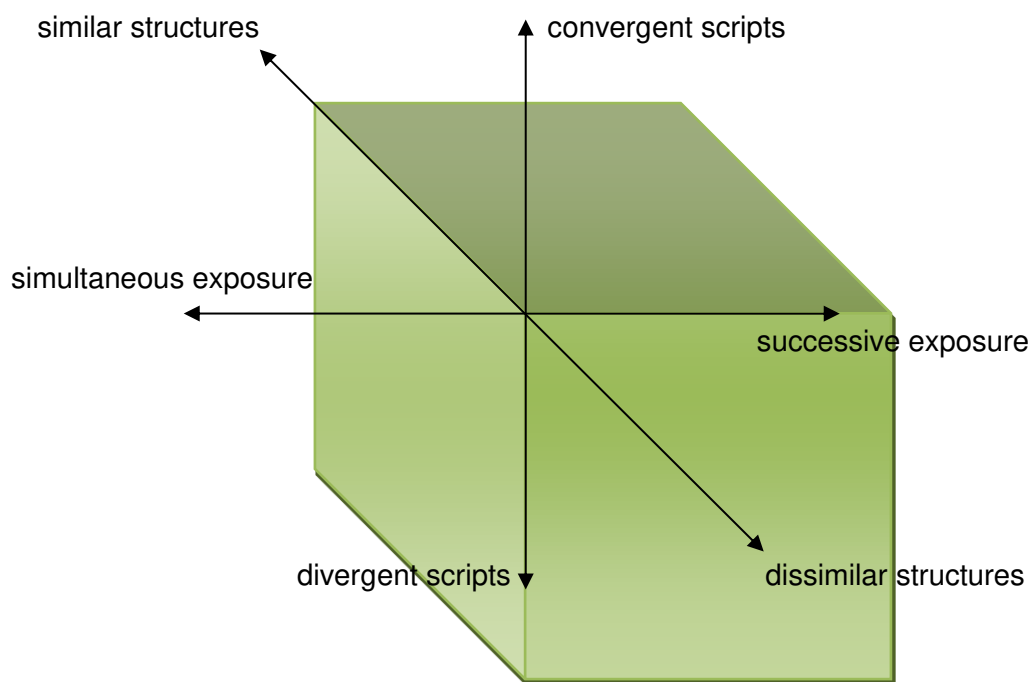


Figure 3. The three defining continua of biliteracy media

well as code-switching and language mixing (Creese & Martin, 2003; Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001), and multimedia literacies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Street, 1999).

*The simultaneous-successive exposure continuum.* Researchers name different types of bilinguals and bilingualism as per language exposure. Lambert (1985) calls early bilinguals those who acquired two languages in infancy (i.e., before age three) and late bilinguals those who became bilingual in adolescence. Accordingly, McLaughlin (1985) differentiates simultaneous bilingualism for early bilinguals from successive bilingualism for late bilinguals. This continuum helps understand processes like additive bilingualism, in which the development of L1 continues while L2 is acquired, and subtractive bilingualism, in which L2 hinders L1 development (Cummins, 1994).

*The similar-dissimilar structures continuum.* This continuum allows for the description of biliteracy when L1 and L2 are linguistically unrelated (e.g., Niyekawa, 1983) to the case of two dialects of one language or the case of a pidgin and a language (Au, Crowell, Jordan, Sloat, Speidel, et al., 1986; Durán, 1987; Simons & Murphy, 1986).

*The convergent-divergent scripts continuum.* This continuum helps understand biliteracy according to the degree of similarity between the writing systems of two languages. Several studies suggest transfer of reading skills and strategies relates to convergent scripts (e.g., Feitelson, 1987), while others show the more divergent the scripts, the less interference in biliteracy (e.g., Fillmore & Valadez , 1986)

**Content.** The biliteracy content continua (Hornberger, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000), namely, literary-vernacular, majority-minority, and decontextualized-contextualized continua, link biliteracy and bilingualism to biculturalism (see Figure 4 below). Consistently, the hegemonic culture grants power to the literary, majority, and decontextualized ends of these continua (e.g., literary texts, majority topics, and decontextualized facts). However, research suggests literacy events also occur in familial and community contexts, with vernacular, minority, and contextualized content (Schwinge, 2003). Thus, Hornberger (2004) stresses the curricula for CLD learners should include vernacular texts, minority-relevant topics, and contextualized facts, i.e., local funds of knowledge (Moll,

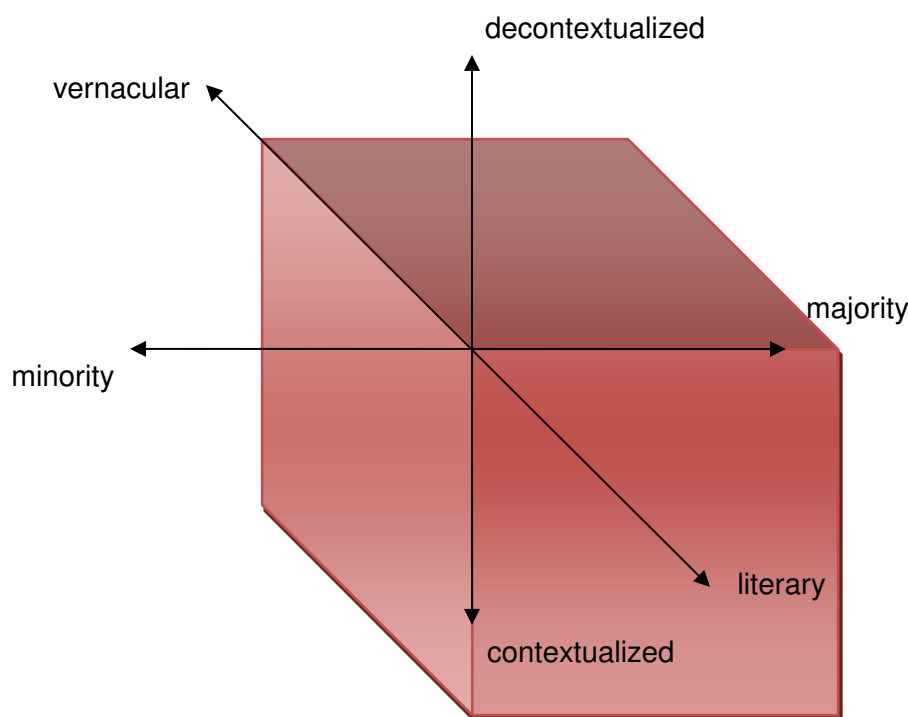


Figure 4. The three defining continua of biliteracy content

Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). This is crucial in a historical context with at least one clear instance of political pressure for a systematic ban on contextualized minority content, such as the H. R. House Bill 2281 (2010).

*The minority-majority continuum.* This is of central importance for understanding cultural issues involving home and local community, versus school. While school traditionally gives relevance to majority content, it is the minority content that makes sense to CLD learners, since they can easily relate it to their home and community lives.

*The vernacular-literary continuum.* This continuum is drawn by formal published texts in the literary end and unpublished informal texts in the other. The content in American schools is mainly literary, while vernacular texts, such as traditional minority stories, poems, and songs, are used less often for the disadvantage of biliteracy.

*The contextualized-decontextualized continuum.* While contextualized text illustrates content with examples, daily experiences, and concrete cases, decontextualized text makes no reference to CLD learners' experiential knowledge and is devoid of examples or concrete explanations.

**Development.** According to Hornberger (1989, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000), individual biliteracy development is shown in the following three continua: reception-production, oral language-written language, and L1-L2 transfer (see Figure 5 below). Hornberger (2003) clarifies that these development continua do not imply individual development is continuous, as "It may, in fact, occur in spurts and with some backtracking" (p. 15). On the contrary, depending on the context, media, and content, bilingual development "is likely to zigzag across points within the three-dimensional space defined by the three continua" (p. 22).

Society tends to give more power to the L2, written, and production ends (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000). Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester stress both national policies and school curricula in the U.S. give more importance to L2-English literacy development, as shown by performance measurements such as standardized tests, while discarding other literacies as

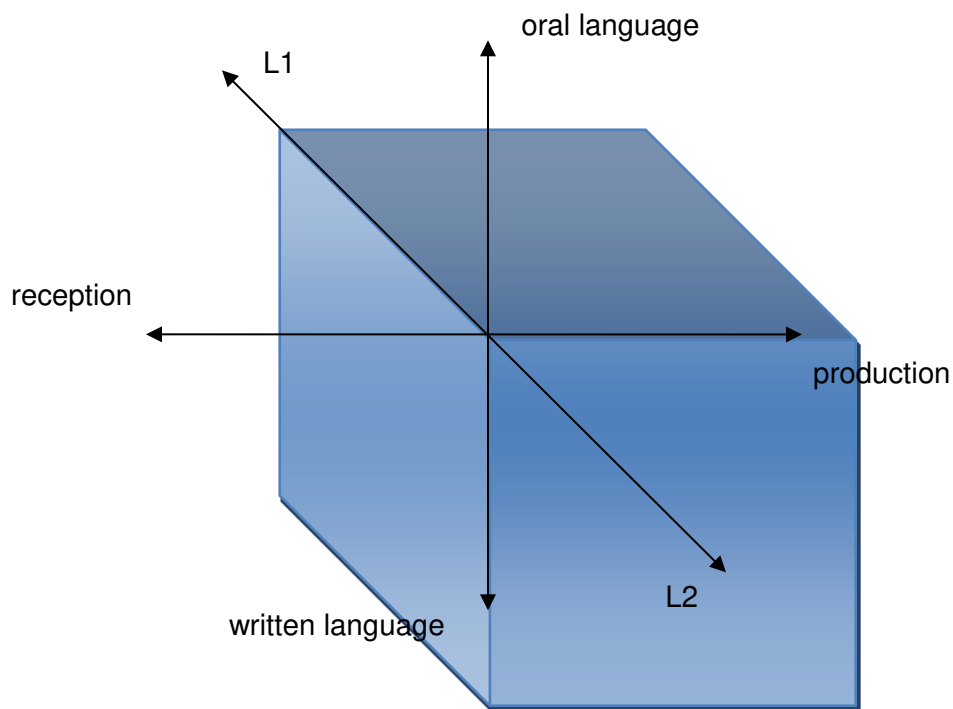


Figure 5. The three defining continua of biliteracy development

invalid. Thus, they propose the power weight of these continua be shifted to the oral, L1, and receptive ends.

*The reception-production continuum.* The dichotomy between receptive and productive skills development as sequential was superseded long ago (Gathercole, 1988; Goodman & Goodman, 1983; Hudelson, 1984; Swain, 1985) and many studies have shown them to be interdependent (e.g., Feitelson, 1987; Hornberger, 1988; Mangubhai, 1987; as cited by Hornberger, 2003).

*The oral-written language continuum.* With respect to language skills, American schools tend to emphasize reading and writing, in detriment of listening and speaking. Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) agree with Pierce (1995) when “[s]he suggests that those who are learning a new language need to believe that they have the ‘right to speak,’ that what they say will be heard and responded to with interest, respect and action” (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000, p. 100). Similarly, oral-written language development is not unidirectional either. For that reason, Hudelson (1984) discourages L2 teachers from

presenting materials sequentially for the four skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as all language skills are interdependent and interrelated.

*The L1-L2 transfer continuum.* This continuum shows the extent to which knowledge of one language facilitates learning the other (positive transfer) or interferes with it (negative transfer) and hinders learning.

### **Biliteracy Contexts**

Developed mainly in the 1960's and 70's, the concept of context is of crucial relevance in the ethnography of communication and sociolinguistics (Fishman, 1968; Hymes, 1974).

Hymes explains how participants use specific culture-bound cues during their interactions that help them infer context-meaning relationships. He defined a number of features of context (addressor, addressee, topic, setting, channel, code, message-form, event, key, and purpose). Later research confirmed the need for the inclusion of contexts in literacy studies. Such is the case of Scribner and Cole's (1981) study in Liberia, which leads them to maintain "literacy is not simply learning how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use" (p. 236). Similarly, Heath (1983) studies literacy in context, from an ethnography-of-communication perspective. Her seminal study authenticates her belief that the functions and uses of literacy differ according to the history, cultures, and "contexts of use as defined by particular communities" (1980, p. 126).

Context is also prominent in Vygotskian theory. Vygotsky took the Hegelian "tool" (Hegel, 1807/1967, p. 76) and its impact on the human mind and added the anthropological view of culture as functional in human advancement to conclude cultural tools and symbols are instrumental in cognitive development (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). These tools and symbols are mediational means through which humans regulate their environment and themselves. The critical factor in this process is the interaction between the child and an adult or "more capable peer" (p. 86), also translated as more knowledgeable other or more capable other (Wertsch, 1988).

Whether the more capable other is a teacher, a parent, a peer or relative of any age, or even some software, the more capable other needs to have more knowledge than the

learner about the target topic (Galloway, 2001). Via social interactions, the child constructs meaning and knowledge as shared in a particular culture. In proper terms, the child internalizes the pre-existing culture through mediation with a more capable other. Mastery through internalization then leads to appropriation when the child modifies an internalized tool or symbol or uses it in an innovative way (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978).

Mediation is, in turn, dynamic, because variations in the tool or its use will inevitably alter both. Therefore, mediation “entails not being able to free ourselves of the constraints imposed by the cultural tools we use to act” (Wertsch, del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995; p. 25). However, Wertsch (1991) contemplates humans may have access to more than one tool kit and “privilege” (p.124) certain mediational means over others in a hierarchical organization according to power or applicability.

The assistance offered by the more capable other is nowadays called scaffolding, a term originally introduced by Bruner (Bruner, 1978; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) to depict the instinctive structural help provided by the parents during a child’s L1-acquisition process. Within that structure, the adult (typically the mother, per Bruner) continually raises her expectations of the child’s performance. Hamilton and Ghatala (1994) clarify “the ideal role of the teacher is that of providing scaffolding (collaborative dialogue) to assist students on tasks within their zones of proximal development” (p. 277). Feden and Vogel (2006) go deeper to indicate that for scaffolding to be possible the learner needs to be interested, engaged, and focused (cf. Kim, 2005), so the teacher should satisfy these conditions to prevent “the learner from becoming frustrated” (p.189).

The L2-research literature contains some particularities of scaffolding in the L2 learning process. Vygotsky’s (1978) idea that social interaction promotes the cognitive development of those less competent assumes the existence of the more capable other, whose expertise assists the learner’s performance. In L2 acquisition, while the more capable other has been one research focus (Ellis, 1985; Hatch, 1978; Ulichny, 1995; Wong-Fillmore, 1985), there seem to be other options, e.g., “collective scaffolding” (Donato, 1994, p. 53). By collective scaffolding, Donato—a critical pedagogue—means the “dialogically constituted guided support”

(p. 53) that occurs between peers with similar competence, by means of which both “expand their own L2 knowledge and extend the linguistic development of their peers” (p. 52). His study showed, in the L2 context, scaffolding takes place while learners collaborate on instructional tasks, which highlights the impact of social interaction in L2 learning.

Walqui (2007) presents a three-phase scaffolding sequence for L2-English learners in school contexts: (a) establish a support structure to enable development of specific performance, e.g. a project, a classroom ritual, or planned tasks over time; (b) conduct specific activities in class; and (c) assist through collaborative interaction. As regards the characteristics of assistance, Walqui believes assistance should be only “just enough” and “just in time” (p. 206). Nevertheless, the provision of scaffolding in the L2 context is not an easy task. For the teacher, it implies finding the precise scaffolds at a level that will be neither dull nor frustrating *for each learner*. Collective scaffolding is a valid option, but it also requires suitable pairing or grouping criteria.

In the case of immigrant children, the provision of scaffolding may be decisive, since the immigration context is a central factor, and culture shock can interfere with educational achievement through lack of concentration, over-compensatory behavior, and even physical illness (Herbert, 1995). In a case study with refugee children in Australia, Cranitch (2010) found a supportive environment and promotion of student well-being are crucial to counteract the emotional harms of at-risk children and sustain the development of their cognitive skills, literacy, and world comprehension. Cranitch’s Sudanese participants profited from the support provided to them by “smaller class sizes, a Sudanese teacher’s aide, specialized counseling support” (p. 258), and teachers willing to develop bonds with the children. Children who had almost non-existent visual literacy skills were gradually able to recognize headings and indexes as well as identify purpose and audience. It is remarkable these improvements took place even when the children did not have “mother tongue concepts to provide field knowledge to support reading in English” (p. 260), as most CLD learners with age-appropriate education and literacy experiences do. They were also able to make positive changes regarding “more mature classroom behavior as well as in their disposition towards learning” (p. 259).



Even when the situation of CLD learners in the U.S. may be less traumatic than what Cranitch (2010) describes for Sudanese refugees in Australia, these words in her conclusion still hold,

English language learning is only one facet of a much more complex educational process which ... requires the flexibility to provide the kind of skill and cognitive development common in lower primary classes while at the same time preparing adolescent learners to become independent learners who can deal with complex concepts. (p. 265)

Research shows in critical-pedagogy classrooms (Auerbach, 1996; Chung, 2006), the links between L1 and L2 literacy have been overtly handled with consequent benefits in the biliteracy development of adult L2-English learners. Auerbach's adult L2-English programs gave students the opportunity to be in charge of their learning goals and to co-construct their curriculum, which fostered the development of leadership skills that later allowed those students to become educators and mentors in their communities. Similarly, Chung's study endorses that when L2-English lessons for adults are critically oriented, students not only learn language basics but are also better prepared to face difficulties and advance socially and economically as well as educationally.

Despite vast evidence (Bialystok, 2010; Bialystok, Craik, & Freedman, 2007; Bialystok, Craik, Grady, et al., 2005; Bialystok, Craik, Klein, et al., 2004; Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2008; Bialystok, et al., 2005; Craik, et al., 2010; Curtin, et al., 2011; Kroll, et al., 2010; Luk, et al., 2010; Luk & Bialystok, 2008; Martin-Rhee & Bialystok, 2008; Morford, et al., 2011) that a bilingual brain is a better brain (among other benefits, a bilingual brain is more plastic and has more neurocognitive convergence and selective attention; see, for example, Mondt, Baleriaux, Metens, et al., 2009; Mondt, Struys, Van den Noort, et al., 2011; Van den Noort, Mondt, Baleriaux, et al., 2010), American schools offer unsatisfactory answers to increasingly diverse classroom populations. CLD students find the doors to learner empowerment closed, success in their target discourse communities out of their reach, and a disregard for the critical debate on the hegemonic role of English and specific genres (Pennycook, 1999).

### **Biliteracy Media**

Because the media of biliteracy reflect not only scripts and structures, but also the manner of exposure to two languages, biliteracy media research has focused on all three aspects. Exposure, however, has been the most controversial for Spanish-English biliteracy, as it touches sensitive cultural, social, and political spots. Valdés (1997) believes veiled power relationships can have negative effects on dual language immersion programs, especially when the use of the minority language is modified in detriment of CLD learners' L1-literacy development and L1 maintenance.

Other potential simultaneous-successive exposure issues include the placement of students according to Spanish- and English-dominant streams, which do not reflect the constant crossing among multiple media. In addition, the usual coexistence of diverse varieties of L1 and L2, both standard and non-standard, with varying structures and scripts, has repercussions on instruction and assessment. Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) propose an approach with stress on the simultaneous acquisition of dissimilar, divergent, nonstandard language varieties.

**Digital technologies as biliteracy media.** The research literature relating digital technologies and biliteracy specifically is almost non-existent. However, some research on e-learning is relevant to CLD learners. Steven Downey (Downey, Wentling, R., Wentling, T., & Wadsworth, 2005) applies Hofstede's (1980, 1997) cultural dimensions and Nielsen's (1993, 1997) usability attributes to the usability assessment of an e-learning system by a multicultural group (N=24). Taking into account Hofstede measures his cultural dimensions on a scale of 0-120, countries with high (ranging from 112 to 64) uncertainty-avoidance cultures are: Greece, Portugal, Guatemala, Uruguay, Malta, Russia, Belgium, El Salvador, Poland, Japan, Surinam, Romania, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, France, Panama, Spain, Bulgaria, South Korea, Turkey, Hungary, Mexico, Israel, Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Italy, Czech Republic, Austria, Luxembourg, Pakistan, Taiwan, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Ecuador, Germany, and Thailand (Hofstede, 2009). Downey et al.'s (2005) study shows learners from high uncertainty-avoidance cultures feel more frustration when using the e-learning system. Pertinent to this study, this means L1-Spanish

CLD students from high uncertainty-avoidance indexes may suffer higher e-learning frustration than their American counterparts (since the uncertainty-avoidance index for the United States is 46; Hofstede, 2009) owing to cultural differences.

### **Biliteracy Content**

The consideration of what texts, topics, and facts biliteracy involves also seems to have sociopolitical roots and shoots. In her dissertation study, Skilton-Sylvester (1997) describes the proficient skills of vernacular writers (i.e., writers of letters or of plays to perform for family and friends) were not valued as writing skills in the school context. To her shock, this occurs in a country where performance is inherent to literacy, since the purpose of writing is to be read out loud, and reading is never individual but for an audience. Despite that, performance has no place in the classroom. Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) conclude this produces CLD students' inability to construct academic texts with appropriate parts (see also Delpit, 1995).

Another critical perspective has extended the understanding of content. Critical discourse analysis—the interdisciplinary approach to discourse as a social practice that mirrors domination (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995, 2003)—has offered a new approach to oral performance as co-constructed, which, in turn, brings about new views on what is acceptable and appropriate in writing. Despite the impact of critical discourse analysis, academic writing seems to be largely feared in educational contexts (Richards & Miller, 2005; Schuldberg, Cavanaugh, Aguilar, Cammack, Diaz, et al., 2007). The imposition of traditional academic constructs and expectations on non-traditional students can have devastating effects on CLD learners, “whose aspirations and self-esteem are pulverized and whose academic progress is stymied,” (Blanton, 2005, p. 114). When CLD learners reach higher education, the demands on their L2 literacy skills are multi-fold: They need to understand materials and lessons in English and produce good English and good academic writing—a genre often new to them (Leki & Carson, 1997).

## Biliteracy Development

Scholars have been divided between finding convergence and conflict in the development of L1 and L2. A notable member of the squadron maintaining L1- and L2-acquisition processes diverge both quantitatively and qualitatively, Dörnyei (2009) exposes a comprehensive list of differences, which I summarize in Table 1 below. All four participants in Kim's (2005) study preferred to read in their L1 but for different reasons; namely, identification of the L1 as the "main language" (p. 257), a feeling of comfort reading in their L1, judgments of the L1 as better, and a fear of L1 attrition ("language loss," p. 258). More importantly, they all "learned second language literacy much faster because they had the background knowledge from their first language" (p. 260) and used different strategies to "comprehend readings from multiple sources" (p. 281), such as schema, connection to self, intertextuality, and connection to world knowledge, among a total of twelve strategies that emerged from Kim's data. Another interesting concept in Kim's study is "reading as

Table 1.

*Differences between L1 and L2 Acquisition (Dörnyei, 2009).*

Difference	Comments
<i>"Differential success"</i> (p. 21)	How the learners consider their own L1 and L2 achievement; L2 level never seems to fulfill the learner's expectations.
<i>"Automatic versus optional"</i> (p. 22)	The presence of motivation is a need for L2 acquisition, while it does not seem to be crucial for L1 development.
Process <i>"homogeneity versus heterogeneity"</i> (p. 22)	There are regular developmental milestones in the acquisition of L1 but focus on variation is the norm in L2 learning.
<i>"Knowledge of the language and knowledge of the world"</i> (p. 22)	While in L1 both happen together. For L2 they are unbalanced: knowledge of the world and thinking skills exist before acquisition.
<i>"Expressing individuality"</i> (p. 22)	L1 presents more relevance for individuality and identity.
<i>"Preexisting L1 knowledge"</i> (p. 22)	L2 builds on preexisting L1 knowledge.
<i>"Language input and the amount of exposure"</i> (p.23)	The quality and quantity of L1 input exceeds those of L2 input.
<i>"Implicit learning versus explicit learning"</i> (p.23)	Often L1 acquisition is identified with implicit learning and L2, with explicit learning.

brainpower” (p. 263), the name with which one of the participants explained how reading makes human growth possible. This image reinforces the value of reading as a learning tool also present in Kim’s study.

### **L1-Spanish CLD Learners**

In this section, I look into the existing research on L1-Spanish CLD learners and into some controversial issues in the literature related to their labeling, from a critical perspective. I discuss the underachievement of L1-Spanish CLD students, and focus on issues specific to those learners, their biliteracy, and their linguistic autobiographies as an established genre in qualitative inquiry.

Most terms used to denote students whose L1 is not English have been target of criticisms. Not only do labels such as LEP, ESL, ESOL, and English language learner (ELL, Crawford, 1998, 2008) seem to be blurry and overlapping, but they have also changed with time, policies, and politics (NCTE, 2008a). Rooted in the civil rights movement, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 officially identifies limited-English-speaking-ability students as LESA. Then, litigations (such as *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974) gave way to legislation that incipiently protected the educational rights of those who, since the Lau Remedies of 1975, have been called LEP students. The Lau Remedies also used ESL to describe not the language spoken by the majority of the population in an English-speaking country as seen by the English learners in that country (the meaning usually given to ESL elsewhere), but the structured instructional program designed to teach English to students whose L1 was not English.

In response to growing criticism that the LEP label stressed deficiency rather than learning (e.g., Freeman, 1998), James Crawford, founder of the Institute of Language and Education Policy, introduced the term ELL in 1998 (Crawford, 1998, 2008). At the same time, critical pedagogues such as Pennycook (1999) wondered to what extent the term ESOL implied the othering (i.e., the positive identification of the self through the segregation and stigmatization of the Other for their subordination; Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007) of those who do not speak English as an L1, and called for a critical view for the teaching of English as an L2.

From a critical perspective, labels such as LEP, ESL, and ESOL may be interpreted as othering and derogatory. Even the widely accepted ELL term has encountered the disapproval of critical theorists, as its application to the learners of English in the U.S. does not capture the cultural and linguistic diversity of such population (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004), their various levels of proficiency, educational backgrounds, socioeconomic status, or length of residence in the U.S. (The Education Alliance, 2011). Because throughout their education in American schools these learners struggle with institutionally assigned identity labels which may be interpreted as a deficit or a sign of linguistic weakness (Costino & Hyon, 2007), such labels may become culturally and socially oppressive.

Jim Cummins, who has devoted almost exclusively to research on and advocate for these students, prefers the term CLD learners. He denounces the oppression CLD students suffer in schools and points to biliteracy and bilingualism as solutions rather than problems (Cummins, 1999). Cummins maintains the education of CLD learners in the U.S. has historically perpetuated the oppression that exists in American society. In his own words,

Culturally-diverse students are defined as deficient and confined to remedial programs that frequently act to produce the deficits they were ostensibly intended to reverse. Empirical evidence that points to biliteracy as a feasible (and readily attainable) educational goal for culturally-diverse students has been either ignored or distorted by media and academic opponents of bilingual education. This is evidenced by the fact that most academic opponents of bilingual education are on record as supporting dual-language programs for majority and minority students but yet they persist in claiming that “bilingual education does not work.” They also persist in defining bilingualism as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. (p.17)

Cummins (1994) explains the relationship between literacy and equity issues clearly. He states the public discourse blames minority students and their communities for their underachievement at school, lifting all responsibility off schools’ and society’s shoulders. These public discourses of literacy “have the effect of reinforcing the societal power structure by limiting students’ power of critical thinking, constricting their options for cultural identity

formation, and eliminating their capacity for transformative social engagement,” (p. 298).

L1-Spanish students are certainly among them. In order to add the specificity of the Spanish-English biliteracy phenomenon, it is necessary to look at L1-Spanish CLD students with more detail.

### **Academic Underachievement**

The literature presents several explanations of why L1-Spanish learners fail academically, which can be grouped in different ways. As a starting point, I summarize the distinctions made by Bond (1981) and taken up by Ogbu (1990) and Valdés (1996) in Table 2 below. While the class analysis argument has had no repercussion with researchers in the U.S., in the United Kingdom scholars such as McRobbie and McCabe (1981), Robins and Cohen (1978), and Willis (1977, 1981, 1983) have explored its applicability. The few supporters of the genetic argument that remain (e.g., Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) believe “minorities do not have the genetic endowment for the type of IQ or ‘intelligence’ required to do good schoolwork” (Ogbu, 1990, p. 45). Still popular nowadays is the cultural argument, with a wide continuum of adherence from extreme and absolute (e.g., Lewis, 1966/1998) to weak and partial. Along the way, some consider CLD children are “culturally deprived” (Valdés, 1996, p. 17) while others classify them as “culturally different and therefore mismatched with schools and school culture” (p. 17), such as Au and Mason (1981) and Heath (1983).

Imbedded in this category are two other explanations. One is what LeCroy and Krysik (2008) call the family background model, i.e. differences in family background are responsible Table 2.

#### *Arguments Used to Explain the Academic Failure of L1-Spanish Students.*

Argument	Genetic	Cultural	Class Analysis
Main Tenet	Academic talent is inherited	Cultural deprivation or difference equals school failure	School failure is functional to the reproductive role of school, i.e. keeps the oppressed, oppressed.
Impact	has led to differentiated curricula and tracking	has led to cultural stereotyping and educational Darwinism	has been practically ignored in American education

for the underachievement of CLD learners (e.g., Ruffolo, Khun, & Evans, 2006). These differences include family structure (Milne, Myers, Rosenthal, & Ginsburg, 1986), the educational attainment of the parents (Kerckhoff & Campbell, 1997), and poverty rates (Kao & Thompson, 2003). The other is what LeCroy and Krysik call the acculturation model, which maintains the higher the level of Americanization Hispanic adolescents exhibit, the lower their motivation and expectations of success, because third-generation L1-Spanish immigrants become disenchanted of their opportunities for success in contrast with first and second generation immigrants (Adams, Astone, Nunez-Wormack, & Smoldaka, 1994; Buriel, Calzada, & Vasquez, 1982; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994; Valverde, 1987). Looking further than family backgrounds, Feliciano and Rumbaut's (2005) study finds factors for socioeconomic success or failure are segmented not only by immigrant generation, but also by class, ethnicity, and gender.

Twenty-five years ago, with what today appear to be surprising results, So and Chan (1984) and So (1987) reported bilingualism in Hispanics as inversely related to reading ability, found higher in primarily English-monolingual Hispanics, except for those with high socioeconomic status. They also inform regardless of socioeconomic status, Spanish monolingual Hispanics had the lowest reading ability, compared with Spanish-English bilingual and English monolingual Hispanics. These results have been overturned since then by extensive empirical research (notably, Lutz, 2003, 2004).

### **Beyond Deficit Perspectives**

Later, in what seems to be a healthier perspective than the deficit approach, some scholars started to focus on positive associations with academic achievement. For example, the perceived importance of education and the expectancies for success (Doll & Hess, 2004), motivation for achievement (Schultz, 1993), school attachment and involvement (MacNeal, 1995; Valverde, 1987), and school belongingness and satisfaction (Ruffolo, et al., 2006) are important factors in better academic achievement and lower drop-out rates of CLD learners. Personal relationships, especially with parents and peers, also seem to be related with academic achievement (Doll & Hess, 2004; Dupper, 2006; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Jacobson



& Crockett, 2000). Similarly, in an antecedent critical phenomenological case study, Adams (2009) looked into the literacy experiences of struggling students in a Midwestern suburban high school. She identified two elements of empowerment; namely, social constructivism as instructional pedagogy and self-efficacy, both of which promoted the development of critical literacy.

LeCroy and Krysik's (2008) remarkable example of personal-relationship-focused research presents predictors of academic achievement and school attachment for Hispanic (as compared with white) adolescents in seventh and eighth grade (N = 170). Their results show association with pro-academic peers and supportive parent relationships relate to higher GPA and greater school attachment. In turn, attachment to school is a predictor of adolescent GPA, as greater attachment relates to higher GPA. Importantly, ethnic differences do not moderate other relevant associations to adolescent achievement and attachment to school, such as family background, linguistic acculturation, school factors, and peer characteristics.

Hence, for these researchers, positive adjustment predictors in adolescence seem to be analogous for adolescents and irrespective of ethnicity, in accordance with previous research (Lau, McCabe, Yeh, Garland, Wood, et al., 2005; Rowe, Vazsonyi, & Flannery, 1994; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991). Their results are relevant for social workers and educators who serve as liaisons between school and community with the goal of tempering the rough edges presented in the next subsection.

### **School versus Family?**

In this subsection, I review some of the many studies that reveal how the conflict between the philosophies and practices of school literacy and home literacy combine to impact biliteracy and academic achievement.

**Home literacy practices.** From a critical-pedagogy perspective, Chung (2006) presents a case study with three Mexican females who learn English in the U.S. as adults in the Community-Based English Tutoring program (CBET) The CBET consists of free training in ESL, family literacy, parenting skills, and pedagogical methods to immigrant parents in exchange for

their service as ESL tutors of young learners. Collected through class observations, interviews with parents, children, and the course instructor, and home observations, Chung's data reflect the positive outcomes of the CBET program as a model of family-school partnerships.

***Home as the context of biliteracy.*** Her second research question, "Which teaching methods and philosophies, if any, do parents transfer to their home literacy practices[?]" (Chung, 2006; p. xv), is relevant to this study. Her data reflect the importance of home as a context for the biliteracy experience. The three mothers did not only transmit American school values and L2-English instruction, but also wanted

their children to maintain Spanish, and to be able to speak it and write it well so that they could communicate with their families, strengthen their ties to their parents' Mexican culture and traditions, and use their knowledge of a second language for the purpose of academic and socioeconomic advancement. (p. 183)

At school, however, the lack of understanding of the importance of L1 maintenance is evident with the son of one of the participants, as his fifth-grade teacher would take away recess from the class every time anyone used Spanish.

***Maintaining the L1.*** Chung (2006) finds the development and maintenance of L1 literacy is a key to success for her study participants and their children,

Even well-meaning teachers who welcome Mexican parents into their classrooms as volunteer readers or helpers, may not fully recognize that parents such as Estela, Marcela and Rafaela instill a wealth of meaningful values and skills in their children, which could be integrated in the fabric of a classroom to enrich the learning experiences of the children, and to provide vehicles for all students to be successful. (p. 186)

Likewise, Lutz's studies (2004, 2003) show how bilingualism helps L1-Spanish students' educational attainment, "biliterate students are significantly more likely to complete high school compared to their monolingual peers. (...) [They] are also significantly more likely to enter college than those who speak only English" (p. 95). Other consistent studies (González, 2001; Orellana, Ek, & Hernandez, 1999; Schechter & Bayley, 2002) identify English as the key to

open the doors to majority assets, but cherish Spanish as the path to identity, family, homeland, and culture.

### **Cross-Cultural Respect and Biliteracy**

Valdés's (1996) groundbreaking work shows how deeply cross-cultural issues can hurt the possibilities of social promotion, academic attainment, life goals, and human dignity of CLD learners and their families. She describes how most deficit-difference paradigm researchers attribute the failure of Mexican children in American schools to either family characteristics or language background or both. In their studies—mostly based on the cultural argument—the inadequacies lay with the students, not their teachers, or schools, or the educational policies and politics. In her belief, intervention programs have been based on deficit-difference research and its simplistic conclusions, so they give narrow solutions to broader problems. Examples are bilingual education, family interventions, parent-education programs, home literacy in Spanish, and parental involvement. Valdés finds all of them inappropriate. Her study shows why.

**Con respeto.** The study is a section from a larger ethnography. Valdés's (1996) participants are ten families of Mexican origin. Most adults were newcomers who used to live in rural Mexico near the American border. Through observations and interviews, Valdés unveils their employment and housing problems, how they relate to education, and rich details about their culture. The rural origin of these families explains why the education of the adults had not gone further than fourth grade at the most. In the U.S., their employment is mostly precarious (e.g., construction, restaurant, farm, house painting, waitressing, and factory labor). While they dream of running a small business, their lives proceed at risk and in poverty.

The families exhibited the traditional role assignment of providers for the husbands and home-keepers for the wives, whose main responsibility was child rearing and education. The children had assigned house chores. They were expected to care for and teach their younger siblings and contribute to the family finances as early as realistically possible. Parents understood dropping out of high school would not give their children the chance of much economic support to the family. Education was seen as important, but not as the way to alter

their economic or social status, because education did not provide them with skills for coping with the tough demands of their daily lives. There was a role for every child in the family, so not every child needed to be brilliant. Family always came first. If there was a family commitment or someone in the family was ill or died, the children were allowed to miss school, even when the parents were aware of the importance of finishing K-12.

Valdés (1996) identifies several cultural clashes. First, because of their disregard for family duties, parents believed school personnel did not care about their children. Conversely, teachers expected parents to teach children their ABC's at home, while parents considered ABC's as the school's job. Second, teachers would send parents messages through their children, which was seen by the parents as an informal manner of delivery. The parents would ignore those messages believing they were not important. While parents saw spanking as a legitimate way to change inappropriate behavior in children, the school called Child Protective Services on them. Third, the parents did not understand the purpose of report cards. In the family, all work together for the good of the whole—for their family, not for personal realization or individual achievement.

Valdés (1996) concludes family intervention programs in American schools strive to transform Mexican families, with the result of the marginalization of the Mexican-American culture. Congruently, the common element throughout the articles in Zentella's (2005) book is the misconception of the school system that L1-Spanish parents do not value their children's education, which serves to lay the blame on the parents instead of taking responsibility for the academic attainment of all students, including L1-Spanish learners in their vast diversity. Several autobiographies offer rebuttals to such myths and increase our understanding of the complexities of immigrants' linguistic lived experience.

### **Linguistic Autobiographies**

According to Dann J. Tannacito's foreword to Palacios's work, immigrant autobiographies have become a "now established genre" (Palacios, 2007, p. vii). Linguistic autobiographies seem to be following the same path, gaining ground both as a literary genre and as a type of narrative in qualitative research. Because language, identity, and political

power are closely related (Ramsdell, 2004), autobiographical writings on linguistic lived experience gain further relevance for this study. Ramsdell remarks in such autobiographies, language heritage descriptions accompany family and ethnic histories. Starting with Richard Rodriguez's (1982) seminal autobiography, I will review the most prominent exponents related to my study.

**A painful choice.** Rodriguez (1982) presents an account of his educational experience from his Mexican childhood to assimilated American adulthood in a series of autobiographical essays. He describes his isolation from society as a child as a reflection of his inability to speak English proficiently, "Language has been the great subject of my life. (...) [F]rom my first day of school, I was a student of language, obsessed by the way it determined my public identity" (p. 7). As he gained L2-English skills, he also drifted further and further away from his childhood values, his family, and his culture. He considers that was too high a price to have paid for advancing his education to the doctoral level, presents his personal schism as a result of his bilingualism, and advocates against affirmative action and for an English-Only approach to public education. The following passage hints to why,

I would tell fellow graduate students about my outrageous good fortune. Smiling at my irony, I would say that I had been invited to join 'minority leaders' on trips to distant Third World countries. Or I would mention that I had been awarded a thousand dollars for winning an essay contest I had not even entered. Or I would say that I had been offered a teaching job by an English department. Some listeners smiled back, only to say: 'I guess they need their minority.' The comment silenced me. It burned. (p. 178)

Rodriguez's pioneering piece stood as model for several others. It may well have been the deep pain revealed in it inspired others to expose their different lived experiences.

**Two sides of one coin.** Dorfman's (1998a, 1998b) decision to write both English and Spanish versions of his linguistic autobiography contrasts Rodriguez's (1982) experience from the start. With an ancestral open-mindedness to multiple linguistic skills rooted on repeated exile cycles, Dorfman comes to terms with the two long-opposed sides of his linguistic identity to integrate them as two separate but valuable sides of his personal identity. Having

experienced how multiple linguistic abilities can be a life-saving weapon during political turmoil, Dorfman sees himself as a man “who is shared by two equal languages and who has come to believe that to tolerate differences and indeed embody them personally and collectively may be our only salvation as a species” (p.42).

**A multilingual self.** In contrast to both Rodriguez (1982) and Dorfman (1998a, 1998b), Anzaldúa (1987) is able to bring her multiple linguistic skills together harmoniously into her undivided multilingual self to extend her personal identity to the communal identity of her Chicano culture. Not only does she reject the opposition between Spanish and English, but she advocates for the recognition of their hybrid varieties as cultural rights, which she exercises by switching codes freely,

At Pan American University, I, and all students were required to take two speech classes. Their purpose: to get rid of our accents. Attacks on one’s form of expression with the intent to censor are a violation of the First Amendment. *El Anglo con cara de inocente nos arrancó la lengua.* Wild tongues can’t be tamed; they can only be cut out. (p. 76; italics in the source, which I translate, to the best of my ability, ‘The innocent-looking Anglo yanked off our tongues.’)

In the section Linguistic Terrorism, she shows how the language of those in power is a weapon they use to combat those on the margins, who are disparaged as inferior owing to the languages they speak. The final lines of that section make her outlook clear and place her at the other end of the spectrum from Rodriguez’s (1982) view,

Until 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, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent’s tongue—my woman’s voice, my sexual voice, my poet’s voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence. (p. 81)

**An analysis of linguistic autobiographies.** Drawing Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan at a time, Ramsdell (2004) uses the three linguistic autobiographies reviewed above as data to look into language, identity, and power. With an emphasis on how enlightening the differences among the experiences of these bilinguals are, Ramsdell still finds some common elements. All three autobiographers view language as home, align language heritage with family and ethnic history, and find language is the essence of their identity. They recognize language affects the development of their private and public selves. Despite their end-result divergences, in all three, language choice is a political stance. Moreover, the linguistic autobiography as a genre appeals to all three, as it “appeals to those displaced, exiled, or otherwise marked as ‘other’ because of their linguistic heritage” (p. 169). Recently, a researcher and TESOL professor (Palacios, 2007) wrote his own biliteracy autobiography as a corollary to his doctoral dissertation (Palacios, 2001). Ramsdell (2004) concludes “Language is identity and identity is political” (p. 176) and supplies this study with valuable bases on which to construct protocols and instruments for data collection (see Chapter 3).

### **L1-Spanish CLD Learners in Higher Education**

A revealing example of the experience of L1-Spanish students in higher education in America, the autobiographical study by Xaé Reyes and Diana Ríos (2005) makes a valuable contribution to frame this study. The authors—Puerto Rican and Chicana, respectively—give informative accounts of their family backgrounds, college and graduate school memories, and their present lives as members of academia. They highlight how, in their lived experience, minority students are “pushed out or alienated in schools by way of linguistic codes and norms that appear to be incongruent with the patterns expected by the dominant culture” (p. 377). They encourage further research using Latino autobiographical experiences in higher education so as to support retention and promotion of L1-Spanish students as educators.

### **Filling In a Research Gap**

Extensive research has shown how L1-Spanish CLD learners struggle in American classrooms and suggested how to make equal access and success attainable goals (e.g., García, 2005; Latina & Swedlow, 2003). Based on their findings, scholars have proposed modifications

in the mainstream classrooms to accommodate for the specific needs of these learners (e.g., Villegas & Lucas, 2007; Wheeler, 2005). However, while immigration grows exponentially (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007) and more educators need to get ready to serve even more L1-Spanish CLD learners, research still needed to uncover how and why some of them excel academically.

Similarly, the experience of L1-Spanish CLD educators' biliteracy and how such experience shaped their academic achievement remained relegated in current research literature. In contrast to most existing research on L1-Spanish CDL learners, this study laid its focus on their experience of academic attainment (instead of their shortcomings) in order to bring to light possible new avenues in the education of L1-Spanish CDL learners, in the belief that, perhaps, American education might benefit from critical interpretive inquiry into the perspectives revealed by some of those L1-Spanish CLD learners who have escaped the statistics of doom.



## CHAPTER 3: DESIGN AND METHODS

The purpose of this multicase study was to describe and explain the perceptions of three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers on their biliteracy journeys to become educators in the U.S. The main exploratory question was: What elements constitute the perspectives of three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers on the relevance of their biliteracy experience in order to become educators in the U.S.? The exploratory sub-questions were: (1) What factors do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive as key to describe their biliteracy experience?; (2) What relevance, if any, do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive their biliteracy experience had for them to become educators in the U.S.?; and (3) From the perspectives of these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high-achiever educators, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on their biliteracy experience?

In this chapter, I introduce the rationale for the methodological choices and design of the study, and I expose the characteristics of qualitative case study research, in particular, multicase studies according to Stake (2006). Then, I describe the development of the study, and I explain how data collection, analysis, and interpretation took place concurrently and iteratively, through what instruments, and by means of what procedures. In tune with the critical-pedagogy approach of the study, I discuss the application of the dialectical method (Ollman, 2008)—offered in Chapter 1—to data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as well as my role as a qualitative researcher. After that, I expose how I approached cross-case analysis and report writing. To conclude this chapter, I consider the trustworthiness and limitations of the study.

### **Methodological Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry**

For pragmatists, knowledge is fallible, relative, and provisional, in ceaseless flow between quality and quantity. Settling at either extreme of the quantitative-qualitative

continuum gives educational researchers a limited and partial perspective of the elusive reality we seek to accommodate for the development of our human action. Like many pragmatic, transformative-emancipatory scholars, I believe “scientists cannot ignore the powerful influences of values” (Mertens, 2003, p. 136). With Mertens, I consider pragmatism alone is a dangerous foundation for research, because what is practical connotes practicality for whom, for what purpose, for whose benefit, and to increase whose power. Therefore, stemming from the results of quantitative research—the statistics for L1-Spanish CLD underachievement and drop-out—my use of qualitative inquiry responded to the necessity for a richer appreciation of the above-the-mean observations in those statistical studies, in order to understand the perspectives of the protagonists themselves, with the ultimate purpose of contributing to the emancipation of the oppressed and the empowerment of cultural and linguistic minorities.

### **Design**

The nature of the exploratory questions above called for a qualitative design, as they sought to further the understanding of personal perspectives on lived experiences in specific contexts. Among the multitude of qualitative research designs, the multicase study (Stake, 2006) stood out as the most appropriate design in order to address my exploratory questions. In the next subsections, I expose why.

### **Qualitative Case-Study Research**

Qualitative research deals with “meaning, interpretation, and socially constructed realities” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 170). Because context, media, content, and development are crucial in biliteracy (see Chapter 2), the design needed to be one that gave preeminence to these continua. Case-study methodology “allows for the investigation of [a] contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1994, p. 3). Through the selection of information-rich cases, qualitative case-study research provides information not reachable in any other way and worthy of in-depth inquiry (Patton, 2002). Moreover, case studies are the appropriate research design when the focus of the study is on particularity and complexity in context.

Hence, this design pursued no generalizations. As explained by Stake (1995), when a case study confirms the generalizations of quantitative research; such study may add understanding of the phenomenon studied, but will not modify previous generalizations. However, when a case study stands as counter-example to prior generalizations, modifications of such generalizations (e.g., the instructional guidelines for CLD learners based on underachievement and drop-out statistics) are possible and valid through case-study research. In order to discover the essence of the perceptions of three L1-Spanish CLD educators on their biliteracy experience, I used a case-study methodology.

**The qualitative multicase study.** In order to define a multicase study (Stake, 2006), I needed to identify both the quintain I wanted to understand and the cases I would study.

**The quintain.** According to Stake (2006), a quintain “is an object or phenomenon or condition to be studied” (p. 6), i.e. “something that we want to understand more thoroughly, and we choose to study it through its cases, by means of a multicase study” (p. vi). In this study, the quintain was the lived experience of the journey from being an L1-Spanish LEP learner to becoming a biliterate graduate educator (with GPA>3.01) in the U.S. The study of what was similar and different in each exponent case led to a better understanding of the quintain (Stake, 2006).

**The cases.** Even when the cases had the quintain in common, each of the three participants had their own perceptions of the quintain. Therefore, I treated them as single cases during data collection, analysis, and interpretation, keeping the ultimate goal of the understanding of the quintain at the back of my mind (Stake, 2006). Each of the three cases in the study conformed a “bounded system” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73) with its own uniqueness and complexity, expressed through the different types of data provided by each of the three participants (narratives, texts by other authors, documents, songs or music, videos, etc.) by means of multiple data collection methods.

**Why three?** Stake (2006) explains the complexity of multicase study research discourages single researchers to embark on this methodology unless the project is a doctoral dissertation. He also points out the importance of treating each case in the multicase as unique

by collecting thick data and taking time to analyze them thoroughly. Otherwise, the researcher runs the risk of missing crucial inconsistencies or similarities across cases. He believes “[t]he benefits of multicase study will be limited if fewer than, say, 4 cases are chosen, or more than 10” (p. 22). Following Stake’s expertise, initially, I chose to conduct a multicase study with four cases. However, one of the participants, Cristina (a pseudonym), withdrew from the study near the end of data collection and analysis. In my reflective e-journal, I write, “I’d like to have one more interview with Cristina, but she hasn’t returned the member checks for the previous interviews yet ... answered any of my latest nine emails or any of my six voice messages on her phone.” Two weeks later, “I finally plucked up some courage and emailed Cristina asking her to allow me to finish data collection with her or let me know if she has decided to withdraw from the study. She did respond this time.” She had had a car accident, which caused her withdrawal from the study. Despite attrition, the data provided by the other three participants were thick enough to allow for cross-case analysis and to address my exploratory questions.

**Snowball selection.** For reasons of appropriateness related to the specificity and feasibility of the study, I used a network or snowball approach to both tester and participant selection (Goodman, 1961; Kemmesies, 2000). The technique described below, a modification of Goodman’s (1961) snowball sampling method, is the most appropriate for hard-to-reach participants (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010), such as the above-the-mean observations of the academic achievement and drop-out statistics for Hispanics in the U.S. The modification of the original technique used chain referrals but disregarded the mathematical requirements ( $s$  stage and  $k$  name) in Goodman’s technique, because statistical inferences were not a goal in this study. The target population was that of L1-Spanish CLD educators who received their degrees from an American public university or college with GPA above the national average for public institutions, i.e.,  $GPA > 3.01$ .

### **Participants’ Biliteracy Autobiographies as Data-Collection Tools in Case Studies**

During the planning stage of this study, I relied heavily on Ramsdell’s (2004) analysis of linguistic autobiographies (see Chapter 2) for the design of the initial data-collection protocols

and instruments. Furthermore, the use of narrative to understand human experience has been long recognized. Ricoeur (1984) and Bruner (1986) are among the exponents of this scholarly field who regard narrative as the key to making sense of human experiences. Ricoeur (1986) presents three factors underlying how humans make meaning of actions. The first is that actions occur in a social context. Norms, values, and symbols are conventions the social world creates, understands, and evaluates according to how appropriate and effective they are for social control (Habermas, 1987). The second is that actions alter the environment, or as Habermas (1987) put it, humans evaluate teleological acting in view of its effectiveness to attain goals in the objective world. And the third adds that actions create social relations that mark their agents with characteristic action styles, i.e., “the participants in an interaction form a kind of reciprocal audience for themselves to which each one of them plays” (Habermas, 1987; p. 101). In particular, linguistic, immigrant, and biliteracy autobiographies offer outstanding tools to collect experience data on CLD learners. For these reasons, participants’ autobiographies had the potential of revealing participants’ contexts, goal-directed activities, and introspection, with minimal researcher intervention.

### **Development of the Study**

#### **Preliminary Phase**

The preliminary phase consisted of all the stages that preceded data collection, including the selection of instrument testers, assessment and modification of instruments, participant referral, informed consent, and participant selection. In this phase, I started a blog with my researcher reflective e-journal, and gave two external auditors online access to my entries. Table 3 below summarizes the stages in the preliminary phase and their chronological sequence.

**Assessment and modification of instruments.** I completed Stages 1 and 2 (see Table 3) during the spring of 2011. I used the network or snowball approach described above in order to select two participants for the assessment of instruments and followed identical procedures as those described for the major study, but for those two L1-Spanish CLD educators. The tests allowed me to use the participants’ feedback to improve the instruments and adjust my

Table 3.

*Preliminary Stages in the Development of the Study.*

Stages	Instruments/Methods	Procedures
1 Assessment of Instruments	Participant Selection Questionnaire e-Journal Guide e-Portfolio Guide	Same as those planned for the main study, except for Participant Referral.
2 Modification of Instruments	Participant Selection Questionnaire e-Journal Guide	I simplified the instruments according to the testers' feedback
3 Participant Referral	Snowball selection	Contact with referees by email, including messages on professional listservs, and postings on social networks
4 Informed Consent	Informed Consent Form	Information and forms delivered through the study website and returned by email
5 Selection of Participants	Participant Selection Questionnaire + Semistructured Interviews	Questionnaires delivered and returned by email Interviews via Skype or phone
6 Participant Training	Online tutorials	Online sessions were not necessary as participants were tech savvy

proposal before its submission for defense. I assessed the readability, appropriateness, clarity, and applicability of the qualitative instruments and the richness of the data collected. The testers' feedback was an invaluable contribution to the improvement of the readability and appropriateness of the participant selection questionnaire and the participant guides. Their contribution allowed me to simplify the structure and language of the questionnaire, and increased the number of items in the guides from five to 20.

**Participant referral procedures.** The snowball started rolling immediately after e-IRB approval. The first step for participant referral was to contact possible referees electronically, including messages on professional groups and listservs, postings on social networks, and emails to my academic circle. (See a sample contact in Appendix A.) Basically, I asked for referral of anyone they could think of who might meet the profile needed for the study, i.e., speaker of Spanish as L1, classified as ELL, ESL, LEP, or LESA by the American educational system at any point during their education, graduate from a public college in the U.S. with a GPA > 3.01, and working or intending to work in education in the U.S. I also included my email address and the

study website for further information about the study and downloadable informed-consent forms. The network approach allowed for referrals for candidates from different states across America, which I considered an advantage, as diversity of location added diversity of lived experience.

**Informed consent.** Having received contact emails from the potential participants, I emailed them the informed consent form (see Appendix B), which was also downloadable from the study website. If they agreed to participate, I requested them to sign the forms and email them back to me within ten calendar days of their reception in order to be considered for participation in the study. The informed consent forms explained the procedures of the study and what candidates could expect in minimal risk conditions. I did not exert any type of pressure on the candidates to participate in the study. The informed consent forms also expressed my willingness to answer any questions the candidates might have, they contained my email and phone details, and my vow to respect and ensure the confidentiality of all records.

**Selection of participants.** Once the candidates returned their signed informed consent, I emailed them a request to complete the Participant Selection Questionnaire (see Appendix A), which I had specifically developed to obtain biographical data, such as country of origin, age, length of residence in the U. S., L1 and other L2s apart from English, education, teaching degree and year of graduation, GPA, and use of digital technologies. I used the data collected via this questionnaire to preselect participants that were potential sources of rich data (as judged by diversity of responses) and to refine the selection to satisfy the characteristics of the population of interest, i.e., L1-Spanish CLD high-achiever educators (Stage 5 in Table 3).

Because participant characteristics are relevant to the information they provide, I interviewed potential participants as a final step in the selection process. The interviews were via Skype or phone, as per the protocols included in Appendix A—mainly, the migration history of the participants (including their present location in the U.S. and plans to move) and their family backgrounds (parents' and siblings' education and occupation). In this way, I tried

to guarantee the diversity of the information the participants might contribute. Although they had been planned for 15 or 20 minutes, these screening interviews took longer than expected (ranging from 0.5 hours to 1.75 hours), as the candidates plunged into their narratives without any prompts.

In order to ensure the initial N=4 for the study, I had planned to identify two additional potential participants in Stage 3, whom I would contact in case of attrition. However, the selection of participants proved more difficult than I had anticipated. Out of the 21 candidates that contacted me initially, only 11 returned their informed consent, and of those, only four satisfied all selection requirements.

**Participant training.** I provided the participants with the online tutorials included in Appendix A, in case they were not familiar with the data-collection methods to be used in the study. Although I had also planned training sessions in Stage 6 (Table 3), the participants' expertise with technologies made them unnecessary. Still, I made myself available to answer any questions the participants might have regarding online methods, but none of them asked me any questions about the tools.

**Human subjects' protection.** I took into account and followed IRB ethical procedures and recommendations. I showed my gratitude to the participants by encouraging them to publish their biliteracy autobiographies, for which I would act as their mentor. I protected and will protect the confidentiality of the data at all times and I have stored the protected files in my personal safe box at home.

**Pseudonyms.** Once I finished the screening process, I emailed each participant asking them to choose a pseudonym that would not have any possible reference that could be traced back to them, so as to ensure their anonymity.

**New email addresses.** I created a new web-based email address for each participant with the number of the e-IRB for the study followed by their chosen pseudonym. These new addresses were the ones I used to create the blogs, so as not to compromise the participants' existing addresses in any way. These new email addresses were used exclusively for the purpose of this study.



*Protected blogs.* Then, I created a blog for each participant. I changed the default settings of the blogs to make them private and selected myself as the only reader. Next, I emailed each participant their new email address and password, and their new blog address and password, and asked them to change those passwords immediately, so that they would own the blogs as sole authors.

### **Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation**

By applying the dialectical method (Ollman, 2008; see Table 4 below, phases 4-9) for concurrent and iterative data collection, analysis, and interpretation, I explored how three L1-Spanish CLD educators perceived their biliteracy experience. I asked the participants to enter their biliteracy-autobiography data into e-journals and artifact e-portfolios. For that purpose, I provided them with Participant Guides (see Appendix A). My access to each blog as soon as each participant posted an entry allowed me to start preliminary analysis of the data. With the assistance of that analysis, I informed the design of semi-structured interviews, which, in turn, informed additional data collection procedures. This method allowed the phases of data collection, analysis, and interpretation to be concurrent and recursive, i.e., they took place simultaneously and iterated as necessary until saturation. Table 4 below summarizes the instruments, methods, and procedures I used in these phases. The numbers in Table 4 do not represent sequential steps; they are intended to simplify reference henceforth.

### **Methods of Qualitative Data Collection**

I utilized three main online methods of qualitative data collection; namely, e-journals, artifact e-portfolios, and online interviews. The first two methods were built on blogs created for the purpose of this research. With the on-going analysis of the data they provided, I conducted online interviews through Skype phone or teleconference in an application of the dialectical method of qualitative data collection and analysis. By these means, the participants were able to give me access to “the recorded reminiscences of a person who has firsthand knowledge of any number of experiences” (Janesick, 2007a, p. 111)—in this case, their biliteracy lived experience in their journey from LEP to high-achiever college graduates (GPA>3.01) and educators.

Table 4.

*Concurrent and Recursive Phases of Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation.*

Phases	Instruments/Methods	Procedures
Data Collection	1 e-journal guide (mainly etic issues)	Biliteracy autobiographies online by means of e-journals (blogs)
	2 Artifact e-portfolio guide (mainly etic issues)	Biliteracy artifact collection online by means of e-portfolios (blogs)
	3 Interview protocols (mainly emerging emic issues)	Online interviews via Skype (phone or conference)
Data Analysis and Interpretation	4 Ontological moment	Total immersion in the data via meticulous reading of blogs and interview transcriptions and consideration of artifacts
	5 Epistemological moment	Organization of data according to emerging patterns. Data coding via e-highlighting, color coding, and comments. Data-coding audits by the critical friend.
	6 Moment of inquiry	Categorization of the patterns identified above as representations of the participants' perceptions
	7 Intellectual reconstruction	Synthesis according to the researcher's interpretation. Triangulation
	8 Exposition	Member check; negative case analysis
	9 Praxis	New data collection

The data collection instruments for the study consisted of an e-Journal Guide, an Artifact e-Portfolio Guide, and Interview Protocols. Each and every guide served to assist and not contrive the participants to share their perceptions with me. Several studies (Adams, 2009; Kayser, 2004; LeCroy & Krysik, 2008; Palacios, 2007; Ramsdell, 2004; Reyes & Rios, 2005; and Valdés, 1996) served as leads in the construction of the data-collection protocols. All instruments appear in Appendix A in their revised versions, i.e., after their assessment and modification in the preliminary phase.

**Blogs.** Kramer and Rodden (2008) define a weblog or blog as “a web-accessible reverse-chronologically ordered set of essays (usually consisting of a few paragraphs or less), diary-like in nature, maintained and updated by a single individual (user) or a group of users” (p. 1125). Kim (2009) invites researchers to forward research in the use of blogs with a focus on the use of blogs as reflexivity enhancers (Williams & Jacobs, 2004; Yang, 2009). With that as a base,

this study made use of blogs as reflexivity enhancers for the participants in their search for memories and auto-biographical events, protagonists, circumstances, and contexts of their biliteracy lived experience. As data collection techniques, blogs took two forms; namely, e-journals and artifact e-portfolios, which constituted the participants' biliteracy autobiographies online.

***e-Journals.*** After I supplied the participants with guiding questions to support their creative processes, I requested each of them to create their individual biliteracy autobiography in the e-journals (blogs). In order to aid their writing, I also made available an article authored by one of my committee members (Richards, 2010) with simple but useful guidelines on academic writing. The participants could audio-record or write their memoirs, or combine both (according to their preference) until they felt they had completed their biliteracy autobiographies. However, none of them chose to upload files with audio-recorded narratives. The participants were free to journal in Spanish, in English, or in a combination of both, and made use of this possibility, using innumerable instances of code-switch at the word, phrase, sentence, and paragraph levels. (In this report, I identified which language they used via simple conventions presented later in Table 7.) I include a sample of e-journal pages in Appendix C.

***e-Journal guide.*** This guide was a series of questions the participants had the option to answer or not. The purpose of the guide was to orient data collection and not to constrain the information the participants chose to share with me.

***Artifact e-portfolios.*** Because “[l]iterature, poetry, and art are sources of phenomenological insights” (van Manen, 2002, subtitle), I invited the participants to upload any texts, images, songs, and videos they considered would add information about their perceptions of their biliteracy experience. Therefore, aided by the Artifact e-Portfolio Guide, the participants selected artifacts of key importance in their biliteracy experience. Although they were supposed to upload those artifacts, two of them chose to email me the artifacts or links to them instead of uploading them onto their e-portfolios. I welcomed the change as it made the process easier for my participants. By whichever means, the inclusion of artifacts

acted as valuable complements to “provide a well-rounded picture of the participants” (Janesick, 2007a, p. 117) and their lived experience. I include samples of artifacts in Appendix C.

*Artifact e-portfolio guide.* This guide gave examples of what type of artifacts the participants might choose to consider as part of their biliteracy autobiographies, such as drawings, video clips, readings, songs, photographs, and any other artifact they found appropriate to illustrate their lived experiences.

*Bloggng procedures.* For both e-journals and artifact e-portfolios, I created one blog per participant, as explained above. The selected software (Blogger) allowed participants to be in control of who can read, write, and comment on their blogs and gave them the option to delete comments. I requested each participant to be the sole author in their blog and to authorize only my comments. I also requested them not to share their blogs with anyone else and delete them at the end of data collection. The website ([www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)) has its own step-by-step instructions for blog creation, design, and editing. While the participants were tech savvy, I was available to offer technical help in case the participants needed it—but they requested no help.

*Semi-structured interviews via Skype.* I designed recurrent semi-structured interviews in view of the results of the preliminary analysis of the data as they became available to me. I conducted them individually, online, at time previously agreed with each of the participants by email. The interviews were in English, Spanish, or both, according to each participant’s preference. They took place periodically, as the participants made blog postings, and I moved forward into the analysis of their data. I interviewed Fátima and Victoria four times each, and Séneca, six times. The duration of each interview ranged from ½ to 3½ hours, to add to a total of 31 hours and 10 minutes. (I also conducted and transcribed 7.5 hours of interviews with a fourth participant, who later withdrew from the study.)

Victoria travelled to visit her parents in Florida and came to visit me on campus. Our final interview took place face-to-face in my office on July 30, 2012. She brought me “arroz con leche” her mother had prepared for me, with cinnamon and all. Unplanned, this was the

only face-to-face interview. I include descriptions of my data-collection instruments in the next section. The data-collection phase concluded only when saturation and redundancy were evident. I provide some samples of interview transcriptions and their preliminary analysis in Appendix C.

***Individual interview protocols.*** The questions in the protocols that appear in Appendix A are only samples of possible questions I planned to ask the participants to look into their perspectives. I devised the protocols in an on-going basis in accordance with the dialectic data collection, analysis, and interpretation approach I followed. I include some samples of protocol development in Appendix C.

**Group interview via Skype.** The concurrent analysis of the data led me to conduct a complementary interview (Janesick, 2004) with all the participants, i.e., a group interview, whose purpose was to confirm convergences and divergences found across cases by allowing the participants to share their experiences with each other. It took place online, via Skype audio conference, at a time previously agreed with the participants by email. As in the individual interviews, there was plenty of code-shift from English to Spanish and back. Having been planned for an hour, it lasted three and a half hours, with several interruptions of the connection caused by a thunderstorm raging across the state where two of the participants and myself live. The final duration of the usable recording was two hours and 57 minutes.

***Group-interview protocol.*** Since all three participants had identified their biliteracy experiences with a journey, the protocol for the group interview reflected their input. I include the instrument in Appendix A.

**Interview recording, transcription, and editing.** Here my recording and transcription methods changed slightly as the interviews proceeded.

***Recording.*** For the first interview, the participant had requested I called her on her cell-phone instead of using Skype. In order to record the interview, I used my Olympus digital recorder, tied with masking tape to my home phone receiver, so as to prevent sliding and the consequent unwanted noise. The recording was good enough to allow me to transcribe it, but I did have some gaps. In order to increase the quality of the recording, since the participant

preferred to be phoned, I called her number from Skype phone instead of my home phone, and recorded the interview with CallGraph, a program that can be used with Skype to record automatically and directly online. This change improved the quality of the recording substantially to allow for fewer gaps in the transcriptions that followed. Using CallGraph also had the added advantage of recording directly in mp3, which saved me the trouble of transforming the wma file my recorder produces into mp3 for use in the transcription and editing software.

**Transcription.** Doing the transcriptions of a total of 41 hours and 37 minutes of recordings myself (31 hours 10 minutes, plus 7 hours 30 minutes, plus 2 hours 57 minutes) was certainly time consuming, but I still preferred investing that time, because it helped me not only get completely immersed in the data, but also memorize what was said and most importantly, how it was said (i.e., with what paralinguistic features, such as volume, pitch, tones, pauses, and voice quality), both important tools a researcher can use to respect the participants' voices. First, I used Scribe to transcribe, which provides tools for pause-and-rewind and changes of speed. However, my decision to edit the recordings for member check (see below) made me change to Audacity, which is not specifically transcription software, but allowed me to transcribe, edit, and divide the files into manageable parts at the same time.

**Editing.** Although using CallGraph improved the quality of the recordings, there were still a few gaps in the transcriptions. I decided to send the audio files to the participants together with the transcriptions as part of their member checks. However, I did not want to overwhelm my participants with extra work, so I needed to edit the audio files to make them as short as possible, while still keeping what the participant said untouched. In order to produce shorter files, I used Audacity to trim off all my interventions, and the participants' hesitations, repetitions, pauses, and hums. This process was long and tedious, but I was able to shrink the files almost into half their original sizes. Once I had about 15-30 minutes of resulting edited audio file, I would give it a name with the corresponding numbered part of the interview, e.g., Victoria\_Int2-Part2, and email the new file with its transcription for member check. This gave the participants the possibility of investing more but shorter periods working

on the member check process, instead of having to make room in their busy lives for extensive member checks sittings for each interview.

### Summary of Data Sources

Table 5 below summarizes the data sources explained above. It also includes the number and duration of interviews, the number of entries in the e-journal blogs, and the nature of the artifacts received from the participants. I present a discussion on the low number of e-journal entries compared to the high number of emails in Chapter 5.

Table 5.

#### *Data Sources in Numbers.*

		Quoted as	Case		
			Fátima	Séneca	Victoria
Questionnaire (by email)		Q	1	1	1
Methods	Interviews	Group online	1	1	1
		Duration	2hs 57m	2hs 57m	2hs 57m
		Individual online	4	6	4
		Total duration	12hs 10m	12hs 55m	9hs 3m
		Individual face-to-face	f2f	0	0
	Duration			3hs 15 m	
e-Journal entries	Blog	J	3	3	6
	Email	E	36	56	42
e-Portfolio artifacts (mostly via email)			CV, silhouette, book titles, song titles, movie titles, websites, family video, writing pieces	CV, silhouette, music video, websites	CV, silhouette, book titles, cartoons, TV shows, websites
Member checks (via email)			6 (5 interviews, 1 case report)	8 (7 interviews, 1 case report)	7 (6 interviews, 1 case report)
Researcher reflective e-journal			Started in the Spring 2011 with the pilot study and finished in December 2012 after I submitted the first complete draft of this report. Total: 472 entries		

### The Role of the Researcher

The critical pedagogical approach in this inquiry aimed at a rich description and understanding of the participants' perspectives by presenting their narratives and voices. Notwithstanding that, crucial decisions such as the construction of the exploratory questions, the design of the study, the selection of participants, and ultimately, which data to present as quotes and how to present them remained in the hands of the researcher and, inevitably,

carried my own voice. Undeniably, in qualitative inquiry the researcher is the main instrument (Janesick, 1999).

Considering I shared a number of characteristics with the participants (L1-Spanish, being a high achiever, being an educator, and the biliteracy lived experience), I purposefully engaged in the participants' subjectivity over my own. Additionally, I resolved to minimize intrusion and disclose any diversion from the previous statement by keeping a researcher reflective e-journal, which allowed me to record my decisions, reactions, and evaluative responses during the course of the study, and to retrieve them later in order to disclose them, and avoid any possible bias.

In my role of researcher, I designed the instruments; selected participants; conducted, recorded, and transcribed interviews; monitored online journal keeping and e-portfolio compilations; kept my own reflective journal; analyzed data, interpreted them, and reported them in Chapter 4. I also referred to any insights gained from the inquiry and related it to existing literature in Chapter 5. I was available to answer any questions my participants had along the duration of the study and to encourage them to publish their biliteracy autobiographies under their authorship once the study was complete.

**Researcher's reflective e-journal.** The inclusion of a researcher reflective journal is crucial in qualitative research. Janesick (1999) considers "journal writing as a powerful heuristic tool and research technique" (p. 506) because it allows for a clear understanding of the role of the researcher and records attendant circumstances that may otherwise be lost. It may also permit interactive researcher-participant communication—especially when kept online—and add facets for triangulation. In practice, journal keeping acted as a lifesaver to prevent the human tool from going under in an ocean of data and imponderables, which were potentially overwhelming.

I intended to add importance to my inquiry by avoiding the mistakes referred to by Janesick's (2008) account of her conversations with Egon Guba, "how many at the time did not understand qualitative methods because so many qualitative researchers forgot to carefully document what they did as researchers" (p.565). For these reasons, I entered all procedures,



as well as my own views, decisions, thoughts, opinions, insights, queries, judgments, and experiences during the data collection, analysis, and interpretation phases in an online Researcher's Reflective e-Journal in the form of a blog (see Appendix C for a sample). I started my reflective-journal blog in the preliminary phase and kept it until the end of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

**External audits.** Two doctoral candidates (see Appendix D) in the College of Education, with experience as qualitative researchers, had online access to my e-journal and audited it periodically. They kindly gave me both on-going and summative feedback of their audits. I shared the blog link with them so they could audit my e-journal at their convenience. I designed the blog so that they could add reactions to posts by clicking "OK" or "Please contact auditor" (see snapshot in Appendix C) if they preferred not to add comments. I kept the journal throughout the development of the study, and requested their summative audit feedback at the end of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation phase.

#### **"Extreme" Member Check**

As I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data, I asked the participants to check the data they provided and my transcriptions, descriptions, analysis, and interpretations of their perceptions. Although I had planned to share the documents for member check via GoogleDocs, it was easier for the participants to use email, especially with the addition of the audio files (explained above), and the lack of familiarity with GoogleDocs of two of the three participants.

For the interview data, I emailed them the edited audio files (as explained above) divided into manageable parts of 15-30 minutes of audio and 2-4 pages of full transcriptions, i.e., the scripts included their answers and my questions. I identified doubtful sections and gaps in red (see sample in Appendix C) and I asked them to complete, delete, correct, or add as necessary, using the track-changes tool in Word. This was useful not only to complete the gaps in my transcriptions, but it also gave the participants the opportunity to enhance the data with elements they might have remembered after the interview or during the member check, which made the information even richer. I called this "extreme" member check.

I added all corrections, clarifications, or expansions to the existing data for re-analysis and re-interpretation. In this way, I included the participants as co-interpreters of their own lived experience (Janesick, 2007a, b). Thus, the extreme member checks provided repeated participant feedback on the appropriateness of my analysis, descriptions, and interpretations of their perspectives; hence, increased the trustworthiness of the study.

### **Negative Case Analysis**

This step involved my purposeful search for elements in the data that would contradict my analysis or fail to support it. The technique proved valuable to refine emergent topics with more adequate labels and redirect further data collection by informing interview protocols.

### **The Dialectical Method of Data Analysis and Interpretation**

One of the most fundamental objectives of critical pedagogy is that learners, educators, and researchers engage in the process of making explicit how knowledge is politically constructed and who benefits from it (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Giroux, 1992). The dialectical method (Ollman, 2008)—explained in Chapter 1—enables them not only to challenge, for example, inequality and discrimination, but also to critically analyze equality and integration, as well as their inherent contradictions. In agreement with the critical pedagogical approach of this study, I applied the consecutive and iterative moments of the dialectical method to data analysis, as follows:

**Ontological moment.** (Phase 4 in Table 4.) I approached the data in search for mutually dependent processes that combined into the essence of the perceptions of the participants on their lived experience. This demanded total immersion into the data by means of the meticulous reading of blogs and interview transcriptions, listening to interview audio files, and consideration of artifacts.

**Epistemological moment.** (Phase 5 in Table 4.) I organized the data according to emerging patterns, through the identification of potential internal relations that appeared to address the exploratory questions. Data coding reflected evidence of emerging themes. I used electronic highlighting, color coding, and comments (with the review tools in Microsoft Word 2010). I had used this technique before, and it still proved effective to help me organize data

that were not massive. The initial N=4, then N=3, in this study had led me to suspect this technique should work. My evaluation held, so I did not use the optional qualitative analysis software considered in my proposal (Atlas.ti).

**Coding and multiple recoding.** I coded the data as they became available through inspection (questionnaires, blogs, and artifacts) and transcription (interviews). My coding procedures followed Saldaña (2009) for the data available in each individual case, with the addition of my own color-coding and comments using Word tools. One of the two auditors agreed to code transcribed data from one of the cases with his personal techniques, resulting in similar categories to the ones I had obtained but with more general codes. This led me to rethink the codes more widely by grouping existing codes under superordinate topics. While Saldaña describes two cycles of coding, my coding procedures resulted in multiple iterative coding cycles for each case.

**Moment of inquiry.** (Phase 6 in Table 4.) I assumed the internal relations identified above represented the perceptions of the participants, and I created categories for the patterns they seemed to follow. These assumptions were essential in order to be able to find discordances and inconsistencies in the data, which promoted further data collection for reanalysis and reinterpretation. Once each participant had member checked emerging topics in their corresponding case, I renamed the topics to follow the metaphor of the voyage of a ship the participants had suggested in the final stage of data collection, the group interview. Although their metaphor was later discarded following my advisors' recommendations, exponents of that phase appear in Appendix C as part of the samples of data analysis.

**Intellectual reconstruction.** (Phase 7 in Table 4.) I brought the categories together into an integrated whole in a way that was clear and understandable according to my interpretation. This involved what Stake (2006) calls generating "a picture of the case" (p. 3). Triangulation of methods was a crucial element in this stage.

**Exposition.** (Phase 8 in Table 4.) This was what Stake (2006) calls producing "a portrayal of the case for others to see" (p. 3). I presented my interpretation to the

participants in search for discrepancies and misinterpretations. Member checks and negative case analyses were an integral part of this process.

***Audits by the critical friends.*** An important element in critical pedagogy, the critical friend is “a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through other lens, and offers critiques of a person’s work as a friend” (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 49). The same two doctoral candidates in the College of Education, with experience as qualitative researchers, had access to my completed data-analysis work via email. They had been advocates for my work before, and had proved to be both sharp critics of my production and close friends to me, the two characteristics essential to a well-chosen critical friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993). Our familiarity with the same type of technology tools was convenient to us once again. Samples of coding appear in Appendix C, and audit documents, in Appendix D.

**Praxis.** (Phase 9 in Table 4.) The identification of gaps or incongruities in the data triggered off a dialectical series of postulation questioning, using existing data to inform their interpretation, advancing interpretation to inform further data collection, and attaining answers to the proposed questions—which demanded resorting to manifold paths to attention, awareness, discovery, reflection, knowledge, and action. The samples in Appendix C illustrate how both coding and formulation of follow-up questions occurred simultaneously, giving way to multiple iterations of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation process in the dialectical method.

#### **Cross-Case Analysis, Answers, and Report Writing**

I organized the report of the findings around issues, including first the emic issues emerging from the data (Stake, 1995), and then, the etic issues presented in the exploratory question and sub-questions. This phase included cross-case triangulation and the application of the data analysis and interpretation to address the questions.

After making sure the analysis and interpretation reflected the participants’ perceptions, I exposed the cases in Chapter 4, respecting the participants’ emic voices and adding my own work as long as it described and explained their perspectives on their biliteracy experience. Subsequently, I proceeded to interpret the three cases, triangulate across cases,

analyze them, and discuss them in Chapter 5. For cross-case analysis and triangulation, I used the recommendations and worksheets provided by Stake (2006, Chapter 3). I include samples of those worksheets in Appendix C.

Even when the methodology presented above provided rich data to allow me to address the exploratory questions, some of the answers I found were partial and new questions arose. I paid attention to such occurrences in order to disclose additional limitations of the study and offer suggestions for further research.

In the writing of my report, I made the conscious effort to use “ordinary language” (Janesick, 2007a, p. 113) in order to give the participants’ lived experiences their own voice, while assisting the reader to enjoy the exceptional in all everyday histories (Janesick, 2000). I also attended to the establishment of “an empathetic understanding for the reader, through description, sometimes *thick description*, conveying to the reader what experience itself would convey” (Stake, 1995, p. 39); i.e. “an experiential understanding of the case” (p. 40).

After receiving feedback on one of the cases from my co-major professors, I reanalyzed the data and discarded the metaphor of a ship’s voyage the participants had suggested, in order to follow my advisors’ advice to simplify the presentation of data, which produced a second version of Chapters 4 and 5. There were two more versions after that to address advisors’ feedback. I submitted the fourth version of my report to my committee, and prepared for the dissertation defense.

### **Trustworthiness**

In this section, I address trustworthiness from the critical perspective, in tune with the theoretical framework of this study, and also from the widely accepted constructivist perspective, mainly represented by Guba’s (1981) contributions. The section ends with an exposition of the approach to ethics I followed.

#### **The Critical Criteria**

From a critical viewpoint, trustworthiness relates to consequential validity (Messick, 1989; Shepard, 1993) and to catalytic and tactical authenticities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Consequential validity rests on the critical assessment of who benefits from the inquiry (or is

damaged by it) and how successfully the research becomes a tool for social and political change (Patton, 2002). In Morrow's words, it "involves identifying sources of inequality and representing the perspectives of those who have been silenced or disempowered" (p. 253), i.e. presenting their emic voices as ordnances of empowerment. Catalytic and tactical authenticities refer to "the ability of a given inquiry to prompt, first, action on the part of research participants and, second, the involvement of the researcher/evaluator in training the participants in specific forms of social and political action if participants desire such training" (Morrow, 2005, p. 253).

This study satisfied both critical trustworthiness criteria through the collaboration of the participants as constant reviewers of the inquiry and through my role as a researcher to "attend to the power issues and relationships between and among researcher and researched" (Morrow, 2005, p. 253). It also gave the participants the possibility to count on my assistance to publish their biliteracy autobiographies and, thus, build "the capacity of those involved to take action" and identify "potential changemaking strategies" (Patton, 2002, p. 545).

### **The Constructivist Criteria**

In an attempt to recognize the specificity of qualitative research, Guba (1981; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) proposes new criteria instead of those used by positivist researchers. Respectively, Guba presents credibility (instead of internal validity), transferability (instead of generalizability or external validity), dependability (instead of reliability), and confirmability (instead of objectivity) as the four criteria qualitative researchers should seek to satisfy.

**Credibility.** When it comes down to the qualitative researcher's responsibilities, credibility relates to the truthful depiction of the phenomenon under study. In this study, engagement was prolonged and frequent enough to understand the participants' biliteracy experiences. I made it a point to develop rapport and trust with the participants to allow for co-construction of meaning with them, and made a conscious effort to be aware of any preconceptions or biases on my part. I also asked questions and re-asked them at later interviews in order to make sure the participants' responses remained the same. When

contradictions arose, I asked new questions to elucidate them, which provided deep data. Triangulation, negative case analysis, and member checks also enhanced credibility.

**Transferability.** Transferability concerns the dense description of the context of inquiry so as to allow the reader informed decisions about similarities with other known situations and the possible application of findings to the reader's known context. Thick description (the detailed account of field experiences to overtly depict social and cultural patterns and their contexts, Geertz, 1973; Holloway, 1997; Ryle, 1949) is, therefore, key to transferability. By going back and forth from data collection to analysis iteratively, I had the chance to add detail to the participants' descriptions and narrations and complete any gaps. This should help the readers of this study evaluate to what extent the findings can be transferable to their contexts.

**Dependability.** Dependability enables the potential repetition of the study by other researchers. The detailed description of procedures should allow other researchers to conduct similar studies with other participants.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability establishes the findings emerge from the data and not from the researcher's bias or predispositions. The extensive use of member checks and audits increased the confirmability of this study, as did the triangulation of data collection methods. An additional safeguard of confirmability was my commitment to reflexivity throughout the development of the study, and its corresponding record in my reflective journal, by making systematic entries during the research process.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation consists of a multiple approach to different elements of a research with the purpose of increasing trustworthiness. Denzin (2006) describes four types of triangulation: (1) methodological triangulation (through multiple methods of data collection); (2) investigator triangulation (through multiple researchers); (3) data triangulation (through time, space, and participants); and (4) theory triangulation (through the application of multiple theories to interpret the phenomenon under study). This study applied, at least partially, all four types of triangulation, as explained next.

**Methods.** In this study, the diverse data collection methods used allowed for methodological within-case triangulation. The rich data obtained through e-journals, e-portfolios, and interviews allowed for confirmability, while the thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) they permitted endorsed the detailed description of the participants' biliteracy experience so that readers can evaluate the transferability of my conclusions to other contexts. Finally, the use of different data collection methods allowed for cross checking information across sources and offered the possibility of indicating the high quality and congruence of the data collected.

**Technology.** The use of technology for data collection and recording benefitted the trustworthiness of the study. Online methods made it possible to keep precise data records through digital means for accurate verbatim accounts and contributed to the availability of those records for later corroboration by the researcher, member checks, and audits by outside reviewers. Additionally, the online environment, which allowed for both synchronous and asynchronous data collection, helped create the conditions for participant comfort, and encouraged them to speak openly about their experience.

**Investigators.** The presence of other two researchers, to serve as external auditors of the researcher reflective e-journal (in favor of the transferability of the study) and as critical friends for data analysis and interpretation, made investigator triangulation possible (at least partially, since there were no multiple researchers), for the benefit of the trustworthiness of the study. The inclusion of a researcher e-journal provided additional information on my decisions and their grounds, any unexpected situations that might have put the integrity of the study at risk (such as the withdrawal of one of the participants), and my own reflections on those events. The on-going audits by two experienced qualitative researchers endorsed the integrity of the procedures, and gave them the possibility to alert, had it been necessary, about the need to revise or modify the methods, procedures, data, or analysis. This also strengthened the transferability and credibility of the study.

**Data.** The extensive use of member checks supplied data triangulation through time, while cross-case analysis provided triangulation across participants. The diverse data types the



various data collection methods provided (narrative documents, artifacts, interview transcriptions, and emails) permitted the triangulation of data for each case and of findings across the three cases. By including a proactive search for the disconfirmation of interpretations, the possibility of triangulation was a valuable asset for trustworthiness as it added credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Moreover, member checks added to the representativeness of the data and the appropriacy of the assertions reached through interpretation, thus increasing the credibility of the study.

**Theories.** The only theory behind this study is critical pedagogy. Still, several critical views exposed in Chapter 1 and the literature included in Chapter 2 contributed some triangulation of visions, as exposed in the discussion section of Chapter 5.

### **Ethics**

No ethical issues arose during any of the phases in the development of the study. Nevertheless, I was prepared to approach them with the criteria proposed for evaluators by Janesick & Stevenson (2002), “recognizing the existence of a moral or ethical issue; obtaining as many facts on the case as possible; evaluating the options available from various perspectives; making a judgment based on the evidence provided” (p. 107). Fairness of such judgment would take into account: “What will produce the most good and do the least harm? What respects the rights and dignity of all the stakeholders? What would promote the common good?” (p. 110).

### **Limitations**

As in all qualitative research, the role of the researcher as instrument makes it difficult to separate the researcher from the researched (Janesick, 1999). Different researchers will pull different strings and produce different tones, for which hermeneutics is always a factor (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Tappan & Brown, 1992). Booker, Invernizzi, and McCormick (2007) warn “In qualitative research, the views and perspectives of the researcher have great influence over the direction of the study” (p. 321). My own views and experiences as an L1-Spanish educator in the U.S., close to those of the participants, might have influenced what insights I found in the data and how I interpreted them. In view of this limitation, I was aware

of my positionality and made a conscious effort to revere the emic voices of the participants. Then, the online methods of data collection per se might have influenced both the researcher and the participants in unidentified ways and impacted “the ways in which qualitative researchers make sense of, and represent data” (Markham, 2005, p. 794). The extensive use of member checks should have diminished the possibilities for misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the participants’ perceptions.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the methodological rationale for qualitative inquiry needed to address my exploratory question and sub-questions. I explained the design as a multicase study, using the participants’ biliteracy autobiographies as data-collection tools. Then, I described in detail the development of the study, from the preliminary phase, through data collection and analysis, to interpretation. I narrated the processes of cross-case analysis, addressing of the exploratory question and sub-questions, and report writing. The chapter concludes with discussions on the trustworthiness and limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of this multicase study was to describe and explain the perceptions of three Spanish-English CLD high achievers on their biliteracy journeys to become educators in the U.S. The main exploratory question was: What elements constitute the perspectives of three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers on the relevance of their biliteracy experience in order to become educators in the U.S.? The exploratory sub-questions were: (1) What factors do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive as key to describe their biliteracy experience?; (2) What relevance, if any, do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive their biliteracy experience had for them to become educators in the U.S.?; (3) From the perspectives of these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high-achiever educators, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on their biliteracy experience? As methods of data collection, I used a participant selection questionnaire, individual and group semi-structured interviews via Skype, e-journals for biliteracy autobiographies, e-portfolios of artifacts, researcher reflective e-journal, and one face-to-face unstructured interview with participant Victoria only. Additionally, I integrated into the data the personal email communications with the participants and their member checks. Two external auditors reviewed all data collection and analysis procedures.

### Chapter Overview

As per Stake (2006), each case in a multi-case study is part of “the case-quintain dilemma” (pp. 7-8), both epistemologically and procedurally. In the epistemological sphere, Stake asks “What is more worth knowing?” (p.7), while in the procedural aspect, the dilemma affects the focus of the research. In this study, the focus was on the quintain, i.e., the biliteracy experiences of three CLD high-achievers who became educators in the U.S. from their perspectives. Yet, the data in this multicase study came from the cases. Thus, it was necessary to give each individual case a high relevance, since “The more the cases become

merely incidental to the study ... the less appropriate it is to call it a multicase study,” (p. 8). Therefore, in this chapter, I present the data for the three cases and their respective analyses. Each case starts with a narrative to serve as context for the topics that emerged from the data. The topics follow. Next, those topics address my exploratory questions for that particular case. Finally, I offer a reflective summary to close each case. Table 6 below outlines the structure used to expose the sections and topics emergent in all cases with variations of degree. The cross-case analysis appears in Chapter 5.

Table 6.

*Structuring the Presentation of the Data. Emergent Sections and Topics.*

Emergent Section	Section Content	Emergent Topics
Context	Introductory narratives and timelines	
Ordeals	Perceived obstacles which needed to be worked around in order to attain academic achievement in the U.S.	Culture shock Language shock
Breakthrough Paths	What the participants perceive helped them prevail over their ordeals	Helpers Tools Belonging Acknowledgement Empowerment Identity Revisited Advocacy
Evaluation	Perceptions of how study participation impacted the participants	

### How to Read the Cases

**Code-switching.** In order to be faithful to the participants’ use of code-switching throughout their interviews and e-journals, when adding quotations, I have italicized the words I translated into English from their original Spanish, and I have left non-italicized those words I quote in the originally language chosen by the participant, whether Spanish or English.

**Sources.** Unless specified otherwise, the sources of quotations were the individual online interviews with each participant. I identify other frequent sources as, “J” for e-journals, “G” for group interview, “E” for email, and “f2f” for face-to-face interview.

**Paralinguistic features.** Additionally, I identify paralinguistic features inside <>, for example, <pause>, <laugh>, <inaudible>. Table 7 summarizes in-text conventions.

Table 7.

*In-Text Conventions.*

		In text
Code-switching	Quote of something said in English, and quote of something said in Spanish and kept in Spanish	Normal font
	Quote of something said in Spanish, which I translated into English	<i>Italics</i>
Sources	Quote from individual online interviews	No identifier follows
	Quote from e-journals	(J)
	Quote from the group interview	(G)
	Quote from email	(E)
	Quote from face-to-face interview	(f2f)
Para-linguistic features	The interviewee paused	<pause>
	The interviewee laughed	<laugh>
	Words inaudible in the recording	<inaudible>

**Pseudonyms.** All names of people, institutions, organizations, and cities are pseudonyms in order to protect the identities of those involved.

**Famous quotes.** Each case starts with a quotation the participants chose to characterize their journeys.




**Headings.** As in all this report, the style of the headings in this chapter follow APA-6<sup>th</sup>-edition format; i.e., level-three headings are bold normal font flushed left, level-four headings are bold normal font indented, and level-five headings are bold italics indented. In the cases, these headings also represent the hierarchy of emergent themes.

### Participant Profiles

To conclude this introductory section, I present a summary of the participant profiles in Table 8. The illustrations in the first column were contributions of the participants. For Fátima, I processed in Photoshop a jpg file she emailed to me in order to protect her identity. Victoria already had her silhouette made from a photograph and she emailed me her file. Being an Instructional Technology specialist, Séneca made his own silhouette. The rationale behind these silhouettes was to diminish the perception of the participants as abstract entities and bring it closer to real, sentient people.

Table 8.

*Summary of Participant Profiles at the End of Data Collection (July 2012).*

Pseudonym	Gender /Age	Place of Birth	L2	Age of Arrival	Total Time	GPA	Ed. Level
 Fátima	f/29	Peru	French English	15	14 yrs.	BA:3.45 MEd:3.96 PhD:3.86	ABD (pursuing PhD in ESOL/ Bilingual Education)
 Séneca	m/35	Colombia	French English	23	12 yrs.	BA:3.1 BA:3.2 MA:3.6 EdS:3.8	Ed.S. (pursuing PhD in Instructional Technology)
 Victoria	f/49	Cuba	English	8	41 yrs.	BA: 3.8 MA: 4.0	MAT-TESOL (planning an Ed.S.)

#### **Fátima: A Journey of Hope**

*In this life we cannot do great things; we can only do small things with great love.*

*Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997)*

Fátima Brooks-Alfaro was born to a Catholic family in Peru in October 1982. She came to the U.S. when she was 15, in July 1998, with her parents, her younger sister, and her great aunt. She got married to an American in the U.S. in 2011 and in Peru in June 2012. She was 29 years old at the moment of the study. As specified in Table 5, Chapter 3, her data sources were: one questionnaire, three e-journal entries, four individual online interviews (totaling 12 hours and 12 minutes of audio recordings), one group interview (of three and a half hours of which two hours and 57 minutes were usable), her artifacts (CV, silhouette, book titles, song titles, movie titles, websites, family video, and writing pieces), 36 emails, and six member checks (one for each interview and one for her final case report). Figure 6 is the silhouette of a photograph she emailed to me as one of her artifacts, which I edited with Photoshop to protect her identity.



Figure 6. Fátima's silhouette.

### Fátima's Context

**A rich symbolic universe.** In Peru, Fátima's family had an upscale lifestyle for South American standards, which included cars with chauffeurs, nannies, and trips abroad. This allowed Fátima to grow up immersed in a rich symbolic universe (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), which, together with her familial educational involvement, granted her the chance to acquire her L1-Spanish literacy at home. She explained, *"We had quite a large library at home, so what I would do was go down to Dad's study and take down all the books, look at all the encyclopedias, and that helped me a lot."*

**L1 Literacy.** Her parents and her great aunt, Mamá Ekito, started teaching her how to read and write in Spanish at age two. At age two and a half, she entered kinder, *"because they could not put up with me at home anymore,"* and when she entered first grade at age five, she already knew how to read and write. Her parents also bought her *"books and more books."* They were *"very, very involved in everything related to education. And my Mamá Ekito, too, more with the purpose to teach me how to be a Catholic, she always made me read the Bible and go to Mass."* In this way, faith got intermingled with Fátima's love for Mamá Ekito first, and for reading and learning as a natural consequence.

**School in Peru.** In her native Peru, Fátima was an outstanding student. She attended a private Catholic school with a demanding curriculum in which she excelled. Her effort gained

her numerous academic honors and awards. Fátima remembered, *“My parents ... would spend their money on our education, not on toys or stuff, but on academies, art, dance, music, languages, apart from school.”* Because the school curriculum included French but not English, her parents sent her to a private language academy for several years, where twice a week after school hours she took general American English classes, *“because my parents always had the plan that I should study abroad.”* From an economically privileged family, Fátima acknowledged not only the material possibilities her parents offered her, but also their interest in her education and academic achievements.

**Coming to the U.S.** Although her familial professional tradition was one of judges and lawyers, her father was an engineer working for the Peruvian government, and her mother, a full-time mom and wife. Her family expectations were she would follow the family tradition and become a lawyer, like her grandparents and uncles. Despite their social and economic position, terrorism and the context of insecurity it brought about pushed Fátima’s parents to consider emigration. Thanks to Fátima’s godfather, who convinced Fátima’s mother to enter into a visa lottery, her mother won a green card for herself and her immediate family. They would travel to the U.S. once a year in order to maintain alien resident status, but they did not want to leave Peru because they wanted to live close to their extended family. Eventually, insecurity resolved her parents to use their green cards and move to the U.S. to give their daughters a safer environment. *“But we came with nothing. The house was not sold, nothing. Nothing, nothing. Only with the books, because my dad told us, ‘Pick the books you want to take and a few clothes.’”* This shows not only the importance her parents gave to books, but also Fátima’s feelings of material destitution attached to the move.

**School in the U.S.** Upon arrival in the U.S., she entered 12<sup>th</sup> grade in a high school in Ore Town, a small city in Florida, and was classified as LEP. To my question whether her EFL studies helped her in any way, she responded they did, but she realized when she arrived here that *“I knew all the formulas, the structures, the grammar, but I lacked the discourse, the pragmatics, and foremost, the academic language ... which is what one needs to be able to go to school and be successful.”* She was assigned to an ESOL program with other immigrant



children. Fátima considered the program inappropriate, since *“the kids were there so as to be cared for so that they didn’t misbehave. So my parents told me I could not be in that ESOL program anymore.”* As a result, her parents signed a petition to stop ESOL services upon their responsibility and she returned to the mainstream classroom after two months of ESOL instruction.

**Plans for college.** When she finished high school, she entered the job market as a shop-assistant, temporarily, before entering the University of Greatness (UG), because she did not feel ready to enter the university. She preferred to wait about six months, work, and save up some money to be able to meet some of her expenses when she entered UG. Once in UG, she sought to improve her English by doing a B.A. in English Literature before going into Law School. She explained, *“This was my logic: I need to learn English; if I want to be a lawyer, I need to learn how to write well; moreover, I love literature. So I said, well, a B.A. in English Literature it is!”*

**A vocation.** While at college, Fátima had the first glimpse of what would become her vocation. *“I started to form groups [and] ... develop programs for Mi Casa [the institute of Hispanic and Latin cultures at UG, where Fátima created the section Café Cultural]. But I had not yet found the niche of language.”* Until a friend of hers, Sandra, told her she had started going to farm workers’ communities around Win Town (the locality of UG) to teach them English,

*And I said, “... I want to go, too!” So we would travel every Friday and Saturday afternoons, when one wants to go out and be with friends, I would go and teach my kids, my students. (...) I would read to them ... I didn’t know how to teach but I made it up. (...) My friend Sandra told me one day, “You’ve chosen the wrong major. You should be a teacher.”*

This discovery would become both “a blessing and a curse” for Fátima, since she would have to confront a strong familial directive to study law. Committed to fulfilling their expectations, she took her FCATs, passed them, and when she was ready to go to Law School, she started

thinking whether she really wanted to study Law after all. Hence, as she obtained her B.A. in English Literature in May 2004, her career plans changed.

**Teaching ESOL.** She decided to pursue education in the ESOL field. Again, she preferred to gain some experience, especially to figure out what she wanted to do as a researcher. She got a job in Bee High School (a school in Ore Town) and “worked there for three to four years as the ESL teacher... for 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.” It was a rewarding experience for her, “though I didn’t ... have a teaching degree ... I think I did a really good job, at least as far as instructional practices and finding opportunities for them to go to college.” However, to take a step away from the familial tradition was not going to be that easy. She was “*compelled*” to study Law, but she prayed to God for strength to stand up and follow her calling. She explained to me her faith gave her the courage to face her family,

*It was a very existential thing. Awful! Because my grandfather phoned me—my dad’s dad—called me and he got angry and called me names. And I told him “Yes, Grandpa; yes, Grandpa” because that’s how we’re brought up. Your grandfather tells you whatever he fancies and you keep quiet. And my mom got mad, too, even when my mom’s so sweet, but she had the dream that one of her daughters would be a medical doctor or a lawyer. The only one who supported me from the start was my dad. I told him, “Daddy, this is what I must do.” And my dad, so sweet, because he’s all kindness, he told me, “Little girl, I will support you, but if you’re going to do it, you’ll have to do it well, because teaching is not just a career but it is also a calling.”*

In this way, Fátima overcame the first obstacle in her journey, the familial pressure to follow the legal tradition, with the sole support of her father and her faith.

**Lately.** Having found her vocation in ESOL education, she pursued an M.A. in ESL and Bilingual Education, which she finished in May 2009. Since then, she has been a doctoral student in the Bilingual Education program at UG, where, through her major professor, she received information about this study. “My advisor got the message you sent to a website, SFST (...) She tells me, ‘Fátima I think you should look into this ... it would be a good experience for you and ... you meet the requirements.’” During the time of the study, she took her qualifying

exams. At the end of data collection, she was a doctoral candidate writing her dissertation proposal. Figure 7 presents the timeline of the major events above, which I describe in detail as they relate to this study in the subsections below.

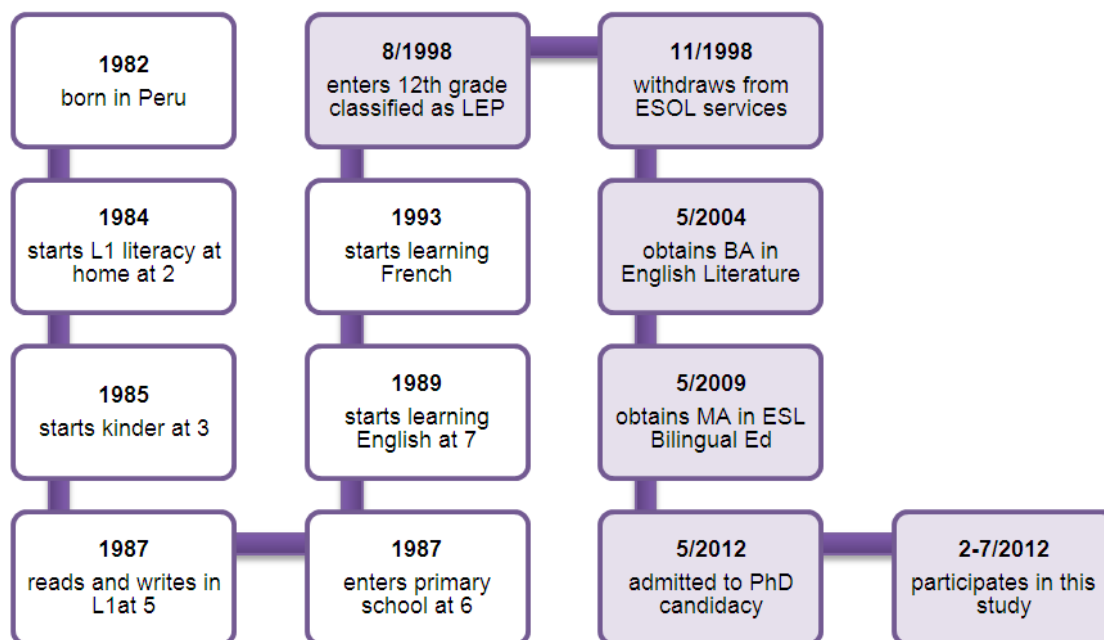


Figure 7. Fátima's timeline. □ In Peru; ■ in the U.S.

### Fátima's Ordeals

In this subsection I present what Fátima perceived as some trying challenges during her biliteracy journey.

**Fátima's identity at play.** Here I present issues related to her existing identity before her change of context. Her first concern, she remembered, was to fulfill her parents' expectations and not disappoint them. She felt, "*they had no need to move here. Just for security reasons and to give us a better quality of life in that sense, only that and peace, and so that nothing would happen to us. That is why they came,*" (G). She restricted the reasons for her parents to emigrate to the U.S. uniquely to the benefits of their daughters. Fátima's familial expectations made her feel compelled to become a lawyer. Initially ready to please her family, she started the process of admission to the university. She recalled feeling

overwhelmed by all the paperwork she had to do and all the exams she had to take to enter UG,

*I went to see my counselor and told her, "I want to enter UG, which has a good School of Law. Everyone in my family is a lawyer so I have to be a lawyer, too." And that's the truth. My grandfather, my uncles, they're all lawyers, judges, and magistrates at the Supreme Court in Peru. So I told her, "I must be a lawyer and I want to be a lawyer."*

Fátima felt defied by what she interpreted as a lack of understanding on the part of the counselor of the importance of following her familial tradition at any rate.

Her extended-family identification came into view as she sounded outraged when she reckoned she had not been to Peru to see her family for the three years of her doctoral studies, *"because I would say I didn't have time."* But as she came back from Peru with her husband, where they had their religious wedding, they promised each other to go to Peru once a year, *"because when you are sick, your degree is not going to make your life any happier or give you a little hope, you see?"* (all quotes, G). Again, she showed a contradiction between her rage at herself for being focused on her studies instead of her family, and her primary goal of being academically successful in order not to disappoint her parents for love of them. When I confronted her with this supposed contradiction, she explained, *"It's both but one, because everything is fueled by family, love and respect for them. That's what's most important."*

**Fátima: What might have been.** Fátima perceived a different kind of cost in the loss of the cultural potentials on hand in Peru. Before she moved here, she was learning about the Peruvian aboriginal movement in culture and literature, and Quechua (the aborigine language of Peru). *"Unfortunately, it was then that we moved to the U.S., and apart from that being a traumatizing experience for a 15-year-old, I feel my education was interrupted,"* (J). I asked her whether the interruption referred to a gap in her educational development or to an aspect in her identity, she thought it was the latter,

*Because ... I lost [the chance] to be able to identify more with that part of my identity which is where we come from ... the Inca culture, Quechua. I had a little of that with*

*my Mamá Ekito, with my nannies, but it is so vast. I left and I lost the possibility to sit and read it, understand it, listen to it, and in its own context. I had to leave and learn a language foreign to me, when sometimes I feel ... my second language ought to be Quechua. (...) It's part of my identity which was cut off ... and I truly believe that language and identity are intertwined. (...) So that portion of me, my learning Quechua, slipped off my hands.*

Fátima felt if she had stayed in Peru, she would have taken the opportunity to immerse herself in the traditions and language of her aborigine ancestors. She expressed a feeling of debt and betrayal towards her cultural roots for not having gone deeper in her Quechua studies and having devoted to learn English instead.

**Fátima's culture shock.** Different elements made up Fátima's perception of her struggles related to culture shock, of which the most salient were the problems she faced when she and her family were trying to find their way in a new culture, the disrespect she perceived when she was classified as ELL and offered what she considered inappropriate ESOL services for her needs, and the perception of members of the host society as uninformed about her cultural background.

**Uprooting and homesickness.** Fátima pointed out one of the greatest sacrifices she had to make in her biliteracy journey was being away from her homeland and extended family. She confessed sometimes she told herself, *"What am I doing here when all my people are over there? (...) I miss them very, very much. I wonder whether the time will come when we'll have to choose to live in two countries or possibly move back,"* (G). In her e-journal, Fátima remarked on the hardships of uprooting, *"...the unbearable pain of leaving my family, my home, my school, my friends, my pets, the small library ... on the second floor of my house, my city, my country; ...everything I knew, everything that defined me as a person."* A 15-year-old at the time, Fátima felt deeply sad at these losses.

Changes in lifestyle and newcomer sorrows were additional factors Fátima perceived added to her feelings of loss,

*From a very beautiful and large house we came here to live in an apartment. And because my dad didn't speak English ... he came to work in a factory, making furniture ... having had a chauffeur who picked him up to take him wherever. (...) And my mom came to work in a hotel. But my parents have always taught us work dignifies you and as long as you have a moral job, you shouldn't be ashamed of it. (...) What we must care for is the family. I imagine it must have been hard for my parents ... used as they were to something else. (...) And those two years ... it seemed we had nothing in the economic sense, and with the school transition on top of it.*

Material tribulations, shame, and its denial were only part of the cost. In addition, she suffered other dear losses during that period. Her loved Mamá Ekito passed, and an aunt and two uncles also died. These family deaths made the physical distance evident and topped the grief for the loss with the pain for not being able to share those moments with loved ones in her homeland.

**Confusion.** Fátima noted not finding other South Americans made her feel adrift. *I could not identify with anyone. (...) Once a girl—I think she was Puerto Rican—told me, “Your Spanish is weird.” So, I didn't click with Americans, and the Latinos at that time—I'm talking in 2000—most Latin population in UG was Puerto Rican, Cuban... I didn't know where to go. (...) I have never had problems with people like us, international, but American people sometimes feel so weird to me. (...) I've had unpleasant experiences. (...) Maybe that was why I was so scared to learn English, because I think if I had had more English-speaking people around me before, and maybe some academic help; then, it would have been a little easier. But I couldn't find any English speakers I could actually connect with. (G)*

Fátima perceived culture shock led more specifically to language shock.

**Prejudice.** During the first two years in the U.S., Fátima learned, for the first time in her life, what discrimination and disrespect feel like. *“Two very hard years ... of adaptation, of struggle, of uncertainty, of learning. Two years when I ... realized that I was invisible, that my language and my skin color transcended ME, ‘I’ who I was, and who I wanted to be,* (J, quotation marks and capitals hers). As she entered 12<sup>th</sup> grade, she was classified as an ELL.

After having studied English in Peru “on and off” during eight years, she perceived her classification was prejudiced,

*They made me take the IPT [Individualized Development English Activities Proficiency Test]. ... they give you pictures of, suppose, fireworks, and one has to say “Ah! The 4<sup>th</sup> of July” and for us it may be the New Year or Christmas or some other thing. So it’s tremendously biased, culturally biased and linguistically biased. But they threw me there [into the ESOL program] anyway.*

Thus, the classification itself was a traumatic experience for Fátima. Moreover, Fátima perceived the ESOL services she received were inadequate for her needs and for her plans of higher education,

*It was an awful experience because they dumped me into a class where the teacher would say “el gato, the cat; el perro, the dog.” (...) I kept thinking “Damn, my parents have abandoned their lives in Peru to give us better opportunities here and with this kind of education I am not going to be able to go to the university and become a lawyer.” ... basically, that ESOL class was a waste of time. (...) They were not teaching us what we needed.*

Having been an honor student in Peru, she felt cast-off and ignored in her new school. As well, Fátima felt unwelcome by some of her American teachers. “*There were certain teachers who wanted to create obstacles, who did not believe in the potential of a student, maybe because of language issues or barriers,*” (G). This hurt her emotionally.

The “*cultural issue*” made her feel “*isolated.*” That first year in an American school she did not identify with any Americans, and for the Latinos in that school she “*acted too white. Then, I preferred to isolate myself. ... I took refuge in my family. (...) So that year ... was traumatizing because I was ostracized.*” She did not want to hang out with Americans or other Latinos, “*because Latinos did not accept me. (...) It must be because I’m South American. I could not identify with them,*” (all quotes, G).

At my question about the worst obstacle in her journey, Fátima sounded sure, “*The high school. (...) The high school was the worst. (...) The high school here in the U.S. They*

*didn't make it easy at all.*" She felt what "saved" her was her parents' struggle to get her out of the ESOL program,

*What an ordeal that was! My parents had to sign a document renouncing ESOL services so that I could take regular classes with the only teacher who was actually helping me! My dad said, "ESOL is a waste of time. We're not here to waste time. You must go to university." When they told the staff they wanted to sign that document ... the school administration freaked out. ... because they get money from each ESOL student. (G)*

Her parents' decision brought her in touch with her first mentor in the U.S. and out of a program she felt had an agenda divorced from immigrant students' interests.

She added a recent experience of prejudice. Her class at UG was working on visual meanings in an article on Latin women and the care of their looks, even to go shopping. "*When these white girls started talking [about] Latin culture ... I tell them, "It's not that we're vain at all."* She tried to explain to them this is how Latinas are brought up. "*A lady is a lady and has to look like a lady, dress well... wear make-up, do her hair, and if you don't, then you can't go out.*" She remembered "*those white girls*" said it was "very conceited ... very vain," and a reflection of how Latinas are. Fátima replied,

*"No, it's not like that. (...) That is our culture. (...) A Latin woman ... likes to look well, to feel well, without cracking the piggybank, because we have ... grandma's secrets, what we eat, drink, or when we go to the sauna with the sponges, oil and sugar, or honey. (...) You don't know. This is what's so great about being Latina." (...) But what I wanted to explain to those girls was that you don't do it for your husband or your boyfriend. It's for you. And I tell them, "many times even the poorest of women, with no money at all, will always look well... Even the Cholitas [aborigine women] ... wear their exquisite skirts; they're beautiful, with their earrings, very glamorous. That is very typical of our women."*

Additionally, Fátima brought to the table the upbringing of her future children in "*a country like this, where...that warmth of family life, our principles, and our values are missing.*" She said her American husband agreed with her. Fátima expanded, "*Here families*



*don't get together every weekend. People don't help each other. (...) How teenagers relate to one another is so different!*" She remarked she and her husband were also worried about health care, *"One is scared of getting sick here, and that stresses you even more."* She believed, *"It's a lot more feasible to give our kids a better life in Peru than here."* She felt, *"Here people live to work, work, and work. And often it's just to buy a new car, another TV ...materialism, consumerism!"* (G). In my e-journal, I wrote, "Forget about an amalgam in the cultural melting pot! I'm not sure she's even willing to become part of a salad, like a stubborn tomato that wants to keep to its juices instead of being flavored by the dressing." Her rejection of the host culture as an aspect of her culture shock (Marx, 1999; Oberg, 1960; Ward, et al., 2005) impressed me.

Another one was the idealization of her community of origin, *"In Peru people have no luxuries, but they're calm, happy, they're kind to each other. Everyone feels welcome."* She felt she cannot give that to her children in the U.S. During a recent trip to Peru, she was sure her husband saw *"the joy, hugs, love, and kisses I miss so much; knowing if you're on the ground, ten people will help you get up and push you forward. Here, apart from your close family, you can't be sure that will happen,"* (G). In her efforts to preserve her cultural identity, Fátima stereotyped both cultures, drew her husband virtually away from his culture, more than try to come to amicable terms with it herself.

When Fátima was ready to fulfill her dream of entering a prestigious university, such as UG, she saw cultural differences standing as closed doors again,

*I went to see the counselor and she told me very kindly ... I had better not waste my time applying to UG, that it would be very difficult for me to be accepted because I did not speak English, ... that I should, instead, consider a community college or a trade of some sort. I was so shocked!*

She responded, *"How on earth could I let my parents come here only for me to linger in middle management. I can't possibly do that!"* Again, Fátima felt the counselor disregarded or ignored the importance of familial obligations in L1-Spanish speaking cultures. She took the counselor's advice as an insult to her family.

*Information chasm.* Later she learned when her Peruvian high-school transcript was evaluated here, her grades from Peru had been changed. According to her, in Peru, grades go from one to 20, and are not really significant, because entrance to the university depends on an admission exam and not on high-school grades. Thus, some teachers may have a personal grade policy—they “*won’t give you more than 15, even if your work’s perfect.*” A usual trend in South America, this is traditionally more frequent, the higher quality the school is, and she did her schooling in Peru in a Catholic school, run by Dominican nuns, said to be very demanding, These cultural differences were not considered when evaluating her transcripts, and in her view she received no help from her counselor because of her lack of information and willingness. In her words, “*I’ve always had good grades! I’ve been to national and city contests, and international ones. (...) So when I came here, my file was pretty impressive.*” She told her counselor she had even come to Intel, the international science convention, representing Peru, being awarded several prizes, “*But the counselor didn’t seem to care much.*” The counselor’s job, to compare transcripts, did not include the sensitive approach Fátima expected. In her cultural terms, emotions and relationships come first, then any other business.

She saw school officers’ “unwillingness” to give her information as disrespect and discrimination. She recalled she played volleyball “*very well, and they knew it because in the PE [Physical Education] class they wanted me in the team.*” But her parents could not pick her up and take her to practice or pay the fees to enter the team, so she was not allowed to play, “*And now looking back, I know if I had been given the opportunity to engage within the school <pause> but they did not care to do it.*” She recalled her counselor did not give her any information about the Scholastic Aptitude Tests or American College Tests. “*I didn’t know that if you didn’t have your own funds you could apply for a waiver to take the exams with no cost.*” She perceived it as unwillingness on the part of educational officers to guide her towards the assistance the American educational system offers for ELLs, immigrants, and the financially excluded.

Fátima saw members of the host society in general as uninformed about her cultural background. *“I was sick and tired already! Maybe this will sound presumptuous, but I had had enough of them. When talking about Latin-American culture, the only thing they mention is dance or food, and that is it.”* She went on to tell me about a discussion she had with an officer in the cultural extension department at UG, to whom she tried to explain the splendor of Latin-American culture. That lack of information made her feel unwelcome and inadequate *“Sometimes one does or says something and people take it in astonishing, unintended ways. You always feel you have to walk on eggshells with them [laugh] because you don’t want to wreck the situation or infuriate people,”* (G)

**Health.** Since she started her doctoral program and until she passed her qualifying exams, *“I’ve always felt overwhelmed, unable to breathe. (...) I was under so much pressure that the time came when I fell ill. I was a year and a half sick with a bad thyroid condition.”* Currently, she still identified sequels of those hard times, *“what I have now that I didn’t have before is panic attacks. (...) This bothers me ... I’d always been a very strong woman. Now ... I must learn how to deal with stress again, and listen to my body.”* She showed her determination as she said, *“I can’t get sick for any doctorate or anything. If I’m not healthy, I’ll never reach my goals,”* (all quotes, G). The dichotomy strong-weak was a difficult one for Fátima to accept, as she fought weakness in order to fulfill the familial model of women as the strong sex. Her self-proclaimed anxious nature together with culture and language shock beat Fatima so harshly that her health deteriorated to the point of causing her hormonal, immunologic problems, and anxiety problems she still suffers from time to time. These issues, closely related to her emotions, point to the degree of her culture shock (Ward, et al., 2005).

**Fátima’s language shock.** Fátima perceived her difficulties with English and how others reacted to them had a strong impact on her self-confidence, mainly manifested in her reading and writing. Fátima admitted her reading issues related to her lack of love for English. *“I don’t like English. That’s the truth. Before meeting my husband, I didn’t like English.”* She told me she would look around and none of her friends at the university was a speaker of English as L1. *“I couldn’t relate to Americans. Even when I wanted to read, I just could not do*

*it. No.*” However, Fátima’s language shock was mostly about not being able to write in English as proficiently as she did in Spanish. If she had problems reading, there were always dictionaries; but she did not expect to find the help she needed to learn how to write in books but in people. She believed she had now reached the level of academic English needed to write papers, but had not published anything yet “*because I am so afraid of writing. (...) I still don’t feel confident. Even when my instructors tell me “You can do it” I have a huge fear.*” She resorted to her religious faith and to the loving memory of Mamá Ekito to help her face a writing task,

*I take a little Virgin that belonged to my Mamá Ekito, and I keep it with me and set it on a little lace dolly next to my computer, and I start to write ... because I assure you, I don’t believe I can, and I feel like a fraud.*

Fátima also shared with me some interesting insights on what other ELLs in her doctoral program go through as regards language shock, “*They’re all very intelligent, but they have to deal with an extra dimension, trying to understand the language they need, and how to write in it, which is not easy.*” She pointed out how difficult it was, even for native speakers, to write in academic English, “*Imagine what it’s like for people who have been here just for three or four years!*” I shared with her some research on writing difficulties for L1-Spanish college students and that I have always wondered why,

*The problem is we don’t get enough opportunities to write. I had the chance to write a paper with Dr. Cosby last year, but it was a process that lasted the whole summer, where I would write, edit with her, write again, get more feedback. That process gave me an incredible chance to grow, an opportunity only that professor gave me.*

Her advisor also helped her with her academic speaking,

*What she would do was whenever we had to go to Jay Town, those two hours; she’d interrogate me and make me speak. I wonder how I didn’t get a stomach ulcer! Because I knew that both on the way there and back, she’d ask me about Cummings, theoretical framework, and what’s the consistency with this methodology, and I had to be on my game to answer that. (...) But these are opportunities one has to find on*

*one's own, because no one's going to come and knock at your door to offer you help or to teach you anything.*

I wanted to know whether she considered knowing how to write well in Spanish had become an advantage or a hindrance to develop her writing skills in academic English. She clarified, "Academic language also involves inferring, drawing conclusions ... and those skills can be transferred. It's useless to leave Spanish behind, and it can't be done. I believe I've been successful in Standard English, because of my solid Spanish base." Then she remembered her time as an undergrad, when she had to study Milton, Emerson, or Joyce, authors she had already studied in Spanish at high school in Peru. "So, *the cultural capital [Bourdieu, 2005/1982] is what's most important. The symbolic capital I already had before learning academic English.*"

**Self-doubt.** Her difficulties with English and the reactions to her accent started mining Fátima's self-confidence, "*They made me doubt, many times, of my aptitudes as a person, of my intellectual abilities.*" During the first two years in the U.S., "*'learning English' turned into a very personal battle, which 'as said by me' would define not only my future in this country, but also my family's,*" (J, quotation marks hers). She admitted the self-doubt triggered by language shock still remains today and has become an identity issue. Having considered herself a good writer in Spanish, "*when I realized I had a lot more to learn, a new register, what one needs to write in academic English. I crumbled.*" Now they were telling her she needed to learn what she thought she already knew, "*Then my identity was dual ... that dual identity of knowing I'm a writer in Spanish and then knowing I have to learn how to write in English for academic purposes.*" For the past two years, she has made a conscious effort to expand her academic English writing skills "by writing and revising, and writing again, and revising again, and continuing to write and revise." Since she moved to the U.S., "learning English has been a constant source of doubt and uncertainty." Fátima's language shock impacted not only her dual proficiency as a writer, but also her self-confidence to "make it" in English.

### Fátima's Breakthrough Paths

**Fátima's helpers.** According to Fátima's perceptions, family, mentors, and friends have helped her in her biliteracy journey. A deeper look into her views follows.

**Family.** Fátima's biliteracy development fed of the nutrients in the rich symbolic universe (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) of her home environment and of the importance her family gave to academic achievement. She wrote, *"My education in Spanish benefitted from my growing up surrounded by people who were very devoted to my education and were always teaching me something, formally or informally."* She believed her parents, in particular, made crucial decisions when choosing a school of academic excellence for her education in Peru, when sending her to EFL classes, and when withdrawing from ESOL services in the U.S. She reflected on her EFL experience with these words, *"My parents, as devoted parents who tried to give me the best education possible, decided to enroll me in a private academy of English ...I know they did that for my benefit, because they truly believe in the benefits of being bilingual,"* (all quotes, J).

Of all her helpers, her great aunt was the most important for Fátima and the closest to her heart, *"Since my earliest childhood, my Mamá Ekito would read the Bible to me daily. It was a small collection of three volumes my father had brought home from one of his travels ...written expressly for children."* She recalled her affection, *"Mamá Ekito would cuddle me by her side and read me each story to the point when her sweet voice would transport me to that precious moment before I knew, and I would live every experience,"* and her interesting *"long conversations with Mamá Ekito at bedtime, in the kitchen as she prepared her infusions, when she sat me by her side as she embroidered or knitted, and when we travelled together."* She admitted, *"Of course my parents are wonderful and I adore them, but the love and closeness I feel for Mamá Ekito stands no comparison ... My mother understood that long ago, because she adored her too"* (J).

Fátima believed Mamá Ekito also *"implanted"* a love for education in her during their trips together to work in low-income communities, *"we'd always go to aborigine communities, we'd talk to the field workers and I learned that way, ... to do what they did, to teach them*

*how to read and write.*” She presented Mamá Ekito as “*a very strong woman.*” As I was trying to interpret Fatima’s special relationship with her great aunt, I wrote a poem (see Figure 8) in Spanish and emailed it to her, asking her to confirm whether I was capturing her feelings appropriately. She emailed me this reply, “*Yes, you couldn’t have said it better. She’s always been and will always be my lighthouse. Whenever I get lost, just by thinking what my Mamá would do, I find my way again. Thank you,*” (E).

Fátima perceived her parents’ decision to root her education in their Peruvian culture was beneficial to her, as it allowed her to value her origin and feel proud of it. Her mother brought her and her sister up with the idea “*we may be living in the U.S., but we’re Peruvian.*” Fátima saw the implications of such decision clearly, “*Our life has been focused on how children are brought up in Peru and ... as if we were still in Peru.*” She added an anecdote of the times when who today is her husband wanted to take her to meet his parents in a different state, “*He had to first ask for my parents’ permission so that I could leave the house.*” She



Figure 8. Capturing Fátima’s feelings for Mamá Ekito.

understood and accepted it because those are the norms in her family's culture, and in Peruvian culture, *"In contrast, here a woman at 27 or 28 years old in practice can do whatever she wants with her life without having to ask for permission."* Fátima seemed to understand, but not value, the liberties of women in the U.S. as compared to those in Peru. For her, her parents' goals come before her own, based on a notion of respect which includes never questioning her elders' views. Another American custom her parents never allowed was pajama parties, *"It's not done over there, [at least] not when we were growing up,"* (all quotes, G).

Her parents and great aunt also taught her never to give up, *"even when something hurts, even when things are difficult, you must go ahead and do them, crying your eyes out, but do them."* She recalled sitting before her qualifying exam board and thinking she was failing her exam, *"and they were nodding ... and inside of me I was thinking ... I probably didn't pass them, but I just have to keep going."*

Her godfather, an uncle on her mother's side, was another important helper. *"He never abandoned us and always helped us to sail unknown waters as regards paperwork, everything needed to fill in applications for the university."* She felt grateful having been able to come to the U.S. with a green card *"with my godfather's help. That facilitated everything related to financial aid, etc., which was so unknown to us,"* (G). He also came to her rescue when she felt she was drowning in a sea of paperwork, as misinterpretations of her transcripts jeopardized her admission to UG,

*I phoned my godfather in tears and I asked him "What do I do?" (...) We had to call the ministry of education [in Peru] where my parents had some contacts who wrote a letter explaining to them how things are [in Peru]. The Mother Superior who is the principal in my school [in Peru] also wrote a letter explaining to them what the system is like, and that our honor sections group us according to letters—not grades—from A to H, A being the most accomplished group (...) and I have always been in A. That ...had to be explained to them, because it gives you half a point more in the GPA since it corresponds to honors. (...) It was hell.*



In the end, they corrected her grades, *“increased my GPA—which they’d shattered—and only then did they realize what they’d done.”* Her godfather also helped her find the information school officers would not provide, *“They didn’t care to help me, but my godfather did.”* He took her UG tour with her, and told her about university life in the U.S., *“what was good and what was bad.”* He made her feel supported.

It was her husband that she perceived had the most salient role helping her overcome her fear of English. Fátima evoked, *“Only after I met my husband ... did I realize how the language works, that it’s a different register; academic writing is another tackle of language.”* It took her two years of continuous work where she would write something for practice, her husband would edit it, *“and he doesn’t sugar-coat things,”* and that was how, in what she calls an “autodidactic” way, she achieved the level of academic writing she needed. *“But it takes guts and tenacity and tears, because sometimes things are wrong and you can’t understand why. It happens to all international students, the fear of writing, even when they’re brilliant and accomplished.”* She and her husband helped each other in their doctoral training, *“a process that can be traumatizing <laugh> (...) We’re each other’s anchor,”* (G).

Fátima admitted her plights relating to Americans, but she married one, *“I used to say, ‘I will never marry an <inaudible> American,’ excuse my language ... I need to preserve my language, my culture; my children have to speak Spanish.”* But the Latinos she met would not meet the qualities she wanted, *“like my dad’s—an amazing man. And my husband’s just like that.”* She identified her husband as “not really American,”

*That’s why before I met my husband, if I could ... I would stay away from people that weren’t international, ‘cause I have no issues with international people, but it was really hard for me to relate to American people. (...) And one of the reasons why my husband and I work [well] is because he’s everywhere. He’s not really <pause> he’s absolutely different.* (G)

I asked Fátima how it was possible for her to marry an American when she was not able to connect with Americans at all. She explained,

*Frankly, our relationship is God's making ... and it's a "humbling experience" since we have different cultures, languages, RELIGIONS, idiosyncrasies. (...) In these two years of married life, I've been able to experience the love of God and the compassion of the Virgin through my husband, which marvels me every day. (...) I never thought [I'd marry] a "gringuito" but God knows what He does, may everything be His will. Our love is a question of faith, compassion, and determination to love your partner every day, which is also shared by my husband's Buddhist philosophy. I know life is never easy, but I have an enormous faith, and I always pray to God for strength and humility for us both. (E, quotation marks and capitals hers)*

Taken together, this and the previous explanation where she saw her husband as “not really American” seemed to point at two possible origins for this apparent contradiction. Fátima had created a stereotype of Americans into which her husband did not fit, and her religious faith took care of the rest. As I discuss below, this pattern of rage and love, in Freirean terms, enabled Fátima's hope (Freire & Freire, 1994).

**Mentors.** Fátima felt thankful to all the persons who mentored her all the way from high school to her doctorate. The first mentor she remembered was Mr. Pan, a teacher she had at the school in Ore Town after she withdrew from ESOL services. “*Mr. Pan saw something in me. He spoke a little Spanish and (...) he took me under his wing.*” With him, she took sociology, law studies, civics, philosophy, “*all the courses he taught, which were all supposed to be honor classes.*” He helped her, in every way he could to improve her writing and speaking skills “*and I leaned on him a lot.*” In the group interview, she adds, “*Mr. Pan was the only one who believed in me. (...) I loved his classes, because ... I could see he tried to make me participate in one way or other, and to teach me the language.*” Fátima contrasted this teacher to the rest, against whom she felt enraged, but responded with love to give way to Freirean hope.

Later, after finishing her M.A., Fátima met other mentors, such as her advisor, who suggested she applied for the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship. The fellowship would give her the financial aid she needed to go onto the Ph.D. program, “*It's extra difficult because ...for the*

*whole five years, they cover everything. (...) And guess what? I got it! It was a blessing.*” Still, Fátima got bewildered by all the requisites, such as taking courses for 12 credit hours every semester, *“and lots of things you sometimes don’t have time for.”* Her stipend was *“not much,”* so she needed to work to supplement it by teaching or researching, *“which demands time, too.”* Yet, she clarified,

*So what I told myself was, “I’m on the horse already, so let’s gallop!”* [the phrase in Spanish is equivalent to “in for a penny, in for a pound”] *‘cause there are many students on assistantships, but they have them this year and next year maybe they don’t. Like this, I have the certainty that for five years everything is covered.*

Taking doctoral qualifying exams implied writing in academic English, which Fátima confessed she still dreaded. She remembered her advisor’s words encouraged her to take the plunge, *“She told me, ‘you have to find your voice and when you find your voice, you’re gonna be ok.’ She pushes you and pushes you and pushes you, and at the same time, she gives you what you need.”* Certainly, she did pass her exams. Fátima had the certainty everything her advisor did was for Fátima’s best interest, and such certainty made her follow her advice *“sometimes blindly.”* Fátima complained about her advisor’s pressures and her workload; but she was also thankful, and felt her advisor loved her *“with Freirean love”* (referring to Freire & Freire, 1994).

Fátima perceived since she entered UG several different people acted as mentors, *“There are many angels who appear in our lives to help us at the right time, and, sometimes, we also are to play as angels for others,”* (G). Fátima took example of her mentors to become a mentor and advocate for others.

**Friends and buddies.** During the first two years in the U.S., Fátima’s family found help in people from a culture similar to theirs, *“wonderful people who unreservedly backed us up, and who are today, and have been for more than 13 years, our family on this side of the border, and their kindheartedness and generosity are indescribable”* (J). When I asked her to expand on these people, Fátima gave several examples,

*Where we lived, a very humble complex, there was an elderly Puerto Rican couple who took on to my mom a lot. (...) Because my mom would always take care of them, make them meals, and check on them. (...) Once we had to get some vaccines for the school, and we only had one car that my dad took to work, so this gentleman gave us three a lift in his car. (...) Then, the Luna family, who were from Ecuador. They had come here long before us and they kind of adopted my parents, especially Mr. Victor and my dad, because they had almost the same background, they could identify with each other. (...) His wife is my Confirmation godmother. (...) They still remain close friends to this day.*

Fátima identified those people as her family's "support system," their "network." She called them "essential" to be able to adapt and function in a new environment.

**Fátima's tools.** Fátima perceived she also drew on the help, encouragement, and strength from written materials, such as books and letters, and from technologies.

**Books and letters.** Fátima saw her love for Spanish as merged with her love for reading and writing. As she grew up, she got acquainted with "*the great writers of Latin America*" and gradually "*fell deeply in love with Spanish. I was fascinated to see Spanish is so exquisite and at the same time so vast and by the possibility it offers to create so many stories and to transmit so much knowledge.*" She loved writing letters because "*they allow you to tell your relatives how much you love them.*" In short, she admitted "*reading, writing, and conversing were infinitely entertaining*" for her (all quotes, J).

Currently, she still took "*refuge in reading. I go to Mario Vargas Llosa, to Allende, to Benedetti.*" Some English authors arose her fascination, "Oscar Wilde, William Blake, James Joyce, Jane Austen." She explained to me this was because her B.A. was in English literature, so she knows British authors better than American ones. Another poet dear to Fátima's heart is her husband. "*When my husband and I started going out, he would write me poems, and he writes beautifully.*" His poems were powerful tools in Fátima's biliteracy journey, as they helped her appreciate beauty and tenderness can also be expressed in English.

**Technologies.** Audio recordings were one of the first pre-digital technologies she perceived as a constructive tool in her L1-literacy development,

*My parents also bought me tales and fables, Esopo's fables, and some other stories, which came with a little cassette, which would tell me the tales automatically. My mother tells me that, one day, my grandfather (Papá Cosme) came to visit us and I wanted to read a story to him, which he thought was amusing because I was only three years old at the time. So Papá Cosme, sat next to me ready to listen to my story only to get the surprise that I was in fact "reading." Overcome with emotion, he went up to my mom and told her, "Girl, my little Fátima can read!" My mom smiled and replied, "No, Dad, she just knows all the stories by heart ... because she listens to the tapes all day long and she has come to memorize every story that way." (J, brackets and quotation marks hers)*

Fátima was eager to learn how to read, and memorizing the audio books was a good shortcut for a three-year-old. Also, the way her grandfather reacted to her reading subterfuge encouraged her to learn how to read for real.

Later, other technologies, such as television, computers, and the internet, contributed to Fátima's biliteracy development and maintenance, *"but none so strongly as those first audio books."* In particular, Frank Sinatra's songs were additional pre-digital tools for Fátima, *"because the lyrics he sings are so beautiful and so heartfelt; we don't hear lyrics like that nowadays."* Films also contributed, *"my favorite is Casablanca, and it's my husband's favorite, too; so that's our film."*

**Fátima's belonging.** For Fátima, the most valuable sense of belonging was that given by family. *"I know that my parents are always going to be there to support me when I need them and they always have great advice, so I feel safe. I feel safe with them; I feel safe with my husband."* Additionally, she thought being able to find a group of friends made her journey more pleasurable. *"We were a small group of Peruvians, Argentinians, Chileans, and we started making our own room there. Then things began to make more sense, because at that*

age, 17-18 years old, you need some friends!,” (G). Belonging to a unified family and finding friends from a similar culture were sources of shelter and solace for teenage Fátima.

**Fátima’s acknowledgement.** Fátima believed her family’s support gave her strength to excel academically. Their acknowledgement kept her going, *“I graduated high school with very good grades. I was the youngest [in my class] to graduate, just after my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Everyone celebrated!”* After she won her doctoral fellowship; she started teaching undergrads and received an award for her teaching performance,

*At first I didn’t want to apply [because I thought]... If God has given me this opportunity to do this, it’s for a reason. So that’s why I want to teach them, not for the accolades. (...) In the end, I did apply and it was incredible because we’re about 1500 teaching assistants and out of those 1500, only ten get the award. Well, I was one of those. I didn’t think I would, because of my strong accent. But I was!*

In Fátima’s perception, both her family’s and her mentors’ acknowledgements were positive factors in her journey, but probably the most significant acknowledgement was her own, *“When you look at me and you just look at the evidence, you know, I have accomplished a lot.”* Her hope now showed its rewards in her attainments.

**Fátima’s empowerment.** Fátima laughed when I asked her whether she felt she was the captain of her ship now. She expressed doubt about being the captain while navigating doctoral candidacy waters. *“My life belongs to my advisor. That’s exactly what I feel. I swear you, I have handed my life over to God and I just try to take it one day at a time,”* (G). Fátima explained, *“In the doctoral process you don’t feel at helm. You don’t feel at helm of anything. You’re a stowaway, hiding ... and not being seen”* (G).

Fátima found empowering aspects in her journey, even during those difficult first two years in the U.S., and recognizes she found her footing through either religious faith or sheer tenacity. *“It was then [during the first two years here] when a new journey started: my quest to become an English speaker, which could be described as a never-ending journey of self-discovery, uncertainty, and affirmation,”* (J). She believed her identity as Peruvian proved a positive factor for empowerment, *“I have always been fond of Peruvian traditions. (...) I like*

*where I come from. I'm very proud to say I'm Peruvian.*" This attachment to her culture of origin was positive for empowerment, but led her to stereotype and reject her host culture, as shown above.

Exemplifying her empowerment, Fátima believed some of her decisions before entering the university turned out to be good ones,

*I only applied for UG. Everyone said "They won't admit you," so what I did was pray a lot. My mom was so stressed that she lost a lot of weight ... thinking her daughter was going to get stuck as a shop-assistant for ever and would not enter the university. So I told her, "Mami have some faith. I need to grow up a little more; I can't even fry an egg! I must know how to do my chores." Imagine, in a university at 16! At the time my Mamá Ekito was still alive and she taught me and it was very nice to spend that time with her before she passed. And in the end they did admit me ... my grades were good and I believe no one else had the profile I had, with all the contests and awards won, and all the congratulation letters and what not. UG made things easy for me. And they admit you with a very nice letter, which my mom still keeps.*

Fátima saw her admission to UG as a won battle against bad omens, which highlights her family's recognition.

Her religious faith was another facet she identified as key in her empowerment, *"It will sound tacky, but my secret is the faith I have. As long as I'm trying to do things well, things will turn out the way God needs them to turn out."* By means of prayer and faith, Fátima bred additional hope, sustained by her heritage religion.

**Fátima's identity revisited.** Here I present identity issues related to her change of context. Fátima believed some aspects in her identity changed during her journey. Her career change was another aspect Fátima considered positive. She realized if she had stayed in Peru, she would have *"studied Law and worked in the family business"* as a lawyer, *"and it would have been easy in that sense."* But her true vocation, which she *"discovered through this journey,"* and was *"teaching, research, working with people like me, who came from many ways and with many dreams,"* Now she was happy to see her students *"opening doors for*

*themselves, dreaming their own dreams, and building their own future. And maybe I've been of help somewhat in all that transition,"* (all quotes, G.)

In her CV, Fátima described herself as a “reliable, bilingual individual with a positive attitude towards her duties, who promotes cooperation and has a great sense of initiative and leadership, whose academic goal is to pursue a Doctoral degree in the area of ESOL/Bilingual Education.” She shared her perception of other L1-Spanish students, *“Many Latin Americans come to the university not wanting to be identified as Latinos because they feel ashamed. And there is nothing to be ashamed of, because our culture is precious! In every aspect!”* In contrast, she expressed pride and confidence in her culture, *“I've never felt diminished ...but I've always been very clear ... Despite being an American citizen and thankful for the opportunities this country has given me and my family, I always say 'I'm Peruvian' ... 'I'm South American,'”* (G).

Although Fátima perceived it was hard for her to make friends and recover from her isolation in the U.S., she finally found new buddies in members of cultures similar to her own in the Hispanic and Latin cultures institute at her university, Mi Casa, *“I started meeting more South American people in more or less my same situation. My friends came to be foreign students from Latin America, from Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Peru, Chile, Argentina. (...) With them, I was able to identify”* (G).

Fátima felt at helm in her roles as a teacher and wife. *“I do feel at helm when I'm standing in front of a class and teaching. That gives me my self-confidence back. And I also like my new role ... as a wife and housewife. I love it.”* Fátima went on to explain she liked the different roles a woman plays along her life. She compared her chosen roles with other women in her circle who said *“they cannot do both things. But I'm going to do both. (...) For me, family's very important, so if I ever have to sacrifice one, it'll be my profession. This is how I was brought up.”* Fátima explained this made her feel more complete as a person, because *“I had focused on the doctorate so much that I had left aside other aspects that make you a complete person.”* For her, *“getting married, becoming the lady of the house, the companion and friend of my husband, has helped me see things in a different light.”*



This change also encouraged her to pay closer attention to her health, *“I need to be healthy to be able to support him [her husband].”* Fátima related her comfort in this new role with her cultural roots, *“This is how we [her sister and her] were brought up, with the idea that the wife is the core of the home. (...) We’re the strong sex!”*

**Fátima’s advocacy.** Once she finished her B.A. in English Literature, Fátima wanted to work in education to confirm whether that was her calling. She applied for a job as a teaching assistant at Bee High School, and got the job, *“I say to myself, ‘Darn! What shall I do now? I managed to teach my kids in the farms and all, but I have no idea about how to teach in a real classroom.’”* She would pray before going to class because she knew the responsibility she had, *“...and those proved to be four wonderful years.”* She updated the program, identified teachers to make sure they were ESOL endorsed so they could work with her students, and identified those who did want to work with them. *“I’d call each kid and check whether their transcripts were ok or what they needed to be able to graduate, and I found that most of them were taking courses they shouldn’t be taking.”* She contacted the parents, and formed a group to practice Latin-American traditional dances, *“that was a great experience! When I left, they were all weeping, because I was with those kids for four years.”* I asked her if they were still in touch,

*Two of them came to UG with me, others entered UHH [the University of High Hopes] ... and others went to UTT [the University of Tough Toil]. So, those who wanted to go to the university had what they needed to be admitted; and those who wanted to follow other careers were able to do so too. But what I wanted to do was to give them the opportunity to decide, so they wouldn’t feel interrupted. If they wanted to do something, they should be able to do it.*

Fátima tried to give her students what she felt her own ESOL experience had lacked, i.e., student centeredness and care for their college possibilities.

Fátima, who called her 21-year-old students “my kids,” made a special effort to respect her students’ diversity, so as to make a difference in their lives,

*Now I have the responsibility to advocate for my kids if someone does something to them, as they once did to me, just out of lack of education in what refers to CLD students. I treat them as I know they should be treated. (...) First, I know the course I teach. But even more important than that is to embody the pedagogy of hope, of love, and of commitment Paulo Freire talks about. (...) To humanize the student, to avoid seeing the classroom as a field for transactions where I give them the information and they must receive it; to take care of them, that's what's most important. I tell my kids, "One of the things you must do is love your students, even if they drive you mad, you have to love them. If you feel that committed love, as the one our parents have for us, then you will do whatever it takes to make your students successful. Sometimes you will have to be strict and string, but always with plenty of love." (...) Irvine and Kleinfeld also talk about being a warm demander, who is warm and devoted, but also demands and guarantees their students' work, according to each student's possibilities.*

When I disclosed to Fátima the framework for the study was the Freirean approach to critical pedagogy, she responded, *"Of course! I felt we had so much in common."*

#### **Fátima's Evaluation**

To conclude the presentation of data for this case, I include Fátima's response when asked about the impact of participating in this study for her. She explained,

*It has helped me to understand this dichotomy and this ambivalence I used to fear so much; it's become a lot calmer, doable. I feel I'm going to be ok; I'm not the only one going through this. (...) Having to re-examine all those passages, the memories, all the lived experiences that have brought me where I am now, has made me realize it's been an interesting journey, with many tears, but also with joyful moments. This inspires me to keep going, finish the dissertation, and write. (...) Everything's been a blessing, being able to come here legally ... my scholarships, my awards. (...) I'm convinced when God has a plan for you, no matter how difficult the situation may turn, He will clear your path. All we need to do is keep obeying and working hard, and*

*that's what I'm doing. So, it's been a nice wake-up call. It's given me the strengths I needed to go on. (G)*

Fátima acknowledged both her struggles and her achievements, but saw further into the realms of consequential possibilities. She was aware of her contradictions. Her promising present and her future, which she saw as God's plan, were Fátima's evidence that hope was a good policy.

### Findings in Fátima's Case

In this section, I present the findings in Fátima's case relevant to address my three exploratory sub-questions and my exploratory question from her viewpoint only. The form my exploratory question and sub-questions take for Fátima's case appears in Table 9.

Table 9.

*Main Exploratory Question (M) and Sub-Questions (1, 2, 3) for Fátima's Case.*

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Sub-questions	1	What factors does Fátima perceive as key to describe her biliteracy experience?
	2	What relevance, if any, does Fátima perceive her biliteracy experience had for her to become an educator in the U.S.?
	3	From Fátima's perspective, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on her biliteracy experience?
M		What elements constitute Fátima's perspective on the relevance of her biliteracy experience in order to become a CLD educator in the U.S.?

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### Addressing Sub-Question 1: Key Factors in Fátima's Biliteracy Experience

The main factors perceived as key in Fátima's narrative were her feelings of uprooting and homesickness at leaving her land, her ESOL experience, her struggles with English, especially academic writing, on the challenging side; and the supportive role of her family and mentors, as crucial helpers in her journey. Her account shows her native land as a safe harbor, from which she departed to sail unknown and feared waters. Her perception of her ESOL classification as biased and of her ESOL program as inadequate for her needs led her parents to request her withdrawal from ESOL services. Their decision was, in Fátima's perception, an advantage, as the negative experience was followed by the appearance of her first mentor, Mr. Pan, who revalidated her academically and gave her the chance to shine. Her ESOL experience

was later reified in Fátima's teaching practice, both to prevent others to go through what she felt was harmful for her and to find ways out as Mr. Pan did.

Her culture and language shock appeared trapped in a vicious circle, where her struggles with English made her disconnect from English speakers, and the inability to culturally identify with English speakers isolated her, preventing her from practicing English, which would have helped acquisition. Her difficulties with academic written-English attainment also led to a duality of identity as a good writer in Spanish but a non-writer in English—a process she interpreted as having contributed to her self-doubt, anxiety, and health decline. Only the relationship with her American husband seemed to have opened the closed door Fátima admitted she had locked. The support of her family, the appearance of helping “angels” as she called her mentors and her conviction in prayer assisted her in a mission in which she believed she would not have succeeded on her own. This belief gave her the purpose to strive for others' empowerment and to become herself an advocate for her students.

Fátima perceived her early Spanish literacy, an education of quality in her country of origin, the dilemma of what her life would have been if she had stayed in Peru, and her feelings of belonging as additional factors in her experience. The symbolic universe her family provided was an advantageous starting point of which Fátima was well aware. Her access to pre-digital technology in childhood gave her a potent tool for the development of her L1-literacy as regards reading, and helped to make the written word a companion and a refuge since then. Her loving relationship with her family, especially with Mamá Ekito, imprinted the presence of language and love as coexisting forces. Soon, she would learn to share the pleasures of L1-literacy with others not as fortunate as her, in low-income communities, also with the guidance of her great aunt.

The lost opportunity of furthering her knowledge of Quechua and the Inca culture stayed as a thorn in her perception of who she could have been. However, the synergy between the need not to disappoint her family and her previous academic accomplishments gave her enough self-confidence and courage to fight for her survival and success in a new cultural environment, in which she felt unwelcome and inadequate. Belonging to a solid family and

an akin cultural community made Fátima feel more stabilized emotionally and encouraged her to “keep going” in her academic pursuits, with the ever-present support of prayer and religious faith.

### **Addressing Sub-Question 2: Relevance of Fátima’s Biliteracy Experience to Become an Educator**

From Fátima’s perspective, her biliteracy experience is relevant to her becoming an educator in the U.S. Her great aunt acted as the first teaching model for Fátima, as she accompanied her to her literacy work with low-income and aborigine communities. It was with her that Fátima taught reading and writing in Peru for the first time. This matriarch figure stood high in Fátima’s esteem. She saw her as a personification of the strength of her gender and, at the same time, of the caring love Fátima considered an essential requirement of a teacher. Fátima perceived Mamá Ekito’s teaching model and her vocation of advocacy as a first factor of relevance in her biliteracy experience to become an educator and advocate herself.

The arid experience with her ESOL program and, in contrast, the empowerment she developed under Mr. Pan’s wing first, and under other mentors’ later, led her to perceive herself as a bearer of valuable expertise in what ELLs need. This, in turn, encouraged her to become an agent in the empowerment of others through education and advocacy. Knowing what did not work and what did work for her gave her an insider’s perspective to inform her educational practice. She showed her critical conscience in action during her job at Bee School. There, she acted as an advocate, going over her students’ FAFSAs and program of studies, making sure her students had what they would need to enter college, and providing the information about waivers and resources that she had been denied. Her lived experience, thus, enlightened her in the power of educational practices to enhance or diminish ELLs’ possibilities of achievement, and determined her to opt for an emancipatory path in education for others like her through her endorsement of critical pedagogy.

### **Addressing Sub-Question 3: Impact of Digital Technologies in Fátima's Biliteracy Experience**

Fátima's family's socio-economic status allowed her access to technologies in childhood as they became available in her country. However, her narrative gave more importance to pre-digital technologies, such as audio-books and recordings, over digital technologies. Fátima perceived the use of audio-books, composed of a printed book with accompanying tapes, gave her L1-literacy skills an early boost. Later, Frank Sinatra's songs and films contributed to her L2 motivation. Currently, digital technologies were a part of Fátima's everyday life in both languages. She intended to use online communities to give L1-Spanish speakers a possibility to interact intra-culturally, as she did in the past through the Café Cultural website, which she created as part of the Mi Casa cultural extension program at her university. She saw digital technologies offered good possibilities for empowerment and for advocacy.

### **Addressing the Main Exploratory Question from Fátima's Perspective**

What elements constitute Fátima's perspective on the relevance of her biliteracy experience in order to become a CLD educator in the U.S.? The most prominent elements in Fátima's narrative are the obstacles she had to face and the ways in which she dodged them. Regarding obstacles, she emphasized culture and language shock, the identity changes and self-doubt these brought about, and withdrawal of useful information for CLD students by education administrators. She perceived she was able to confront those obstacles with the support of her family and similar-culture "support network," with the intervention of mentors who were host-culture insiders who "believed" in her; and through the determination to never give up sustained by her religious faith. In this way, she perceived she was able to empower herself for academic achievement, which drove her to become an educator and an advocate for other CLD students.

As way of summary, Figure 9 shows the level of relevance of each subtopic in Fátima's case to address my sub-questions and main question. The shading intends to facilitate the visualization of differences in preponderance. The contributions of this case for the understanding of the quintain appear in Chapter 5.

	Topics	Subtopics	Sub-questions			Main question	
			1	2	3		
Context	Background in country of origin		L	M	H	L	
	Spanish literacy and education in country of origin		M		H	L	
	ESOL experience in the U.S.		H	M		H	
Ordeals	Identity at play		L			L	
	What might have been		M			L	
		Uprooting and homesickness	H			H	
	Culture shock	Confusion		L	L		L
		Prejudice		H	L		H
		Information chasm		H	H		H
		Health		H			L
	Language shock	Reading and writing		H	L		L
		Self-doubt		L			L
	Breakthrough paths		Family	H	H		H
Helpers		Mentors	H	M		H	
		Friends and buddies	L	L		L	
		Tools	Books and letters	L			L
		Technologies	L		H	M	
		Belonging	M	L		M	
		Acknowledgement	H	L		H	
		Empowerment	H	H		H	
		Identity revisited	H	L		L	
		Advocacy	H	H	M	H	

(L) Low; (M) Medium; (H) High contribution towards findings, in accordance with Stake (2006).

The shading of the cells helps place the relative weights of contributions for each question.

(1): What factors does Fátima perceive as key to describe her biliteracy experience?

(2): What relevance, if any, does Fátima perceive her biliteracy experience had for her to become an educator in the U.S.?

(3): From Fátima's perspective, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on her biliteracy experience?

(Main Question): What elements constitute Fátima's perspective on the relevance of her biliteracy experience in order to become a CLD educator in the U.S.?

**Note:** Fátima reviewed the level of contribution of each topic and sub-topic in her case during the final member check of her case report.

Figure 9. Contribution of topics and subtopics towards findings in Fátima's case.

### Final Thoughts on Fátima's Journey of Hope

Fátima's is a case of hope in Freirean terms, i.e., hope that stems from rage and love

(Freire & Freire, 1994). Rage came as a first reaction to oppressive elements in the host

culture, and led to its rejection. Love rose towards her cultural roots, God, family, and students. However, a closer look at her narrative made some contradictions evident, e.g., as her inability to “connect” with Americans but marrying one, and the feeling of loss of the privilege status she had in Peru, with an implicit material regard, discouraged by her religion. It seems these contradictions helped Fátima find a way to progress. She admitted her conflicts with the host culture became ingredients in her advocacy vocation for CLD learners like herself (see quotes above). Her rejection of English isolated her, but falling in love with an American made her see the language in a new light, opening the door to her determination to develop her academic English further.

For the header of her case, Fátima chose a quotation from Mother Teresa of Calcutta, which, together with her pseudonym, drew my attention to the importance of religious faith in Fátima’s case. In her words,

*I try as much as possible... to add plenty of love and faith. This is what helps me to feel strong on every step I take. It gives me peace of mind to think I am trying to fulfill God’s will, as everything done with love comes from Him. On my own, I would have got lost long ago. If I go step by step, but with plenty of love and devotion, I will get to where God allows. (E)*

In the first pages of *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire (1994) explains the book is “written in rage and love, without which there is no hope” (p.10). Fátima first reacted with rage against the oppressive barriers imposed by a new culture, a new language, and the lack of help she found in educational administrators. However, she kept working for love of her family and her religious faith, which enabled other mentors in the same system to have a chance to act as her advocates. The perception that her mentors, who were host-culture insiders, believed in her gives her hope and reassures her on her path of empowerment. In Freire’s view, hope is a primary element for conscientization and praxis. In the next case, S eneca takes us on a journey of critical reflection and action.



### Séneca: A Journey of Praxis

*Determine that the thing can and shall be done, and then we shall find the way.*

*Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)*

In April 1977, Séneca was born in Bogotá, Colombia, to parents with post-graduate degrees in a high-middle class household, for South American standards. In 2000, at 23, he came to the U.S. on his own to live with his younger sister, who had emigrated previously. He was married to a Colombian and had no children yet. He was 35 years old at the moment of the study. As specified in Table 5, Chapter 3, his data sources were: one questionnaire, three e-journal entries, six online interviews totaling 12 hours and 55 minutes of audio recordings, one group interview of three and a half hours of which two hours and 57 minutes were usable, his artifacts (CV, silhouette, music video, and websites), 56 emails, and eight member checks (one for each interview and one for his final case report). Figure 10 reproduces one of his artifacts, his silhouette.



*Figure 10. Séneca's silhouette.*

#### Séneca's Context

**A rich symbolic universe.** Séneca opened his narrative with a description of his L1-literacy acquisition process as going hand-in-hand with his socialization, both at home and in kindergarten, which he started at age three. A rich symbolic universe (Bergman & Luckmann, 1966) at home contributed to his L1-literacy development and his academic performance in

general. He remembered, *“I received more instruction than just what I did at school, because ... my parents were very involved.”* Reading was a regular activity at Séneca’s home, *“They would read tales to me at bedtime or we would sit and read a book.”* Moreover, during family outings, his parents would teach *“any new words I saw or heard, by explaining what they meant or giving me a definition.”* The household gave significance to his questions and gave him answers.

**L1 literacy and school in Colombia.** He showed awareness of how, when the home environment gives importance to learning, it teaches the child to regard learning as important (Bergman & Luckmann, 1966). His home was *“like reinforcement.”* It was at school, however, where he felt every aspect of language developed, *“auditorily, verbally, in reading comprehension, writing ... acquiring more vocabulary ... and as you progress in your basic education and the complexity of your academic tasks increases, language develops further.”* It was also at school where he “came in contact with the world of foreign languages by learning French” in childhood, as he “attended a semi-bilingual (Spanish-French) elementary and high school,” (J, brackets his).

He explained the school’s goal was set more on learning the grammar rather than conversational skills. “That’s why I call it ‘semi’ because I don’t think their teaching was for us to become fully bilinguals but rather have the language experience.” He gained reading and writing in French that were “highly skilled” but “I have my doubts I could have kept up a conversation with a native speaker.” He never practiced French with his schoolmates, because they “felt ‘weird’ about it. Aside from a few theatrical plays and class participation, I never had an informal/casual conversation in French which would’ve helped tremendously with becoming fluent speaking.” He now felt his French was “lost and may reside somewhere in my brain but ... ‘if you don’t use it, you lose it,’” (J, quotation marks his).

While he was at school, the performing-arts activities in French pleased his love of acting and boosted his language skills, *“if there was a male character, I wanted to play it.”* So to get the role, he needed to learn the script, *“and to learn the script, I had to read ... pronounce well and have good diction.”* He granted this enhanced his reading skills. So did his

*“fascination” for history, “and to learn history, you need to read.” He identified, “the top of my reading discipline is at about 13 or 14; I’d devour history books. I wanted to know what had happened with the Egyptians, the Romans, the French, all of them! I loved history.”*

Séneca was an avid reader of history at an early age.

Not trained in linguistics, Séneca was still mindful of his L1 development. “My Spanish ...became reinforced everywhere: at home, some of the media, extended family etc.” Spanish made him “feel comfortable and ... connects me with my heritage, inner-self and others.” It was the language to which he was “exposed 99% or more of my childhood and teen years,” and it became “even more dominant” in college, as “Reading and writing became what I would do most of my time,” (all quotes, J). Séneca perceived himself as endowed with a strong command of L1 literacy.

His school in Colombia, a Catholic school run by a Swiss family, was *“very strict, very severe, and very demanding.”* He had classes from Monday to Saturday, instead of Monday to Friday, *“since I was 9 until I graduated high school. Having to get up at five on a Saturday to go to school was not what the usual boy would do, but it was very normal for me.”* He sounded proud of his uncommon training. Religion classes were not compulsory, and Séneca opted out. He considered his school years, in particular learning French, *“a very pleasant experience.”*

Upon his high school graduation and having studied English only during the final year of high school in Colombia, Séneca came to the U.S. for the first time on a two-month holiday, during which he had the possibility to interact with L1-English speakers and to confirm how *“raw”* he was *“to communicate fluently in English.”* He entered the university in Colombia to pursue a degree in Political Science and completed two years of study with good grades (GPA: 3.9).

**Coming to the U.S.** The requirement of a foreign language in his university gave him the *“perfect excuse”* to come to the U.S. to study English. *“So I say, I won’t go for the transfer of my French studies, I have to study English.”* Séneca clarified he could have studied in France, *“in the Sorbonne and I wouldn’t have needed English at all.”* But the power he found

in English and in the influence of American culture in his everyday life pulled harder. *“Clothes, music, television, everything. I said, ‘I need to learn English.’”* He also had other options to learn English, as his university in Colombia offered courses to meet the foreign language requirement, and the Colombian-American Institute, with a long tradition in Colombia, was right next to his university. However, he had a sister who had already come to the U.S., *“so that really pushed me to come here under her wing ... and I was lucky enough to be able to do it.”* His decision was made.

**Seizing an opportunity.** Congruently, Séneca came to the U.S. for three months to make inquiries about studying English. Upon his return to Colombia, he decided to return to the U.S. to study English in a community college during his Colombian university summer break. Once here, the possibility of transferring some of his credits tempted him to go for the more ambitious goal of an American degree, *“because I was a hostage of the myth that it would give me better possibilities in the job market. But I really had no need to come here. It was the fulfillment of a wish.”* He saw the social problems in Colombia clearly, but he had been untouched by them. *“I’m fortunate to come from a cradle where I was not exposed to the violence of guerrilla or drug-traffic warfare, huge problems that never affected me directly.”* He laughed as he admitted, *“In fact, I had no reason to come here at all.”*

**In college.** He started his Language Training after taking a placement test *“in which, to my surprise, I did pretty well.”* He explained there were four levels for each of the four skills. *“In listening and speaking, I made it to the last level, the fourth; and in writing and reading comprehension, I qualified for the third level.”* In that community college, he finished his Associate’s degree, *“the first two years of general education, the AA; and then I transferred to UTT to start a bachelor’s in the same area I had studied at the university in Colombia, Political Science.”* Next, he pursued a second B.A., in International Relations, and a Master’s in Latin-American and Caribbean Studies with a concentration in Political Science. All along, his sister’s support was crucial, in Séneca’s view, for his emotional, cultural, and academic survival in the U.S.

Lately. Séneca heard of this study through a Colombian student in my doctoral program. He contacted me by email to volunteer his participation in what he felt was an interesting research topic. During the study, he was writing his thesis for an Ed. S. in Instructional Technology, and planning to go for a Ph.D. Through Optional Practical Training—the opportunity of employment in the U.S. for international students—he obtained a job as an instructional designer for one of the colleges in UTT. He had also been a Teaching Assistant of online Spanish courses in the World Languages department of another college in UTT. Figure 11 presents the timeline of the major events above, which I develop in more detail in the subsections below as they relate to this study.

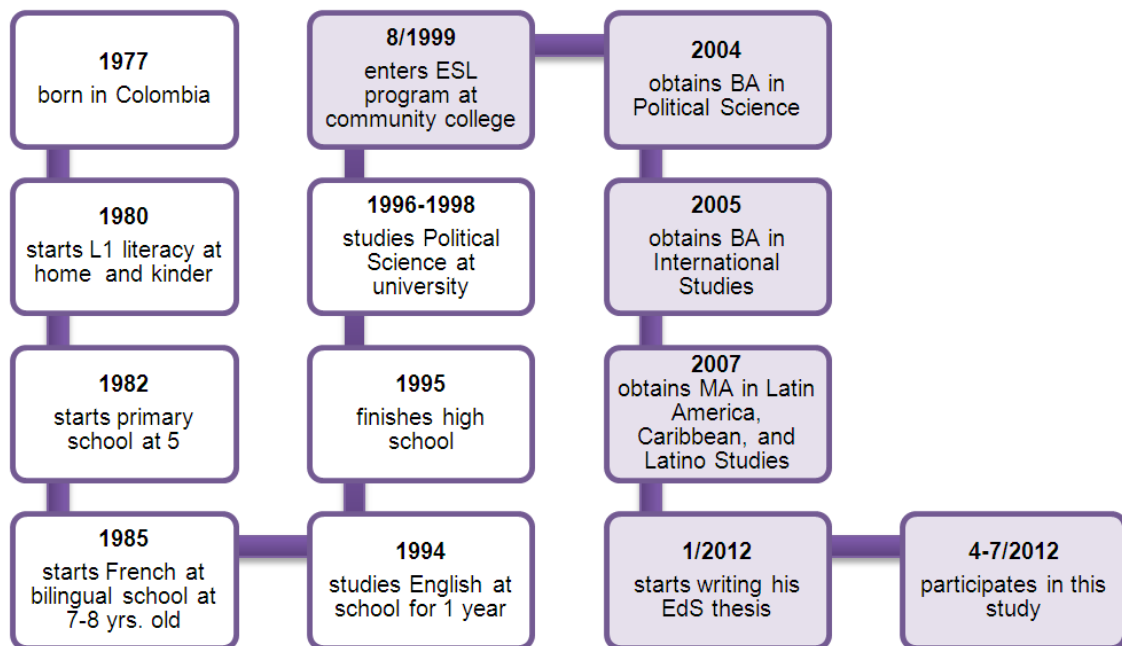


Figure 11. Séneca's timeline. □ In Colombia; ■ in the U.S.

### Séneca's Ordeals

For Séneca, the price of his journey was “*very high*,” (G). That price was connected to a perception of his identity as incomplete, conjectures about what his life could have been like in a permanent context (always in Colombia, or always in the U.S.), culture shock, and language shock.

**Séneca's identity at play.** Here I present issues related to his existing identity before his change of context. When I asked him how he became interested in foreign languages, he

narrated, *“I have a vivid memory of hearing a person talk in another language as if they were someone who had come from Mars.”* He described he would think the person looked human and similar to him, *“but I found it so incredibly fascinating that sounds I had never heard could be articulated by a person to communicate with another, equally Martian in my eyes, to exchange ideas, laugh, tell jokes, or whatever.”* That triggered a thirst for languages in him, *“I would tell myself ‘I want to be like this extraterrestrial! I want to learn how to speak in this otherworldly tongue.’ And that is how I started learning French.”* He was a little boy open to learning and ready to go all-out for his “fascination.”

That fascination for French, however, would soon be challenged by English.

*“I loved French ... but when I first heard English it was as if I’d been sculling on a raft and suddenly saw a cruiser sail by.”* He would listen to songs or see films, and his inquisitiveness rose. *“I was curious and motivated to know exactly what was going on, to discern every thread of that weave.”* He conceded an added fascination for the “mysterious ways” of American cultural strength. He gave me an example, *“If I go to Ecuador, or wherever, it’s not very probable I’ll be able to find people in a coffee bar listening to Indian music, but I will certainly find people listening to music in English.”* His words were tinted with awe. *“It’s overpowering. It’s impressive. I don’t know what it is English has, and the culture, the American culture.”*

Séneca connected his fascination for English with his identity as a teenager, when *“for some reason it would give you status, knowing English was way cool,”* so he became determined to learn English. In the final year of high school in Colombia, he had the chance to learn some English and he *“was the best student in the class with the highest grades. The teacher would always make reference to me to show others how to pronounce something.”* That boosted his motivation. *“When someone acknowledges you have a skill, you feel, wow, I’m good at this!”* But because it was just one year, although he kept learning English through music and TV, he said he felt *“unfinished, incomplete.”* This led him to further his L2 skills.

**Séneca: What might have been.** If he could turn time back, Séneca *“would have studied in Colombia and then come here only for the doctorate.”* He thought *“that’s the only*

*thing for which it's really worth coming here," vis-à-vis academic quality. But he wondered what his life would have been if he had never come here, "What would've happened if I hadn't made this decision to come? What would my life have been like?" and also if he had been born here, "And if I had grown up in the environment where I am now?" He confessed being tormented by these thoughts, "Yes, the price is still high."*

As he went on, Séneca sounded anguished when he shared his worries about the upbringing of his future children. He remembered meeting people who came here in their teenage or even younger, *"when their personality was not distinctive yet, and I see how their environment defines them and takes them far from who they would've been if they'd grown up elsewhere."* He admitted emphasizing the original culture constantly should root children in their parents' origins, but he still had doubts. *"I'm very skeptical; really, whether that little person will ever develop as they would have if they'd really been in their authentic context."* He admitted his distress, ambivalence, and inability to decide how to deal with this issue best, *"Nothing's perfect, but some things are better on one side or on the other. It's always in my mind, is it better to go back? Is it better to stay? Or go back? Or stay?"* (all quotes. G). These conjectures presented Séneca as a critical thinker, aware of the complexities of the socioeconomic context in his country of origin and of the battles presented by the decision to emigrate; especially when the host country is one with a different culture and language from his own.

**Séneca's culture shock.** Séneca perceived the first storm was the experience of culture shock, *"That was the hardest,"* (G). This was thought-provoking since Séneca had experienced some elements of American culture positively as a teenager in Colombia. His explanations helped me understand the depth of his culture shock.

**Uprooting and homesickness.** He explained his experience was close to what every international student goes through, *"You set out from your family, your culture, and you endure the feelings we all go through, who embark on this adventure of living in a different place, where everything's different, and where we're uprooted from everything that's ours."* Séneca felt uncertain about ever finding a place to feel at home again. *"I try to get used to it*

*and think there is no perfect place. (...) Now I feel I don't belong anywhere. That is the reality I struggle with and have to accept if I want to achieve anything.*" As regards homesickness, he added *"being away, uprooted, seeing life go by with your loved ones somewhere else, and you can't share their everyday lives."* He found some help in Skype and other technologies to keep closer, *"but it's not the same. You don't get up every day to see those you love and share those little things with them. That's a distressing storm,"* (all quotes, G). This aspect, which may seem futile for members of cultures where family ties are loose, was uppermost for S neca, as a member of a culture in which family always comes first.

**Confusion.** He described when he first came to the U.S., he felt *"as if I didn't have my hands; I had no control over anything going on whatsoever,"* (G). One of his first experiences here was a dental emergency. He found a dentist on call close to where he lived at the time; but, a fresh newcomer, he got lost trying to get there. *"The dentist's was about four blocks from where I lived and I ended up 20 miles away."* He stopped at a gas station to ask for directions, *"but I was unable to make myself understood, I had no cell phone, I couldn't communicate with anyone. It was a horrifying experience."*

When he had to face arranging his academic transfers, he felt *"left behind because you cannot fend for yourself well without the language."* He resented having to take courses he *"shouldn't be taking."* Furthermore, he was shocked at *"why students at 19 or 20, already at university level, are again taking courses they should've passed in high or middle school. What did they do at school then?"* Now he saw an *"obvious waste of time and money"* in American education. *"If you ask them where Paris is, they'll point to South Africa. It's as if they've slept through their geography classes."* S neca started comparing strong aspects of Colombian schools to weak ones in American education. These comparisons are characteristic of culture shock (Tange, 2005).

Used to a communal approach to student life in his country's university, students at UTT appeared *"too closed."* Although he admitted other universities might be different, in his years here, he had only seen people *"come to class, do whatever they need to do for an hour fifty or two hours and then pick up their stuff and leave."* He felt out of water in that



environment. *“There’s no getting together to debrief the topic, no extracurricular debates, nothing of that sort. Each one to their own business and that’s it. I felt lost.”*

**Prejudice.** Séneca felt the host culture made no room for him. He sensed *“the cultural barrier they force upon you! It pesters me incredibly and increasingly, constantly having to explain my origin.”* He loathed *“needing to define oneself in cultural terms all the time. Those around you keep telling you ‘you’re not like us, you’re different, and you need to think of yourself as different.’ Why can’t we ever feel at home?”* (G). The colloquial “Where are you from?” of American small talk appeared as an impeachment to Séneca, and he felt unfairly sentenced to life of explanations of his origin and language.

He remembered feeling affronted when, after having completed two full years of university studies in Colombia, here *“they decide unilaterally that my basic education is incomplete. It was outrageous!”* Séneca had to take college courses he believed he had already taken in high school in his country. I asked him how it made him feel. *“Awful!”* because he was 23, he had university experience and what he perceived as a completely different academic level from other freshmen in his classes. *“Supposedly, I had to meet their level, but what administrators don’t know is that academic level here is far below ours, and I had already seen all that in my secondary school at a far higher level than college here.”*

He also considered a waste of time having to take courses that were unrelated to his program area, e.g., Earth Sciences, Geography, Chemistry, Biology, and Math. *“Only two of the courses were worth taking, American Government, and Florida State and Federal Government, which were related to my field.”* He felt *“robbed”* because he was *“being charged as an international student; they were making a lot of money out of my guts for something that was of no use to me.”* He felt used and oppressed by the institution that should have offered him educational services.

Séneca believed this issue was not educational but political. *“With all my respect for Yankee imperialism ... this is how it works. You study anywhere else in the world, be it Oxford, Cambridge, or Salamanca ... you bring your transcripts here and you’re in trouble.”* He felt being an international student in the U.S. was like being a *“second-class citizen”* in

sociopolitical terms. *“But you graduate from an unknown American university, and then go elsewhere and they salute you, even if your training was bosh and you learned nothing. That’s politics.”* S eneca’s words exemplified his critical consciousness, i.e., his ability to read his situation in oppressor-oppressed terms (Freire, 1970b).

After S eneca finished his second B.A., he felt *“as if touching the sky with my hands! I did it! Suffering, with blood tears, I made it. Now I can find a good job.”* But he was bound for disappointment. He spoke to the academic counselor in his program and was told *“Well, I don’t know, really, maybe you can find a little job as a translator somewhere in [Latinland].”* S eneca still felt insulted. *“How can he say that to me?”* S eneca interpreted the counselor’s words *“as if he’d told me ‘What are you talking about? You won’t be able to do anything here, you’re a foreigner. Go to [Latinland] where they speak Spanish and try there.’ That hit me hard. (...) No help at all.”* Sadly, he realizes *“even with a work permit and all, my bachelor’s degrees are no good for me here because I’m a foreigner, because I speak Spanish. I had to keep studying.”* Instead of losing heart and going back home, S eneca used his critical consciousness for reflection followed by action. Instead of retreating having lost the battle, he changed his strategies to make room for further empowerment and praxis.

Nonetheless, finding his place became harder after he finished his master’s degree. *“What I wanted was to get a job.”* Again, he became aware of unexpected obstacles. *“I had an offer to work for the Department of State in intelligence tasks, but when they got to know I’m not American, I stopped being a candidate.”* He had other offers in Washington, *“but the kind of visa they’d give me was for two years, after which I was compelled to go back to Colombia, and wait five years to apply for re-entry to the U.S.”* For S eneca, staying in the U.S. illegally was not an option, so as his visa expiration date approached, he decided to pack and leave for Colombia in October 2008, not knowing if or under what circumstances he would be able to come back.

As he explored job openings in academia and diplomacy in Colombia, he found the knowledge acquired in the U.S. was not what was sought in his country, *“local contents, Colombian political theory, everything very Colombian. They asked me some questions I was*

*unable to answer, so I didn't get a job.*" He only got some odd jobs unrelated to his degrees and his aspirations. He thought he would have had better chances if he had studied in Colombia. *"That's the weight of the years I lived here."* He confessed *"It's terrible, because I feel the need for things here and things there. When I'm in one place, I grumble and long for the other. I belong nowhere now."* He started thinking there was no room for him in American society, but there was no room for him back home either, owing to his experience abroad.

Putting thoughts into action, eventually, he decided to come back to the U.S. *"because now my contributions are more directed here."* Then, he chose more practical, less abstract studies than political science, and, following his love for technology, he applied for two programs related to it, a Ph.D., and an Ed.S. in the same university, UTT. *"Technologies had always motivated me and interested me."* Yet, applying for the doctorate from Colombia proved to be harder than expected. One of his letters of recommendation got lost and the replacement did not make the deadline set by the program office. He was left with the chance of an Ed.S. in Instructional Technology.

**Information chasm.** Séneca saw a problem in how American administrators judged the academic quality of South American universities, which he attributed to a lack of information sometimes, and sometimes to *"sheer callousness."* He perceived *"no matter how prestigious the university you come from; they somehow think our academic load is insufficient, and it happens to be exactly the opposite!"* He expanded, *"over there [in Colombia] a university student has no time to work at all."* Still, he had problems having his Colombian university courses endorsed. *"They wanted me to start all over again. Only after plenty of struggles did I get at least some of my credits validated."*

Séneca believed many people from Mexico, Central America, and even *"our countries,"* as he called South America, came to the U.S. *"with the erroneous belief they'll be offered enormously better opportunities here; and their histories end in worse failure and sadness than if they'd stayed in their countries."* He remarked they did not take into account *"here they'll become Hispanic, a term introduced by President Carter, because here everything's managed in terms of ethnia and race with a sociopolitical objective: to categorize people, to*

*manipulate them.*” My own bias against the term is inescapable, as I did not know what “Hispanic” means in America until I came to the U.S.

Another myth Séneca pointed at was the belief everything was better in the U.S. In Séneca’s view, education was not. He found differences between the educational systems of Colombia and the U.S., of which he perceived American administrators were unaware. He explained to me, in Colombia, *“you finish high school, go into university and you know it’ll be five years of courses related to your chosen field from the start. (...) They don’t go back to general education because that’s what high school covers.”* Then, all students take comprehensive exams provided by the state to assess all the areas studied in primary and secondary education, which gives them a score to qualify for the university. Next, students fulfill the specific requests of their university of choice. He applied *“for two universities, one public and one private. One requires an entrance exam and in the other all they care is that you have the money to pay; it doesn’t matter if you’re a donkey! <laugh> That’s how it works.”* He was also aware of the limitations in Colombia, but he found humor in them.

By and large, he was disappointed in UTT. He perceived *“What they provide here is like an educational production line.”* He clarified his perception with a comparison of the auto industry with a Rolls-Royce, *“which takes ten years because it’s all handmade, then it costs what it costs. Then, Toyota assembles a car in 15 minutes.”* That was how he felt UTT operated. *“Numerous people go there like cattle, sit in class, ask questions, take exams, another semester goes by, and you’re done. You know nothing; the university got your money, which is what they wanted; you got your degree, and good luck.”* He sounded downcast as he concluded, *“If you get a job, congratulations; if you don’t, here we’ll be waiting for you to come and study something else.”*

He felt academic quality was demoted in his university *“for fear of losing clients.”* For example, when he was doing his master’s, a new professor came to his department from a prestigious university in the northeast, *“with an excellent academic level, great teacher, too. The class was unable to meet the level he expected, so he lowered it.”* He sensed he lost the chance of an outstanding course. *“What a waste! Here there’s no confrontation, no*

*decantation. No one dares tell you 'Look, you're not made for this... you don't have what it takes to be here.'*" He stressed top universities had those filters. *"That's how UG's the best university in the state, because they care to maintain excellence, with faculty who are knowledgeable and able to do that. But here, I think, it's just business and you get your degree anyway."* His wife was a student at UG; this was how he had information to establish a comparison.

Going back to American conventions, he expressed he expected Americans to be more open. *"For me, Americans are afraid of getting to know people from other places. They fear experiencing other cultures."* He conceded Americans travel abroad, but he observed *"they don't seek the deep cultural experience or interchange. (...) They have no interest in embracing the culture. They go, do what they needed to do, and come back. It's a very flat involvement."* He regretted not being able to make American friends. *"That was a hard blow for me as an undergrad."* He expected more interaction. *"During the breaks, people would go out, get on the phone with friends, husbands, girlfriends, but wouldn't interact much among classmates. I thought, since we're all here doing the same thing, why don't we share more and create links?"* I asked him if that changed later. *"It never happened, not in the two undergrads, not in the master's, not in the specialist or doctoral programs."* He sounded disenchanted with these cultural dissimilarities. He perceived *"people have very precise goals. Their social life is something else, with other people."* He felt it got worse *"when you say you come from elsewhere. Obviously, they feel 'I'm sorry but I'm not interested. (...) I'll do this project with you if I must, but once we're done with it, I don't even know you anymore."* The goal-driven working style of Americans sounded like segregation to S eneca's ears.

**Health services.** S eneca expressed deep worries about health services in the U.S. *"Here you'd better die than get sick, because you'll end up with a number of terrible bills for services that aren't always the best"* He was terrified at that thought, *"medicine here is a business not a service. That's appalling."* Then, he explained travelling back and forth for medical aid was not an option since *"You don't work there any more so you lose your [public] health services; you need to contract private health, which is also extremely costly. There*

*seems to be no way out,*” (all quotes, G). Health services, in the present political agenda in America, affected Séneca, too, as he found himself lost, helpless, and vulnerable.

**Séneca’s language shock.** Séneca identified his worst battles clearly, *“Even when other aspects got better, the most complicated part continued being the language, although it had improved, the language was always the barrier...the language and the culture.”* The language barrier became his endless storm, because he felt *“unable to go anywhere, express yourself, ask for what you want, or communicate an idea, always trying your best. Even today, I learn some English every single day. There’s always something new. That makes it a constant storm,”* (G). In some courses during his B.A., Séneca admitted he *“did horrible, because the instructors were ... also foreigners. Understanding their broken English was a hard challenge for someone with language limitations like me. (...) I doubled my effort but still didn’t understand a single word.”* Moreover, Séneca’s challenges with English went further than receptive skills, such as listening and reading comprehension. He identified writing as the toughest challenge.

Séneca considered his ability to write well in Spanish was not really any advantage, because his English language courses did not capitalize on his existing skills. He explained during that semester and a half in the community college, when he was developing his English writing skills, *“my writing did get graded and corrected, but not to the extent where I felt handicapped to express my ideas.”* But then, when he entered the university and L2-literacy demands got higher, *“I was told I was just translating, thinking in Spanish and trying to write in English, that my ideas were incoherent. (...) The problem is they won’t correct you here. It’s the American culture. Everything’s too lenient, too masked.”* Séneca believed the teaching methods used in the U.S. to teach English writing to CLD learners should change.

Séneca stressed L2-English students need corrections and hands-on tasks. *“We can’t learn on our own what we don’t know we lack.”* He found a mismatch between instructional and assessment standards, *“They tell you ‘that sounds perfect, that’s very good, that’s excellent.’ Then, the day of your presentation (...) they spew all your errors at your face, all you’ve done wrong and all you could have improved. That’s too late.”* He recalled in Colombia

he would hand in an essay and the professor would “*give it back to me with all kind of marks and corrections, with constructive criticism ... that’s what one needs in order to learn.*” Here, in contrast, he did not feel he was corrected enough, “*and they’re all experts with PhDs in English (...) people who know about writing, so you trust them. But they won’t make any deep corrections, no way.*” Again, he highlighted the standards changed when it was time to assess his final work,

*But then when I give my documents to the committee, they tell me, “This is wrong. What are you saying here? Why are you saying this this way?” So that cultural component, that people are not confrontational (...) that they won’t tell you “No, this is wrong ... or change it here” but it’s all so light, so lax, so courteous, and so very polite. (...) It’s double morality.*

Séneca sounded upset as he tried to find explanations for what he felt indicated neglect and lack of care, “*Sometimes I wonder whether what they intend is to let us do everything wrong, because they think, if we correct him and he gets it right, then he’ll come and take my place.*” Again, he contrasted cultures, “*In our countries we help each other succeed, because we’re all doomed anyway, so we help one another the best we can. But here, it’s competition to death.*” In Séneca’s culture of origin, solidarity is more important than individual attainments; then, competition is not well seen.

In academic assessment, he perceived English took precedence over content, “*and international students are never going to have perfect English.*” He remembered the director for whom he worked in the summer. “*She admires international students because she says ‘you have to do the same as everyone else here, but with a hand tied behind your back.’ And her phrase stuck in my mind because she is so right!*” He felt this was truest as regards writing. “*English writing is the most crucial tool for our academic success and it becomes our greatest problem.*” He disclosed writing his thesis “*has drawn blood. That’s been terrible for me, terrible. I’ve been to the Writing Center several times to get some help.*”

He also found a difference in language difficulty between humanities and hard sciences. “*In engineering or business administration, you don’t have to struggle with language*

*or ambiguity so much. International students, obviously, do better there than in humanities.”* He told me about other Colombians who came here with very little English, *“just the TOEFL, but since they could rely on numbers and codes, they didn’t need so much English, and they did their master’s more easily. That’s why there are so few Spanish speakers in humanities.”* Séneca hinted at a possible interaction between academic English skills and career choice.

When I asked him if anything became more challenging once transferred to UTT, he exclaimed *“Absolutely! It was appalling. It was a hard shock, because not only were the texts longer and more complex, but on the exams, questions were not multiple choice any more but essay questions. Back to struggling with English!”* Later, for admission to the Ed.S. program, the GRE exam became a steep obstacle. Even after living in the U.S. for eight years, *“the verbal section of the GRE was an unexpected difficulty, because they want second, third, and fourth meanings of infrequent words. It requires very sharp thinking strategies and linguistic knowledge.”* Despite a lengthy and conscientious verbal preparation, he did *“a lot better in math! The verbal section was way too tricky for me.”* Once in the specialist program, his reading comprehension was defied again; this time by having to use English as a bridge to understand programming languages. *“Imagine learning programming languages through a language that is not your own. It’s like a double filter. That was intellectually demanding for me.”* Again, he offered a new clue relating career choices and academic English skills.

**Self-doubt.** Séneca’s language and culture shock generated self-doubt. As he gave me the GPA of his first B.A. (3.1), he considered it low compared with his performance in Colombia. *“That was so low! I didn’t like that at all, because in the two years in the university in Bogotá, my GPA was 3.9 over 4.”* This undermined his self-confidence. *“Imagine how I felt! That was such a shock. My perception was ‘I’ve become a blockhead! Or what’s wrong with me?’”* He was also astonished as his GPAs went up with time. *“It’s curious my GPA has come from low to high. Sometimes I’ve thought, how come? Shouldn’t it be the other way as the academic degrees get more difficult and what you’re doing gets more demanding?”* Then, he found an explanation. *“Now I see maybe what that shows is the development of my academic English, is that possible?”* I reassured him it seemed quite possible to me.



He saw academic English as a dreaded foe, and his self-doubt about his English skills guided some of his career choices. *“Now looking back, I think I could’ve come to UTT directly after finishing the Language Training in the community college, or even started learning English at UTT.”* But as a newcomer he held *“an academic environment of 2000 students—compared with the 45000 at UTT—where they still baby you, they pay attention to you, instructors are more accessible, classes are smaller,”* was a better start for him to begin adapting. *“Secondly, there was an economic factor, as the fees in the community college were lower.”*

Séneca felt it was unfair to be sent back to general education instead of moving forward, but the whole situation had undercut his confidence. He feared, *“What happens if I go straight to the university and the level of demand is too high, especially English, and I’m not ready, then I’ll do horribly and I’ll have to go back to the community college anyway.”* Self-doubt made him see being sent back academically in a positive light.

Self-doubt also pushed him to go for another B.A. instead of starting his master’s. He felt he had not received sufficient training to go into the job market. He felt unprepared, especially after his counselor’s *“words of discouragement”* and his lack of success trying to find a job after graduation. *“I felt I had to go back and do something else. So since I had always been drawn by International Relations, and I felt what I had received in the bachelor’s was too local and too limited ...then I went for that second B.A.”* He admitted losing heart because *“you don’t see the light at the end of the tunnel. When will this be over? And with a tough job market ... and the language barrier... you’re always missing something to be perfectly able to accommodate to all situations,”* (G). Nonetheless, Séneca’s critical consciousness led him to actions that favored his permanence in the educational system rather than leave the battlegrounds in defeat.

### **Séneca’s Breakthrough Paths**

Séneca conceded not everything was a struggle in his journey, *“It has been a little bit of both, I guess. It hasn’t been a pleasure cruiser all the time, but it has given me satisfactions, too.”* He remarked, *“I’m infinitely thankful to this country and to the people*

*who've given me the opportunities I've had*" (G). With some help and plenty of determination, Séneca developed a sense of belonging and acknowledgement and felt gradually more at ease in his new context.

**Séneca's helpers.** Séneca acknowledged some of his mentors, but he felt his family had a preeminent role helping him weather the many storms in his voyage.

**Family.** He believed the most valuable help he received during his experience as an international student was his *"family's support, even when long distance."* I asked him whether there was anyone in particular and he told me he could not choose, that all his family members backed him up in every way they could. Later, he focused on his sister. *"Having supported each other is most definitely the key to our success. (...) She cleared the path for me and helped me in everything she could ... for me to have a pleasurable experience."* Then, he added, *"beyond the distance, my parents have always supported me and been very attentive to my wellbeing and my sister's, since we were here on our own,"* (all quotes, G). Family support stood high in Séneca's perceptions of helpers during his biliteracy journey.

**Mentors.** Séneca acknowledged his instructors along the way, but found it hard to identify individuals. He perceived the constancy of his family's support had no parallel. *"I've had very good teachers, but I can't identify anyone in particular as the one who supported me all the time."* He made clear those mentors *"were there in those moments when I needed them, but none was there all the time, which is what my family did,"* (G). One such moment was his Language Training. *"My English teacher! I owe her my English. Her name was Lou-Lou. That's such a nice story. Ten years later we took a doctoral course together. I'll never forget her, lovely lady."* The only mentor Séneca was able to name was, not surprisingly, his teacher of English, the one who helped him sail the roughest waters during his journey.

**Friends and buddies.** Séneca explained students in Colombia *"join forces with each other."* He did not find *"that kind of partnership with Americans"* but with students from cultures more similar to his, *"with the sporadic classmates who also came from abroad or had been born elsewhere, and with whom I could find some empathy."* Most were L1-Spanish speakers from different nations, who had come here at earlier ages, *"so they'd been here for*

*longer, they'd finished secondary school here, and their mastery of English was better than mine. They were open to socialize with me.*" And by means of socializing, S neca gained the support he needed with English and culture shock.

Although his efforts to make American friends seemed fruitless, S neca found friendship in students coming from cultures similar to his, even when linguistically different. *"Some are people who come exactly from where I come from, even from the same socioeconomic status, which is an important element in our country."* With them, he shared *"life, experiences here, we're there for each other, and they become like your family."* Others came from former Yugoslavia. *"There's something in their culture that clicks with ours, with the same parameters, the importance of family, unity, respect, friends, and collaboration. They're not afraid to experiment other cultures and are interested in getting to know one."* This mix of people was by his side and communed *"beyond my imagination; our empathy has been very positive. They really deserve a footnote along my path,"* (all quotes, G).

**S neca's tools.** Although books and dictionaries had their role, technologies had a special marquise in S neca's perception of his biliteracy journey.

**Books.** For S neca, books meant Spanish. In Colombia, as usual in South America, books are not provided by the school and each family has to buy the required books for their kids. *"Many books were part of the school curriculum, but many others my parents would buy for me when they saw my interest."* I asked him whether his parents were avid readers like him. He responded, *"To tell you the truth, no; not for fun. But my parents are both professionals; my father, an engineer; my mother, a lawyer. So they did a lot of reading for work, especially my mom."* Whether for fun or for work, S neca received a parental example of reading and familiarity with books.

In his undergrad years, S neca had good allies in bilingual dictionaries. *"I would spend hours, hours! looking up words in the dictionary ... a paper dictionary, because online dictionaries were not so popular at the time."* By his specialist program, he felt freer from the dictionary and relied more on *"inferring meaning from the context."*

**Technologies.** When I asked Séneca how technology entered his life, he took me back to the arrival of the internet in Colombia in the early 1990s. *“I was about 13 or 14. I have a very vivid memory of hearing about the internet and the possibility to ... transmit information electronically ... and thinking it sounded so bizarre.”* He reminded me, until then, if you had to send someone a document, you would meet with them and give them a hard copy to take with them; or you would write it down on paper, put it into an envelope, stick a stamp on it, and take it to the post office. *“So that novel concept was a whole new world for me, an unknown dimension, which I felt I had to explore.”* He recalled the first computer his parents bought as *“an exciting machine ... a mysterious apparatus which ignited my curiosity. What’s in there? What can this entity do?”*

So without any formal training, he started by teaching himself how to open an email account. *“The same email account I have today is the one I created in 1993; 20 years with the same email account! <laugh> That’s a lot!”* I could hear a smile in his voice as he evoked the noise the modem would make when connecting through the telephone line, *“It would take you all afternoon to get connected, and then nobody else could use the phone because you were online. It was such a luxury.”*

Séneca’s interest in English appeared additionally reinforced by two external elements related to technologies, “media and music.” He wrote,

See, my teen years were full of American influence. Radio stations for youngsters were packed with songs from the U.S and I could say the same thing about T.V and advertisement in general. To “buy” the American culture was a synonym of being “cool,” and who does not want to be cool when you are 15. I would watch T.V (satellite back then I remember) of shows made in the U.S. Some ...were translated to Spanish, some ...were not. Same with music. Radio stations ... would play all kinds of rock’n roll and emerging genres to which the people I grew up with and I would “sing” having no clue what they meant or even if we were repeating the lyrics correctly. A song from the Seattle band Nirvana comes now to my mind Come as you are. Quite frankly I don’t think even English native speakers back then knew all the words in that song. (J)

One of Séneca's artifacts was a video of that song. Surprisingly, the lyrics contain one word in Spanish, "memoria" (Cobain, 1992).

Thus, in Séneca's teenage, music meant English. He interpreted that as evidence of the influence of American culture, *"of the success and the mystery of how American culture has been able to permeate all other cultures so impressively!"* Music and television were the influential technological media he employed to study English at home, because internet access in Colombia was limited to cyber cafés. When I asked him whether he used any Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) during his Language Training in college, he replied, *"No, no CALL, none at all. In Composition 2 we had to write our essays on a computer, like in a lab, and the materials were on the computer, but that was it."* He expected to have access to more technological tools for language learning in the U.S.

Now, technology was an everyday must for him. *"I favor reading from the screen. I try to have everything mobile, as much as possible. I'm the number one fan of the cloud. Everything on the cloud!"* He felt technology as a field helped open doors for him *"so unquestionably; I've been in this field for just two years, and even when the job market is very competitive, I've been able to get this job."*

Beyond academics, Séneca perceived technologies helped him keep in touch with those he loves. *"I taught my family what they needed to learn and encouraged them to incorporate technologies into their lives so that I could feel closer to them, communicate more frequently and easily."* He liked how technological advances make communication increasingly direct. *"I have this i-phone, for example, and I can text my mother and she gets it instantaneously on her i-phone, sees my message, and replies to me instantly. We can share photos or whatever. That's of great help."* Therefore, Séneca perceived digital technologies were another key factor in his biliteracy journey.

**Séneca's belonging.** As time went by, Séneca felt more knowledgeable about academic life in a foreign country. At the start of his second B.A., he *"already knew how to navigate inside the system"* so he did not feel so lost. He also had *"better knowledge about the level of demand and what was expected"* from him, which he perceived gave him *"some*

*calmness and more confidence.*” In turn, that allowed him to be *“more successful, in comparison with the first experience, when I had felt absolutely alien and adrift.”* He pointed out, as he started studying foreign relations, he *“interacted with classmates and faculty who had a more global vision and were not just focused locally.”* He remembered wondering *“Well, what about the rest of the world? So that widening of perspective was encouraging, although the cultural barrier was always there.”* Séneca perceived this small change benefitted his wellbeing as he felt he fit better among people in the field of foreign relations.

**Séneca’s acknowledgement.** After the shock of *“losing academic ground”* having to take general education courses in the community college, Séneca found some of the courses he had taken during his two years at the university in Colombia could be transferred to his program. *“For example, here you have to do Calculus, but since I had taken Statistics at the university in Colombia, they endorsed that.”* So there were certain courses he did not have to take, and he finished a two-year plan of studies in one year. Something similar happened when he transferred to the university from the community college. *“In a year and a half I finished everything, because there were some courses the university validated.”* Being acknowledged encouraged him to aim higher. *“When I applied for the second bachelor’s they told me I had to take just two semesters more to get a second degree. That was certainly worth considering, wasn’t it?”* I could hear a triumphant smile in his voice.

Analogous acknowledgement stimulated him to pursue a doctoral degree after his Ed.S. *“For the Ed.S., I’m taking all doctoral level classes ... and I can transfer 25 credits from the Ed.S. in Instructional Technology for the Ph.D., in I.T., too.”* As for his working environment, after his master’s, he got a job in the online Spanish program in the College of Arts and Sciences at his university. *“That encouraged me enormously, because my boss acknowledged my potential and marveled at my English skills, being that I started learning so late in life.”* Nothing like acknowledgement to lift your spirits.

**Séneca’s empowerment.** Séneca made a clear point on self-responsibility, *“because I don’t want to spill all the dirty water on the university.”* He told me about something he heard once and he found valid, *“Where you study does not make who you are. Even if you’re*

*part of an established house of studies, with tradition and recognition, it still depends on you, on what you give of yourself.*” And he concluded, *“Therefore, academic success depends both on the academic institution and on the individual.”* When I asked him whether he ever used the writing resources on the university campus, he confessed nobody told him those resources existed, but *“I found them because of my own initiative. And I also had a couple of friends who had been here longer, also speakers of English as an L2, and I would ask them to review my papers before submission.”* Although the institutional mechanisms had failed him, Séneca still found some help through his own empowerment.

Getting to know how things work at the university allowed Séneca to enjoy benefits *“nobody cared to tell me about. For example, when ...I was eligible as a resident of the state, which implies lower tuition fees.”* He also became better skilled in his job, *“I liked technologies even more and decided to stay in this field.”* In Instructional Technology he *“didn’t have to read so much <laugh> or rather, the readings were easier.”* That was a difference he found. *“Now I could read and make sense of everything. (...) It was a different kind of English; one I did understand. It was hands-on experience. This satisfied me immensely.”* Once again, he hinted at a relationship between English skills and career choice.

During the group interview, he revealed how, in other aspects, he did not feel at helm yet. He had the dream of becoming fully bilingual and bicultural, in such a way that allowed him to adapt to either context without distress. He also continued struggling with doubts about the better context for raising his future children, with the added concern of wanting to be available for his parents in their old age.

**Séneca’s identity revisited.** Here I present identity issues related to his change of context. Séneca discovered his biliteracy experience brought about a duality of identity, *As time goes by one becomes, as it were, two people; with two identities, and you don’t belong here or there. When you go back, you realize there are many things that still root you there, but there are many others that have influenced you in your experience abroad. Then, you feel you don’t belong anywhere. This is one of the things that give me the most anguish, feeling I don’t know from now on, where, if*

*anywhere, I will feel completely whole again. Unfortunately, I realize I'll have to accept neither place will ever be the same, because of what I've lived through when leaving the cradle where I was born, in linguistic and cultural terms, and as regards opportunities. (G)*

I asked him if he identified a Séneca for English and another for Spanish. *“Oh, yes, absolutely! I feel I'm one in Spanish and another me in English; the former is freer and constant; the latter, more tetchy and transient.”* I asked him whether those two Sénecas ever fought or collaborated. *“They compete. They don't fight, but they're disjunctive. They coexist, but they don't like it, and they'd rather not coexist. But they have to; one reproduces my life in this context, and the other's really me.”* He made a long pause. *“I have to live both identities as if they were split.”* He returned to this topic later. *“Until not long ago, my effort was to acculturate, how to become more American.”* Lately, he thought that uprooted him more. *“So now I'm going through a process of reversion. Now I want to feel happy and proud of speaking the Spanish I speak: I want to enjoy my culture.”*

In addition, he felt uneasy being a student for more than 10 years. *“Initially, I brewed the idea I'd study, get a degree, and with that I'd have the world in my hands and things would move forward as planned. But it hasn't been like that.”* He admitted he became *“a professional student, someone who just devotes to studying. That's all I've been doing all this time.”* Still, he admitted other changes were for the better. *“I've had very enriching experiences. I've finished some of my studies, reached my goals, found a good job, even when I didn't live here permanently.”* He stressed his experience also taught him the importance of *“teaching the next generation where we come from, who we are,”* (all quotes, G). This was one of the factors that led him to become an educator; the main one, however, was working for the advocacy of others.

**Séneca's advocacy.** Séneca made it a point to help others like him, *“so that they don't feel alone. When someone comes to ask for advice, I like being the first one there to collaborate with them in any way I can.”* He remarked he had the best disposition and felt pleased to be able to help, *“because I know how tough it is to start a pathway here and make*



*it, be successful, and feel good.*” If there was something he could do, Séneca was committed to doing it. *“This is really what has led me to work in education,”* (all quotes, G). Séneca deepened his critical consciousness, past his own empowerment, to become an educator and an advocate for other CLD students like him.

I confided in Séneca my perception of him as “some kind of solo sailor, as if his journey has been an individual quest for him,” (researcher’s e-journal). He confirmed my insight. *“I received training, but I felt the majority was self-instruction. I didn’t have friends or feel welcomed here, so I searched for my own space to develop language and the ability to overcome obstacles, all on my own!”* I asked him whether that made it even harder for him. He explained he was not likely to ask for help. *“I try to solve my issues in private, by myself, maybe because of the role of my gender. Men are stronger; they should fend for themselves. That may have had something to do, too.”* When at helm, Séneca directed his ship towards empowerment, identity adjustments, and his decision to work for the advocacy of others.

#### **Séneca’s Evaluation**

Next is Séneca’s view of this study. *“I’m honored to be able to participate in this project on which I have so many expectations and to contribute what I can to this opening for social change,”* (G). In one of his individual interviews, he added,

*I love what you’re doing, because I believe it will reveal many things that have been going on for a while but haven’t been exposed in a formal study. (...) I enjoyed telling my story. I’d never done it before, but I’d told myself someday I have to tell my story ...the story of someone who came here legally, by plane, and has had to face difficulties, culture shock, and language barriers, and everything all that implies. So I liked this exercise because it helps me for this idea to put everything into a book one day. (...) I’ve also liked it because I’m interested in social issues, the exercise of power, and social mobility, which are all very determined by language. (...) I’ve made a noble effort to report my experience hoping to serve the purposes of your study. All along, I’ve enjoyed our conversations, because they led me to reflect upon my journey*

*and its value. It helped my own growth and it'll help others, which I feel is a very valuable social initiative, to which I am pleased to contribute.*

Séneca's critical consciousness was again at work for his participation evaluation. He was reflective on his context, but did not stop there, and moved on to praxis for social change.

### Findings in Séneca's Case

For the same reasons offered in Fátima's case—what Stake (2006) calls “the case-quintain dilemma” (pp. 7-8)—I present the findings in Séneca's case relevant to address my three research sub-questions and main question from his viewpoint. The exploratory question and sub-questions for Séneca's case appear in Table 10 below.

Table 10.

*Main Exploratory Question (M) and Sub-Questions (1, 2, 3) for Séneca's Case.*

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Sub-questions	1	What factors does Séneca perceive as key to describe his biliteracy experience?
	2	What relevance, if any, does Séneca perceive his biliteracy experience had for him to become an educator in the U.S.?
	3	From Séneca's perspective, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on his biliteracy experience?
M		What elements constitute Séneca's perspective on the relevance of his biliteracy experience in order to become a CLD educator in the U.S.?

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### Addressing Sub-Question 1: Key Factors in Séneca's Biliteracy Experience

The main factors Séneca perceived as key are his family's support, his language shock, especially as regards writing, technologies, and his self-empowerment. His biliteracy journey was interspersed with trials and triumphs, in which he stood, for the most part, as a lone knight, backed by his family. The symbolic universe his home provided during his childhood served as fertile soil for the intellectual growth Séneca treasured. As a teenager, he found an inquisitive thirst for knowledge about American culture, English, in particular, and new technologies. His resolve to fend for himself urged him to keep afloat during gales in his voyage, and the love and support of his family served both as reason and cause for enduring all the complications of a new cultural context, where he felt deficient and uninvited. His interest

in technology opened a profitable path for him and became empowering for his linguistic and academic endurance, to end up becoming his career of choice.

His narrative also highlights the evolution of his identity into disjunctive duality, with one Séneca in English, transitory and uncomfortable, and another Séneca in Spanish, permanent and himself. This duality did not hold when the job market entered the scene. His master's training in the U.S. did not open many doors in Colombia as he had expected. Here, although he had a job he liked, he did not find the economic status to which he aspired, what impulsed him to pursue a doctoral degree next.

When faced with an obstacle—and there were many—Séneca used his critical consciousness to inform his actions, in an embodiment of Freire's (1970b) praxis. In a synergic way, culture shock and language shock appear as the hardest obstacles in his quest. His language limitations secluded him from socializing locals, and the lack of socializing deprived him of coveted linguistic practice. These elements combined to produce self-doubt and cultural alienation, which he managed to overcome by means of empowerment, capitalization of external acknowledgement, and the quest for fresh feelings of belonging and appropriacy.

#### **Addressing Sub-Question 2: Relevance of Séneca's Biliteracy Experience to Become an Educator**

From Séneca's perspective, his biliteracy experience is relevant to his becoming an educator in the U.S. His thrust for academic excellence made his initial goal of learning English grow into the pursuit of a doctoral degree, which made him a knowledgeable resource for others' empowerment. He identified this calling as what led him to a career in education. His perception of mentors predominantly as a collective rather than as individuals did not prevent him from valuing the influence tutors' involvement can have for CLD immigrant students. On the contrary, he personally became committed to giving others the generous support he once yearned.

In his perception, digital technologies appeared as the most relevant tool to allow him to work for the advocacy of others through his present job as a course designer. He was committed to finding ways that facilitate CLD students' learning and, at the same time, reduce

the use of complex academic English; all through the use of digital technologies. Again, Séneca showed how his critical consciousness was put into praxis with social change as the ultimate goal.

### **Addressing Sub-Question 3: Impact of Digital Technologies in Séneca's Biliteracy Experience**

Séneca's family's socio-economic status allowed him access to technologies in childhood as they became available in his country. He explored the first computer his parents bought and taught himself how to operate it. He would go to a cyber café when domiciliary internet connections were not available yet, and later, in modem times, he would cause family conflicts because nobody at home could use the phone while he was online, which seemed like "all the time" to his family members.

Now, digital technologies served a multiple purpose in Séneca's life. They were his source of income, as he worked as an instructional designer at UTT; they allowed him instant connection with his family in Colombia, via texting on his i-phone or video chat on Skype; they allowed him to read Colombian and American newspapers online to keep up with news in his country and in his present context; they presented him with possibilities of interchange with other countries in pursue of his interest in international politics, history, and social change.

The field of instructional technology appeared to be a comfortable niche for Séneca, where his English did not need to be so pristine, and where he felt he belonged. The acknowledgement he received for his work as an instructional designer also encouraged him to move forward in his career. At the same time, it diminished his self-doubt and reinforced his new identity as an educator with the feeling "I'm good at this!" Séneca perceived his biliteracy experience led him to technologies as a tool for empowerment and as a working field for others' advocacy through instructional design.

### **Addressing the Main Exploratory Question from Séneca's Perspective**

What elements constitute Séneca's perspective on the relevance of his biliteracy experience in order to become a CLD educator in the U.S.? The most prominent elements in Séneca's narrative are his obstacles, how he faced them, and his routes for empowerment along the way. He perceived the main obstacle was English, with culture shock in second place.

Even when he came to the U.S. with some knowledge of English, Séneca felt his communication skills were not what he needed for daily communication or for academic achievement. He found his academic writing preparation in community college lacked an adequate volume of corrections. Because his tests were multiple-choice, he could still pass his college courses. When he transferred to UTT, however, tests included essay questions, which brought to light the gaps in his writing skills. Moreover, he perceived a double standard between what was required during a course and its final assessment, when English had preeminence over content, in Séneca's view.

Family and technology were the main helpers in Séneca's perception. The presence of his sister, who had emigrated to the U.S. before him, gave him emotional reassurance and general information to help him overcome newcomers' challenges. His family's support, even at a distance, was an element Séneca perceived as central to encourage him to face his obstacles and get through them. In his words, "*My family were always there to give me their support. Thankfully, because otherwise everything would have dive-nosed long ago, is they hadn't supported me the way they did.*" Although he felt very thankful to his teachers, in comparison with his family, they ranked second in perceived commitment and constancy. His family appeared as the main source of help.

Technologies had an important role in Séneca's perception, because they were not only tools of research and study, but they also assisted him keeping in close contact with his family, even at a distance. Moreover, he found a niche in them, because he felt the field did not demand so high a level of academic English as humanities did. As his work in instructional design received praise, he felt acknowledged and valuable, and built a sense of belonging to the field of instructional technology, to which he now devoted himself. After serving his empowerment, this field now gave him the possibility to realize his goals as an advocate for others through instructional design.

As a form of summary, Figure 12 presents the level of relevance of each subtopic in Séneca's case to address my sub-questions and main exploratory question. The shading intends

	Topics	Subtopics	Sub-questions			Main question	
			1	2	3		
Context		Background in country of origin	L	M	M	M	
		Spanish literacy and education in country of origin	M	M		M	
		ESOL experience in the U.S.	M	M		M	
Ordeals		Identity at play	L			L	
		What might have been	M			M	
		Culture shock	Uprooting and homesickness	M	L		L
			Confusion	M	L		M
			Prejudice	M	L		M
			Information chasm	M	L		M
			Health	L			L
		Language shock	Reading and writing	H	H		H
			Self-doubt	M	H		H
		Breakthrough paths		Family	H		
Helpers	Mentors			L	L		L
	Friends and buddies			M			M
	Books			L			M
Tools	Technologies			H	M	H	H
	Belonging			H	H	H	H
	Acknowledgement			H	H	H	H
	Empowerment			H		H	H
	Identity revisited			M	L	H	H
Advocacy	M			H	M	H	

(L) Low; (M) Medium; (H) High contribution towards findings, in accordance with Stake (2006).

The shading of the cells helps place the relative weights of contributions for each question.

(1): What factors does Séneca perceive as key to describe his biliteracy experience?

(2): What relevance, if any, does Séneca perceive his biliteracy experience had for him to become an educator in the U.S.?

(3): From Séneca's perspective, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on his biliteracy experience?

(Main Question): What elements constitute Séneca's perspective on the relevance of his biliteracy experience in order to become a CLD educator in the U.S.?

**Note:** Séneca reviewed the level of contribution of each topic and sub-topic in his case during the final member check of his case report.

Figure 12. Contribution of topics and subtopics towards findings in Séneca's case.

to facilitate the visualization of differences in preponderance. The assistance of this case for the elucidation of the quintain appears in Chapter 5.

### **Final Thoughts on Séneca's Journey of Praxis**

Séneca's is a case of praxis in Freirean terms, i.e., action for social change that stems from conscientization (Freire, 1970b, 1973), also called critical consciousness. Séneca evaluated his circumstances in political terms, which allowed him to engage in actions to reject oppression and resist manipulation. His praxis led him to empowerment to reach his goals and promote social change through his advocacy work.

In *A Response*, Freire (1997) explains "The consciousness of incompleteness in human beings leads us to involve ourselves in a permanent process of search" (p. 312). That is Séneca's script. He knew French, but sought English to feel complete. He got one and then two bachelor's degrees, which were not enough, so he embarked in a master's and then a specialist's degree. He was now starting his PhD, not because he was comfortable as a student, but because he felt unfit for the job market. No matter what it took, Séneca was ready to find a way. The pseudonym he chose evokes images of wisdom, stoicism, and Spain; all of them apposite for his biliteracy journey. For the header of his case, Séneca chose a quotation by Abraham Lincoln, from his speech in the House of Representatives on June 20, 1848; namely, "Determine that the thing can and shall be done, and then we shall find the way." The quote embodies Séneca's qualities of reflection, determination, and resolve for accomplishment through praxis. In the next case, Victoria takes us on a journey of dialogue.

### **Victoria: A Journey of Dialogue**

*Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy. Winston Churchill (1874-1965)*

Victoria Vidanueva was born to a Catholic field-working family in Cuba in September 1962. She came to the U.S. as a political refugee at 8, in April 1971. She married a Cuban in 1987, had two daughters (23 and 19), and adopted a son (13) from Guatemala. At the moment of the study, she was 49 years old and going through a divorce. As specified in Table 5 (see Chapter 3), her data sources were: one questionnaire, six e-journal entries, four online

interviews totaling nine hours and three minutes of audio recordings, one group interview of three and a half hours of which two hours and 57 minutes were usable, one face-to-face interview of three hours and 15 minutes, her artifacts (CV, silhouette, book titles, cartoons, TV shows, and websites), 42 emails, and seven member checks (one for each interview and one for her final case report). Figure 13 shows an artifact she emailed me, her silhouette, which she had made from a photograph of her profile.



Figure 13. Victoria's silhouette

### Victoria's Context

**Survival in Cuba.** Victoria's journey took her from an economy of survival in Cuba to one of fulfillment in the U.S., and from a Cuban multi-grade rural classroom to an American master's degree. When Victoria was four, her L1 literacy started developing at home guided by her mother, her grandmother, and her aunt, even though there were just a few books in the country shack where she lived in Cuba, with no electricity and no plumbing or running water. At six, she started first grade in a rural school, where her Spanish literacy developed further. *"We would go all together to the same classroom but we were in different groups. When you finished a certain level, you would move to a more advanced group. That's how at eight I was finishing 4th grade."* When I asked her whether she learned English in Cuba, she laughed, *"No, not in Cuba. Not a word! The revolution was still young at the time and everything American was barred."*



**Her parents' education.** Victoria's voice scintillated as she told me about her parents' education. "My dad didn't go to school; he never liked school ... he was one of six brothers and sisters, and his father died when he was very young. His grandfather would hire a tutor a couple of times a week." The boys worked the farm and their grandfather brought a tutor to them about twice weekly so they could have classes and learn how to read, write, and do math. "But he never really officially went to school. I think he went until second or third grade. My mother, she was a studious one," although she only went to school to the fourth grade in Cuba. "I think that's where I get my brains from; she's much more methodical. (...) She's my hero ... because there's nothing that she doesn't put a goal towards that she doesn't accomplish, sooner or later." She found pride in her father's humble beginnings and identified with her mother's strength of character and love of knowledge for knowledge's sake.

**"No" to the pioneros.** I asked her whether she went to "pioneros" (the Organización de Pioneros José Martí is similar to the Scout movement, but coordinated by the Communist Party). She did not go, and she shared "*That was terrible, because everyone had their scarf and I liked the colors so much and how nice it looked over the gray uniform.*" But her family did not want her to be "pionera" because they were afraid the government would not allow her to leave Cuba with her parents. So her parents advised her to say "no" to the pioneros, and if they asked her why "*I should say I didn't like it. That was a huge conflict, because I wanted to have the pretty scarf, but I had to obey my parents. I didn't understand my parents' reasons until years later.*" She understood her parents had chosen the integrity of the family and the possibility to leave the country to the training opportunities the pioneros could offer her.

**Leaving Cuba.** I asked her about her parents' decision to leave Cuba. She told me how after the incidents in the Bay of Pigs, President Johnson opened the doors to any Cuban who wanted to come to the U.S. "*Everybody wanted to leave but there were only a few daily flights; so Castro decided to use all those people.*" She told me everyone above 16 for women and 15 for men, who was physically able and had no children, had to go to military school. Males who were not in the military were sent to work camps "*to do what they called volunteering, which was compulsory.* You were leaving the country, so you had to go work in

the fields. *So my dad had to spend five years on the sugar-cane fields, harvesting cane for Fidel.*” I could hear pain and pride in her voice as she recounted how her father had to sleep in a burlap hammock hung from tobacco barns, *“a rice sack cut in half, which he had to take with him wherever they sent him throughout the island to work the fields.”* He was allowed to go home one weekend per month, *“but he had to find his own transportation to and from his camp. Mass transit was erratic at best.”* Her mother had to work the land in order to feed her and her grandmother. *“My older brother was away in boarding school in the city and we could go see him every other week on Sunday afternoons.”* Victoria remembered clearly food was scarce all around and rations did not suffice. *“Through bartering and black market goods we managed. When we arrived in [Latinland], my father weighed 135 lbs.,”* (all quotes, J).

**Arrival in the U.S.** When Victoria and her family finally got on an Eastern flight and arrived in Latinland, they stayed in Casa de la Libertad for three or four days waiting to be distributed to their destination. *“They would send political refugees to areas with available jobs. But if you had family somewhere in the U.S., then they would write that place as preference, and my mother had relatives in Sweater Town“* (f2f); so there they went. Her grandmother had come to the U.S. a few months earlier, her mother and father came with her, but her aunt stayed behind.

**School in the U.S.** Although she had almost finished fourth grade in Cuba, American educational administrators decided she should repeat fourth grade, *“Because they didn’t believe I had finished fourth grade being only eight. (...) So I had ESOL only in fourth grade and then in fifth grade I was already mainstream.”* She had good memories of that year in ESOL class with Mrs. Spencer, the teacher who taught her *“to speak English without an accent.”* In high school, Victoria took two years of Spanish as a foreign language, Spanish III and IV. *“Since I already knew how to speak, read, and write, they placed me in the more advanced levels. It was still very easy. To tell the truth, I didn’t learn much, but it was good practice.”* Victoria believed she lacked the occasion to learn more Spanish and Latin-American literature, as she would have liked.

**Her parents' English.** It would take her parents longer than the year Victoria took to learn English. "My dad just learned on the streets. The English he speaks only he understands <laugh> He picks it up. He'll tell you, 'No classes, never'." When Victoria was in college, her mother took some private lessons at home, "after working in the factory all day. Twice a week, she would have a lady come to the house ... to teach her English, and my mother would pay her." Victoria stressed her mother's love of learning. "My mother learned to drive when she was 42. She'd never had that opportunity. (...) She was born in '37 so she's 75, and she still has goals for herself, which is awesome." Victoria lauded both her parents' efforts to learn English, although she favored her mother's means of self-empowerment, "judging by the results," she joked.

**Parental involvement.** Her parents' excess of work and lack of language limited their participation in the school setting. Victoria's father "was always working. He was never there," so it was her mother who would go to the school meetings. But she did not speak any English, "so she would go and nod and smile but I would translate." These obstacles did not prevent her parents from instilling the importance of education into Victoria. "They told me school was first," and taught Victoria to revere school and treasure education. "*My father always told me 'Education is something no one can ever take away from you. In Cuba we were deprived of the land, we lost everything, but here, with an education, no one can dispossess you.'*" Again, Victoria's voice exuded the admiration she felt for her father's values and critical consciousness.

**Familial values.** I asked Victoria what changed after coming here. "It's interesting; the only thing that changed was the bank account, seriously, *because my parents have always been very measured in their things. At home nothing changed.*" She remarked there was no car of the year, or newer furniture, or trips to Europe. Her father taught her, "*Look, I can buy pants for \$200, but I can also buy pants for \$20 and keep \$180 in my pocket, so I can eat a steak wherever I want.*" She laughed, which allowed me to laugh with her. "*The money you have is there to serve you, not for you to serve the money.*" I felt Victoria's proudness of her parents.

**Academic excellence.** Despite her struggles, in 1991, Victoria graduated high school eleventh in a class of 396 students. She attained her A.A. in Marketing and Management in 1983, and her B.A. in Behavioral Science, with honors (GPA 3.8), in 1996. She obtained three different GACE certificates, ESOL-Spanish, Early Childhood Education, and Middle Grades Language Arts, in 2009, 2011, and 2012, respectively. She received her MAT-TESOL with honors (GPA 4.0) on December 13, 2012, and planned to pursue a specialist degree in Educational Leadership in the future.

**Lately.** Victoria heard about this study through a professor in her university who had previously been a member of faculty in my doctoral program. I had emailed her professor—one of my contacts on Facebook—an invitation for my snowball recruitment. Victoria emailed me in early February 2012. Figure 14 displays the timeline of the events above, which I present in detail as they relate to this study in the subsections below.

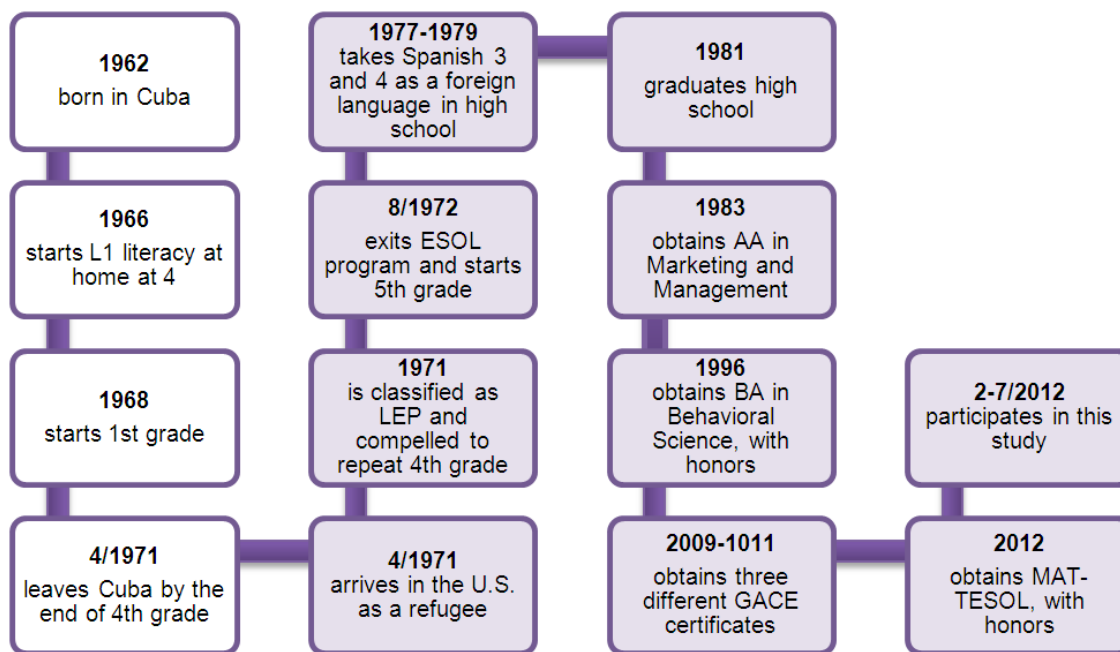


Figure 14. Victoria's timeline. □ In Cuba; ■ in the U.S.

### Victoria's Ordeals

In the group interview, Victoria shared, “For me, it was a very high price I paid. I lost my country, my family, the opportunity to grow up within my family and my culture.” She also distinguished her circumstance from the other participants’, “and it wasn’t a choice. It was an

imposition.” Together with her parents’ education and her socio-economic starting point, this was one of the clear differences Victoria identified between her experience and her co-participants’. I expand on these differences in Chapter 5.

**Victoria’s identity at play.** Here I present issues related to her existing identity before her change of context. Victoria identified herself as passionate, and perceived passion was *“a huge component ... because we’re very passionate people, generally speaking.”* Victoria pinpointed passion as a characteristic shared by L1-Spanish speakers. Her love of Spanish was evident in her e-journal. “It is the only language I spoke for the first 8 1/2 years of my life. It is a Caribbean dialect of Spanish. My grandfather on my father’s side was born in Spain, in the Canary Islands.” She described some of the characteristics that make the Canarian variety of Spanish different from the Castilian standard. “It has many slang undertones which drop the lasts syllable of most words. For example to say ‘come here’, the words are ‘ven para haca’ [sic]. In my family we would say ‘ven paca’ [sic].” She added, “We also drop the S on many words. For example to say, what do you want, the proper Spanish is ‘que quieres’ [sic] many times we only say ‘que quiere’ [sic].” In one of our interviews, Victoria told me she read in Spanish not only because she wanted to maintain and develop her L1 literacy, *“I want to practice the language, and the feeling is different, too, the poetry, the delicacy of Spanish!”* Victoria felt Spanish, which showed how much her L1 impacted her identity.

For Victoria, the labels ESOL, ESL, ELL, and LEP meant “there’s something wrong with you.” I referred her to her account of Mrs. Spencer and asked her why she regarded being taught to speak English without an accent as a positive gift. She said,

Because I learned to speak it the way in which it was more acceptable, it made me feel included, therefore I would not have the <pause> They hear somebody speaking in a Hispanic accent, they don’t even give you a chance. They already have a prejudice. So if I learned to speak English without the accent, I would have an opportunity to be myself, to get them to know *me*, without the prejudice. So I felt that was a good thing.

Victoria's perception of institutional labels as "quarantining diseases" and her use of "they" pointed to a perception of herself as othered (Pennycook, 1999) by the "whitestream," to use the term McLaren (2006, p. 64) prefers over mainstream.

**Victoria: What might have been.** Victoria would have liked the chance to learn more Spanish. In her e-journal, she pointed out, "My Spanish vocabulary is not as vast as my vocabulary in English. I only took 2 years of high school Spanish and went only to the 4th grade in Cuba." Her knowledge, however, allowed her "to CLEP, two years of Spanish and passed the GACE certification to teach Spanish in my state without having to study much." She felt she learned Spanish accentuation and spelling, "*but not much vocabulary or syntax. I would have liked to learn more literature. (...) I didn't have the opportunity to learn Spanish, South American, or Caribbean literature. I lost that opportunity.*" When I asked her whether her present Spanish readings compensated that loss in any way, she told me "it helps," but she would have liked to have the chance to study Spanish and Latin-American literature as a school subject in a Spanish-speaking context, with other people who found pleasure in the flavors of Spanish and highlighted them for communal enjoyment, instead of just reading on her own.

**Victoria's culture shock.** Victoria identified culture shock as the main obstacle to overcome as a newcomer. Even now, she perceived cultural differences were still in the way. The sudden lifestyle change was a stumbling block for Victoria and her family. "*The first storm for me and my family was climbing the socio-economic ladder, starting at just survival when we first arrived here ... with nothing. Then, for me especially, it was so confusing. I was only eight.*" Victoria felt lost, segregated, and misunderstood.

**Uprooting and homesickness.** In her e-journal, Victoria remembered her transition as pleasant but tinged with sadness. "At 50 years old and transitioning again into a new life, the task of remembering and reflecting on that first big transition, moving to the U.S. from Cuba, is bittersweet." Victoria established a parallel between her transition from Cuba to the U.S. and her present transition from a 25-year marriage to a new life as a divorcee. She identified both experiences as "a time of change and contradictions, the pain of loss and the excitement of new horizons." The loss of her country, her extended family, the opportunity to develop

close to all her relatives and immersed in her culture became a right of which Victoria felt deprived by the use of imposition on one end and the status of political refugee on the other.

**Confusion.** Victoria remembered the anxiety and apprehension she felt as a newcomer. *“I was small; I didn’t know anyone; the language was foreign; and I came from a tropical island to Sweater Town, with its bitter cold and the snow.”* Coming here from being field workers to a new culture and socioeconomic level did sound like an abrupt change, and that was how Victoria perceived it. She used to live in the country in Cuba and came here to *“the fourth floor of a skyscraper in the inner city, just across the river from Huge Park City. That was horrifying because everything was unknown to me. That was hard.”* Her voice trembled attuned to the feelings she described.

On a different note, she found their first year as immigrants was fertile ground for funny family stories. She recounted her favorite one, “which is a bit off color.” Her mother was starting a job at an embroidery factory, and she needed some hoops and needles. They all went downtown for her purchase. “It sounds innocent enough, but with no language skills in English my father decided he would communicate with hand gestures. Got to hand it to Dad, he has never backed down from any challenge.” Time was of essence, as her mother began work the next day and needed her supplies. The whole family went to the Singer store, where no one spoke Spanish. “My Dad starts gesturing to the lady. Her voice begins to rise, she starts to shout and the next thing we know we are out on the street without knowing what had happened and without the needed supplies.” They returned later that evening with a bilingual cousin,

As it turned out, the sales clerk got offended when my Dad gestured putting his left index finger and thumb together to make a circle and represent a hoop, then he took his right index finger and put it up and down into the circle to represent a needle. The sales clerk understood Dad to be making obscene gestures at her. She explained this to my cousin that evening, we all had a good laugh about it and still do whenever it comes up. (J)

Her positive attitude through humor towards a situation of helplessness was an example of Victoria's skills to transform obstacles into empowering opportunities. Along her narrative, she gave several instances of this talent.

What Victoria found the hardest was to learn "the social cues and norms," what the host culture dictates in certain situations, "*and which you ignore completely. I felt like a duck out of water, entirely. That was very, very hard for me.*" Victoria explained to me it was difficult to behave distinctly in compliance with either culture's expectations,

It was very difficult because it was like I was skiing with a Spanish ski and an English ski, and I was trying to ski down the road in an even way, but the two of them don't always match, so I always felt like I was straddling, both the Spanish and the English, what my parents expected of me as a teenage Latin girl and what American society expected of me. That I think was the hardest. If I had to choose what was one of the biggest storms, just living in a bicultural environment. That was the hardest for me.

Cultural differences were an obstacle for her to overcome still today. When Victoria moved south from Sweater Town, she felt she had to learn a completely different cultural language. I asked her how she managed to learn the southern codes. "*Through thumps on my head! <laugh> I even bought a book on etiquette because I was so frustrated.*" Although that was 15 years ago, Victoria recalled distinctly, for example, "*the thank-you notes—a completely new concept for me.*" She told me how in her Cuban childhood sugar-cane countryside, if someone gave you a gift, you would have never fancied thanking them by mail. But here, "If somebody gave you a gift, you should send a thank-you note by mail. Aha! My query was if I thank you and I send you a thank you, do you send me a thank you for thank you?" Then, an American friend of hers told her how it works. "You don't thank a thank you. Well, ok. <laugh> 'Cause I was wondering, when do we finish? (...) I didn't understand." Having no knowledge of such rule myself. I asked her whether an e-card would be acceptable nowadays. She educated me, "Acceptable, but not as nicely received, *because you should take the time to make the card, mail it, I don't know.*" She gave me some other cultural tips I certainly treasure dearly. "You just learn! by doing or by what people do to you (...) *I learned after many, many years of*



*not knowing what I was doing wrong.*” She confessed to me she sometimes still hesitated whether to send a group card or individual cards to thank a group gift.

Victoria admitted, at times, asking culture hosts for instructions did not work either. She recalled she had just been promoted in her corporate job and was invited to a Christmas party at her director’s home. *“Shall I take something or not?”* She did not know, so she phoned her director’s wife, introduced herself, and said “I would like to know if there’s something that I could bring. And she says, ‘Whatever you like’. *That felt like a kick. Don’t you realize I’m calling you because I don’t know?! <laugh> So I made flan.*” We laughed together. She confessed, “Those stupid things would make me suffer, you know?” (all quotes, f2f). I conceded I did know, and she smiled a warm, accomplice smile at me.

Victoria told me how frustrating cultural issues were, because *“You want to do what’s right, but you don’t know what’s right. You need to ask. I had to ask. Maybe they don’t like you asking, either. There’s no solution.”* Multicultural diversity in America made things even more difficult in Victoria’s view. *“And there is no right answer, because each person here may be a different phenomenon, especially southerners or Asians. There should be some kind of education, some college for that.”* Victoria’s choice to ask questions of host-culture insiders was one of the powerful ways in which dialogue characterized her journey.

**Prejudice.** In several instances, Victoria felt the host culture made no room for her. She was outraged when told she had to repeat fourth grade. *“I was so frustrated!”* Her voice still carried pain and anger. “I just saw it as ignorance on their part, because they never tested what I knew; they just assumed.” Although she arrived in the U.S. at eight, she was nine by the time classes started. “You’re nine, you should be starting fourth grade. I said, No, I just finished fourth grade! Well, you’re nine; you’re in with the fourth graders.” She had no choice but to retake fourth grade. *“The good thing was that I was soon top of the class, the third. I already knew everything.”* Again, Victoria chose to discover an empowering possibility in what she still perceived as oppressive.

Victoria’s perceptions of discrimination were evident when she explained the meaning she thought her hosts made of labels such as LEP, ESOL, ESL, and ELL. *“It means there’s no*

*room for you. There's no room for you in this group. You are singled out, isolated. You are segregated. You have a condition that limits you, a quarantining disease, Limited English Proficiency.*" Victoria pointed out she understood the need for classification and why the educational system uses labels, *"but these are labels that set you apart and restrict you. Instead, they could think you're a dual-language person. The emphasis could be on what you bring and add, not on what you lack."* I asked Victoria whether she ever felt rejected by Americans. She said, *"Sometimes. But rather, it's not that I feel rejected personally, but I feel misunderstood, and it's not their fault, but they have no reference, and they don't want to learn."* Victoria made an attempt at justifying the ignorance "they" exhibited, but then charged them with a higher count, that of disengagement. She returned to that perception in her narrative several times.

When she talked about her identity and about being passionate, I asked her whether she thought American education took learners' cultural traits into account. She laughed, *"In my experience, they prefer what's scientific and academic, the results, the method; but not feelings or passion. If anything at all, they take into account what's negative about us, not what's positive."* In my researcher's e-journal, I wrote, "Victoria is so clear about her perceptions of the oppressive strategies of the oppressor! She's helping me understand whitestream culture better." I expand on my personal insights along data collection in Chapter 5.

I asked her how she felt about being Hispanic in the U.S. "I'm proud of it! But most people, when they first meet me and hear me speak, unless they know my last name ... they may think I ... could be German, Italian, I could be from anywhere." I wanted to confirm this was thanks to Mrs. Spencer teaching her how to speak without an accent. Victoria confirmed, "Yes, because the minute I start speaking with a Spanish accent then they know that it's a problem, there's something different; therefore, they already have a preconceived idea about that person." Victoria perceived a Spanish accent led others to stereotyping. I asked her to expand on those ideas. She added,

“She’s here illegal,” that’s the first thing; or “why is she speaking like that, she has not learned how to speak English;” or “how long has she been here to really know anything about this country; she doesn’t share our history; she doesn’t know our culture.” You know what I’m saying? Not having an accent is a good thing for me, because it gives me an opportunity to show who I am, without that prejudice.

Victoria’s critical consciousness allowed her to use her lack of L1 accent as a weapon against the oppression of prejudice.

She also remembered her perplexity when somebody once told her, “You don’t look like a Cuban. I go, really? What does a Cuban look like? <laugh> We come in all colors, shapes, and sizes, all religions, everywhere. So, what does a Cuban look like?” (f2f). She sounded defiant, chewing on her words as she spoke. In my journal, I entered, “I feel her pain at the bigotry, and I admire the courage that arises from an attempt to humiliate her.” Next, I added a tag to remember to disclose this feeling in my final report.

Victoria was proud of how her daughters identified with their mother’s origin. She smiled as she said, “My [first] daughter is the best. She’s very proud to be Cuban. She’ll tell you she’s Cuban even though she was born here.” She told me how much fault her first-born child found at being labeled Hispanic. Victoria reported her daughter’s words, “In the Crayola box, you have white, you have red, you have yellow, and you have black. There is no such thing as a Hispanic crayon. So when you show me a Hispanic crayon, then I’ll check the Hispanic box.” Victoria gleamed with pride as she added, “*She’s awesome for those things!*” (all quotes, f2f). She perceived her daughters as her allies in the battle against cultural oppression, in favor of multicultural dignity and respect.

Victoria clarified “we,” i.e. L1-Spanish speakers, speak our mind “*and that scares them*. I really believe that. It’s intimidating for them.” She gave me an example. “*One of my managers once told me*, Victoria, intimidation is one way to manage, but it’s not the best. <laugh> I go, What do you mean, Gordon? I’m intimidating?” Victoria was the head of a 120-people department; she could not see what Gordon meant. “How am I intimidating? He goes, you may not think so, but you are; because you’re very direct. I go, how else are people going

to know what I need or want if I don't tell them?" Victoria interpreted the problem was Americans did not like conflict. "I go, just because we have a conflict doesn't mean that I don't respect you or that I don't appreciate what you bring. They take it as an indictment, *as if you were against them.*" In Victoria's culture someone can say *"I love you with all my heart but I can't stand you when you do that. We can separate things, go to the point, and it has nothing to do with you as a person, your personality, or your beliefs."* Victoria explained, *"For them it's all or nothing. That's so immature!* And now that I think about it, I find that a lot." Victoria told me other anecdotes to illustrate her point. Then, she impersonated a masseuse as she said,

*You need to give them time, little massages. You have to massage everything. That took me some time to learn. I thought, really? People think that? I'm the kindest person! I have no malice; I'm not willing to get anybody fired. I'm only trying to get this problem solved and move forward. Let's get to work.*

Victoria perceived she learned the ways of the host culture, but she did not identify with it and found some aspects "prejudiced" and others, "immature."

When Victoria got married in 1987, she moved from Sweater Town to the south of the U.S. *"That was another culture shock, because southerners are quite different from northeasters."* It would take Victoria longer than a year to learn how to *"treat people at work, at church, in my community, my neighbors. I didn't understand what was going on. With time, I realized, southerners tell you one thing but it's another. They're not factual."* She clarified she did not *"want to use the word 'hypocritical' because it's too strong. They understand their codes. I was the one who did not understand their language, their signs."* Victoria's contradiction between her perception of southerners and the excuses she made for them puzzled me as I transcribed and did the initial coding of that online interview.

In order to dig into that, in the face-to-face interview, I asked her for an example of her culture shock in the south, to see whether the contradiction reappeared. *"In Sweater Town, it was usual to have weekend barbecues; everyone would bring something, with families, everyone on the deck, and socialize all Sunday afternoon. When I came south, I did*

*the same and invited everyone home.*” But, to her disappointment, she found the customs were different. *“They came home, drank my beer, ate the barbecue, all very nice, everyone well-behaved, and I thought everyone had had a great time. One month, two months, three months went by and nobody else had a barbecue.”* Victoria was stunned, she thought, “Wow, what happened? *Did I offend anyone? I started asking and they said, ‘Oh no, it was lovely, it was very nice. Yes, thank you so much.’ But for them, it was an event not a relationship.*” She sounded disenchanted in what I still perceived as a contradiction with her justification of the southern culture.

Reflection led me to understand Victoria’s perception of the host culture was an operative contradiction. In a dialectical movement, she condemned the host culture, and then sympathized with it in an absolutory spirit. This allowed her to find a third, more balanced moment with which she could function satisfactorily in American society. Now, Victoria had *“good friends in every circle, the church, my community, the school, at work. Not many, but very good. It’s a matter of choosing those who complement you.”* She appeared to be critically conscious of her circumstance, i.e., a reader of the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

**Information chasm.** Victoria confided in me, *“I’ve brooded over this so many times. Why is it that they don’t get us? They don’t know about us, and they don’t want to know, because if they know, then they have to do something, then they are responsible.”* She concluded, *“So they don’t want to know,”* coming back to her perception of the whitestream as indifferent and disengaged, but this time with sadness in her voice.

Victoria exemplified the source of that perception and her passion against it with an anecdote from the Social Justice and Pedagogy course she took with the director of her program in college. *“They came to me for communism, and I was enraged! I know education has its colors; as I say, red and black as if it were the 26th of July, as we say in Cuba.”* She cautioned me, *“I understand we have to be fair, defend equality, educate our children, and all that. But that day I was, as they say, on a soap box.”* I did not know what being “on a soap box” meant and I asked her. She told me the expression comes from the 1930s and 1940s, *“when someone wanted to do politics, they’d take a soap box to whatever park, stand on it,*

*and they could do their politics. So when they tell you get off your soap box they mean 'don't start doing your politics.'*"

That clarified, she went on with her narrative. *"So I got on the soap box to say what frustrates me is the lack of responsibility, personal responsibility. Here many people are given everything and they still complain and do nothing for themselves."* She acknowledged there were limitations, *"but to what extent? One thing is to have social justice and another is hand-out. Give them a hand up, not a hand out. What's their part in it?"* In that course they were reading about oppression and poverty. *"Why is there poverty? Because there's a lack of education, of jobs, or of self-responsibility. Now if I stay at home to wait for the check to come every month and I do nothing to improve myself, then what?"* She confessed she kept going at it and suddenly *"there was a deep silence and I was the only one talking. <laugh> So I say I'm sorry I have to excuse myself. Because there was so much passion in me, too much passion for them, and they don't understand!"* This is what she told her program director,

*Look, my parents arrived in this country without the language, without an education, without a trade. My father was a field worker; my mother, a housewife and a seamstress. We lived in a shack without electricity or plumbing, and they came here to live across the river from Huge Park City, "the" city, when they'd never even seen a city before. I don't feel I'm better than anyone, but my father, who's now retired, toiled to have his own business, put me through college, bought several properties to let out, and all by means of his work. He would get up every day at three in the morning and go to the market in Huge Park City for vegetables and fruit that he would then sell off his truck all along Success Avenue and across Huge Park City. I believe everyone has that same opportunity he had, but some take it and some don't. Personal responsibility will lead to your motivation. If you have to clean toilets, make them the nicest toilets you'll ever see.*

Her passion, fed by love for her father's sacrifice and mixed with injustice-rooted rage, brought about hope and empowerment. These, in turn, allowed her to stand up to an interlocutor perceived as oppressor to situate herself as an equal enabled for dialogue.

**Victoria's language shock.** Victoria perceived her language shock was intense but short lived. *"I learned English very quickly. I only spent one year in ESOL classes. In the second year, at 9 or 10 years old, I was with all the other students, and I was one of the three top-grades in the class."* She later explained to me her performance was so good because she had already learned all the contents in her rural classroom in Cuba.

Victoria felt comfortable reading and writing in English. In Spanish, however, she was "not so sure." She would have liked to develop her Spanish more, especially as regards lexis, syntax, and literature. *"I go to the library. Where I live, the library has books in Spanish. So I practice Spanish on my own that way."* She resorted to reading in Spanish as a way to maintain her biliteracy.

**Self-doubt.** Victoria's self-doubt grew in the shade of cultural differences with the host culture exposed above, on the one hand, and what she felt was lack of progress in her Spanish skills, on the other. "I feel very at ease with my English ship and everything. The only thing, sometimes I have to refer to my Spanish navigation chart." I asked her if she meant linguistically or culturally, *"both (...) depending on the situation, if I need to sail new waters in Spanish, I need to make certain of the route. (...) I don't feel so updated in what's Latino as I do in what's American."* This feeling of incompleteness as regards some aspects of her L1 resonated with her feeling of loss concerning the possibilities of developing her Spanish further in a Cuban classroom.

### **Victoria's Breakthrough Paths**

**Victoria's helpers.** Victoria found her home education, her parents' involvement, and several good teachers were the main forces that took her ship to good winds. Even when Victoria's parents were not fully schooled, they had "a crucial impact on my education" by giving their children's academic achievement top importance in the family life. Additionally, she considered herself lucky to have had "very good teachers." Family and mentors, and to a lesser degree friends, were the helpers Victoria identified in her journey.

**Family.** Victoria's mother, grandmother, and aunt taught her how to read and write at home in early childhood. *"I had two or three booklets, not many. Golden Lock, Three Little*

*Bears, tales and nursery rhymes in Spanish. I remember the pictures and illustrations ...very jolly and bright, and there was always a girl with two pony tails.*” They were her aunts’ books from the 1950s and 1940s, which someone had sent from the U.S. They were colorful books, not just in black and white as those printed in Cuba. It was those books in Spanish her mother, grandmother, and aunt would read to Victoria, and with which she learned to read at age four. Later *“when my brother, who’s six years my elder, started school, I’d learn everything from him. I’d sit with him to do homework. That’s how I learned the letters and how to write my name.”* Victoria’s pleasure at remembering these passages in her journey brought me a scent of the pleasure she found in learning and sharing school activities with her big brother.

Her parents always told her *“my job was the school. What I had to do was to focus on my studies.”* She remembered they were so strict that her father got furious with her when, at 16, she took a part-time job after school hours. *“He didn’t want the job to take any time or attention off my studies. (...) My family guided me and gave me the opportunity, the support, and the encouragement I needed to keep advancing in my education.”* Victoria identified the *“strong sense of personal responsibility and personal honor”* her parents instilled in her as key factors in her academic accomplishments. *“I strive for excellence, because I’d like to see how far I can go. Also, I understood the sacrifice my parents made in coming to this country.”* She expanded, *“It’s my legacy to capitalize the freedoms and opportunities of this country and cash in on the sacrifices my family made to bring me here. Otherwise, their sacrifice wouldn’t be honored. This strong self-motivation is the main key factor.”* Victoria believed *“most people help those who help themselves.”* Given her strong work ethics and dependability, most teachers she encountered were supportive of her goals *“and were willing to give me a hand.* Employers, too, gave me opportunities because they knew I would give it my all to be successful.”

Clear about the relevance of her parents’ impact on her journey, I asked Victoria whether she perceived her children’s father being Cuban had any bearing on her biliteracy experience. *“It’s a good question. I’m sure it did in some ways, because the whole family is bilingual, his parents, his brothers, my family. But he came when he was four.”* Victoria



remarked on the differences of his experience. She explained how he was exposed to both English and Spanish at home through his older cousins, “so by the time he went to school as a kindergartener, he started learning from the ground up.” Another difference she found was “his Spanish is very limited in reading and writing. He can speak it, but reading and writing is very difficult. So there is bilingualism but not biliteracy.” He took Spanish in high school, “but he wasn’t a very good student anyway, so. I would say, it probably is a factor but I think I would have maintained my biliteracy anyway, because I lived in a Hispanic community growing up.”

**Mentors.** Victoria saw several of her teachers’ help as decisive hands on her biliteracy ship. She felt grateful to Mrs. Spencer, the first teacher she had in the U.S., for her English literacy and her lack of L1 accent. *“I can envisage her clearly, a very petite lady, with her black with gray bee-hive bun hairdo, her cat-eye glasses, her flowery dress with puffed-up sleeves and a very narrow belt, support stockings, and orthopedic shoes.”* Victoria’s voice transpired love and admiration, *“She was a very good teacher; a very good teacher. Yes, she was so much the typical teacher.”*

When I asked Victoria what made Mrs. Spencer good, she remembered the times of her first class in the U.S. *“Mrs. Spencer was the classic teacher. <laugh> She taught me how to speak English without an accent. I don’t know if she did it intuitively or following an exact science. It was 1972.”* She recounted how, every week, Mrs. Spencer’s ESOL class had the goal of learning 20 new English words, *“meaning, pronunciation, and using them in a sentence. First, we had to repeat the words she said in chorus. Then, we had an English-Spanish glossary,”* and a small mirror. Victoria described how Mrs. Spencer wrote the words on the board, and her students had to write them in English and in Spanish, with definitions and sentences in both languages. Then, she would stand in front of the class and say the words. *“We had to watch her first, then look into the mirror and shape our mouth, lips, teeth, tongue, everything as she did, so we would be able to pronounce without an accent.”* Victoria explained, *“She wanted us to learn how to use our voice tools. I follow her method with my*

*students now. That's a treasure she gave me.*" Mrs. Spencer stood as a model for Victoria to become an educator.

Victoria considered herself lucky and grateful for the teachers she had. "They were all American. They didn't know Spanish; they talked to me only in English." She went deeper, *"even when I went to public school, I had several teachers who would take the time to guide me and give me good advice, opportunities, and teach me there was always a way to improve oneself, to overcome any situation."* She felt thankful for their acknowledgement and guidance. *"They'd tell me I had intelligence; I just had to apply it and do my part; and that I shouldn't ever let anyone tell me I could not do it."* Apart from Mrs. Spencer, Victoria specifically remembered three of the teachers she had in school,

*Not only did they know how to teach, but they also had that quality of being able to motivate their students, encourage them, support them, and treat them as the small persons they are ... that the world is open for them, they just need guidance. I'm very grateful because I had very good teachers. It was an inner-city school, where they now say nobody wants to teach, that those children don't have any good education and that you don't have good teachers. In my experience, it was not like that at all, thanks God.*

These three teachers, knowingly or not, applied the critical-pedagogy principle of dialogue based on respect (Freire, 1973). Victoria's narrative confirmed this as follows.

The first of those three teachers Victoria evoked was her fifth-grade teacher. "She told me that I could do anything I wanted to do. And she believed that. I didn't believe it, but she believed it. So I believed because she told me, and she was right." Victoria considered her teacher was the kind of people that "were in education because they felt they could make a difference," i.e., in critical-pedagogy terms, conscientization for praxis to transform reality.

She also told me about her eighth-grade teacher, Mr. Marino, who "taught me the big lesson of responsibility and taking charge of yourself." She recalled the class was "acting up big time" and not doing what they were supposed to do. "You know, eighth graders, we were

a mess, and one day he just packed his stuff and left. <laugh> He just took off.” They were supposed to be escorted out of the school. She continued,

Everybody just looked around, My God what did we do? What do we do? But he taught us a lesson. (...) It’s just that independence and that if you don’t conform that’s fine but just know that there are consequences for everything. ... The whole Latin thing is so much more controlled. (...) You couldn’t think for yourself. Be independent, but do what I say. <laughs> My dad was that way, control.

The lesson Mr. Marino taught them, Victoria perceived, opened new avenues for her. “This one teacher taught me that I can act independently. (...) I guess, him being a male, I equated them in the same way, that male teacher and my dad, and I saw that difference.” By confronting Mr. Marino and her father, Victoria opened a path of emancipation from the oppression of her father’s parenting style, and developed critical consciousness about her reality in the home culture to give way to her own empowerment and developing autonomy.

Last but not least, Victoria told me about Mrs. Lomb, a Jewish teacher who used to take her “to these little plays at the neighborhood community theatre in English, a Jewish playhouse. She would take me like after school in the evening or like at the weekend on a Saturday. I went a few times.” Victoria paused, overflowed with emotion. “And she took an interest. And she would take me to just look at the rehearsals or help with make up or costumes or whatever, just be there. And it was wonderful.” Victoria’s emotion stemmed from being acknowledged as valuable, worthy of respect, appreciated in her unique presence and potential; i.e., the contrary to the dehumanization typical of oppressive education.

***Friends and buddies.*** Victoria considered her coming to the U.S. at an early age and growing up in an area of mostly immigrants, “*first, second, or third generation,*” helped her make friends in her new context. “*I made friends everywhere,* at school, at work, at church, in the community, wherever. And I still have very good friends over there.” This abundance of friends allowed Victoria to feel she belonged to a community, which worked in her benefit by providing reassurance and self-esteem.

**Victoria's tools.** Victoria perceived the main tools in her biliteracy journey were books and technologies; the former, for the maintenance of her Spanish, and the latter, mainly for English.

**Books.** In her e-journal, Victoria explained she read in Spanish in order to maintain the language. Later, I asked her to give examples of the readings that helped her most. *"When I read, 'A Hundred Years' Solitude'"* She joked, *"I mean, it took me 100 years to read it! <laugh> It talks about our history, about us, about how life goes around and it's always the same. That's the one that affected me the most."* She also mentioned "Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo, La Casa en la Calle de Mango, House on Mango Street.*" Victoria chose books that not only are in Spanish, but also present the weaknesses and strengths of Latin Americans, with meticulous depictions of evils and virtues, both in social and personal scales. I asked Victoria what drew her to these books apart from the language. She told me they are books "about us." She found herself and "all of us" there. Victoria realized she went to these books for both L1-literacy maintenance and a caress to her cultural heart.

**Technologies.** Television was a great tool to help Victoria learn her L2. *"Popeye's cartoons! I learned how to speak English from Popeye, Olive, Wimpy, and all those."* Cartoons helped her reinforce her English because "the language was simple and their actions mirrored the words. This gave me a good base as well as an ear for the language." With a level of English adequate for a beginner, Popeye's cartoons provided Victoria with motivating fun and tenderness.

Now, Victoria used digital reading and writing daily. "I do Google searches every day. When conducting research, I save the PDF files to folders and use my highlight features to make notes and distinguish text in documents. I use MS Word, Power Point and Excel at least weekly." Apart from these professional and academic uses of technology, Victoria enjoyed social networking. "I have a Facebook account and several email accounts that are monitored daily," (all quotes, J). Although she perceived digital technologies as useful tools, she thought the main impact of technology on her biliteracy journey was that of television.

**Victoria's belonging.** Victoria grew up in an L1-Spanish community, “the inner city” in Sweater Town. She told me where she lived was “like another borough of Huge Park City” right across the river. She went to school and later worked in Money Isle. She used to take the path train under the river and in 20 minutes she was in Huge Park City. “But outside of where we were, there were beautiful suburban towns and shopping malls and all that stuff.” She remembered watching *The Brady Bunch* and wondering “where are these houses? Because they aren’t anywhere near where I am, an apartment building back from the turn of the century; it was very different. There’s a whole different part of Sweater Town where I grew up.” Victoria had good memories of her inner-city life. The L1-speaking community made her feel recognized and appreciated.

While in her youth she perceived belonging as tied to Spanish, today her feelings of belonging were connected to her bilingualism. She wrote, “Yesterday I was attending Sunday Service at church and the program was printed bilingually in English and Spanish. Those of us who read along and sang and chanted in Spanish acknowledged each other with a glance throughout the service” (J). In the following interview, I asked her to expand on those feelings. *“It feels good to be part of a group that sets you apart from the ordinary, because we share something. Just by looking at each other we know what we’ve been through to become bilingual.”* Then, she added, *“It feels good to realize we’re not alone, but there are many of us on the same boat, as we say in Cuba.”* Belonging to a group of people who not only spoke the same two languages but had also lived through similar experiences gave Victoria feelings of reassurance and victory.

This evolution from belonging to an L1-speaking community to a bilingual one made me curious about what Victoria might have chosen for her children’s upbringing. I asked Victoria how she educated her children. “I had no option but to educate them here. This is my country, and I’ll always love it the same or more.” But she clarified since they were very small she taught them the culture they came from. *“It doesn’t matter where you are; you need to know where you come from, who you are, where you belong, and what’s important for us.”* Therefore, she provided the cultural environment to which she belonged as a child to her

children. *“For 25 years, I cooked every day and we sat at table to eat all together, from Monday to Sunday.”* Her children were not allowed to contend wanting to eat in front of the television, going to someone else’s house, having baseball practice, a disco outing, or anything to disrupt their family routines. *“Yes, they were allowed to do everything but we had our time to sit at table, eat in family, discuss our day, relate to each other, and see what’s going on with each of us.”* She remarked those values and routines were the most important. *“Of course the environment weighs and there were terrible quarrels because they wanted to go to a sleep-over somewhere and we don’t believe in sleep-overs”* She gave me another example, *“My eldest daughter had her first cell-phone six months before she started driving. We saw no reason for a cell-phone before. She’d tell us, all my girl-friends have them.”* Then, Victoria told her daughter, *“Perfect! If you need to call me, any of your girl friends can lend you hers.”* We laughed together.

Victoria felt she must have done something right. Even when her daughters were born American, and their father came here at four and their mother at eight, *“they always say they’re Cuban; that’s how they identify themselves.”* She told me she took both her daughters to Cuba to visit Victoria’s grandmother, who was still alive at 102 years old as we spoke. *“With my mother, I took each of them at 10 or 11, to see where I was born, where I lived, my relatives, my granny, for them to learn where I come from, where they come from.”* Victoria’s voice was tinted with pride—the pride she felt about belonging to a Cuban family, the same love she instilled into her daughters.

**Victoria’s acknowledgement.** Victoria explained the meaning of the church experience referred above as a reached goal, *“the achievement of being recognized by the institution of the church by giving us not only the choice of mass in English and mass in Spanish, but a truly bilingual service.”* This made Victoria feel included, part of the same service, *“acknowledged the same value and attention they give the others and including them, too, as equals.”* I asked her about the preeminent emotion created by such acknowledgement. *“Company and respect. Feeling included and embraced. There’s room for us.”* Then, she explained to me it

was not about the room the church made for them, but rather the room they made from themselves, respect they gained, a victory they deserved.

Another form of acknowledgement Victoria kept close to her heart was Mrs. Spencer's Friday candy. She remembered, *"Every Friday, she would greet us goodbye for the weekend while she held a Prussian blue tin can."* The can contained Mary Jane candy, *"and she would give us one to take with us. Now whenever I see that candy at Walmart or the shops, she always comes to my mind."* Victoria's voice smiled as she remembered Mrs. Spencer's sweet acknowledgement of a week's hard work.

**Victoria's empowerment.** Victoria described her empowered growth in her e-journal,

Over 40 years have gone by, but feelings have no knowledge of the calendar. They are dependable, constant and true. Feelings also have extremes and generally extremes are not good in neither [sic] direction. Feelings must be tempered, and never ignored. They guide us from where we have been to the present and lead us to the future. (...) If left unchecked strong feelings can run our lives. Thank God for our cognition that can turn stubbornness into tenacity, perfectionism into conscientiousness and can coach fear into cautiousness. (J)

In one of our interviews, I asked her to expand. She said,

*I feel comfortable with both cultures inside me. Before I didn't know where I belonged. Now I know I belong, period. I know who I am, wherever I am. Room or no room, here I am. And I'll do what I need to do, whether they like it or not. They'll like me or they won't, but it is what it is. I think that comes with age. We are, period. And each one lives with their history.*

Later, she added, *"God made us all equal, so you're not better than I am, I'm not better than you are. Here we are all together."*

Victoria recognized the value of the opportunity to be at helm of her biliteracy ship. *"Coming to this country opened the doors to a whole world for me, even more so living across the river from Huge Park City, with all its cultural life. Everything was on the palm of my*

*hand to see and know.*” She contrasted these possibilities with those she perceived she would have had in her country of origin,

*We were not like those Cubans in La Habana, millionaires, doctors, or lawyers. My parents were field workers who wrought the family land. That’s why I’m so grateful to this country and I thank God and my parents every day for the sacrifice they made to come here. In Cuba? Forget it! I would have had no opportunity of anything.*

Her certainty that changing countries also meant changing her future appeared as an interesting ingredient in Victoria’s operative recovery from culture shock, as discussed in Chapter 5.

In the group interview, Victoria disclosed, *“I feel great, very comfortable commanding this bilingual ship, as regards language and communication. I like knowing my Cuban culture and where my grandparents come from in Spain.”* She told the group she had been to Spain to meet her relatives who lived there. Professionally, Victoria still felt she needed to finish her master’s to feel fully at helm after finding a new job. Personally, she still felt *“amid the seas, trying to finalize my divorce, after 25 years, and start a new life.”* She shared her personal problems with me. *“I don’t see a harbor, but I do have direction. But if reaching a safe harbor means having mastery of both languages, I’ve been in a safe harbor for a long time.”* Then, she reflected out loud,

*Now the question remains, what else? Where else do I want to take my ship? How else can I use my bilingualism so that I can impact the world? And what is a harbor anyway. A harbor is just a place [where] we stay for a while. That does not necessarily mean that you’re going to stay there forever. Life is there to sail and we’re all in a journey so we’re all going to be in different places. But I’m grateful that my ship is pretty sturdy. I have a very good ship. I feel I have a lot of faith and a lot of motivation to continue to make a difference in this world and not just get by. So I think I’m pretty good. I’m good. Even when I’m in the middle of nowhere specifically, I know that I have different options and choices to make.*



I asked her if she could imagine the ingredients of a recipe for empowerment. “*Mexicans have that phrase, Sí, se puede; yes, you can. If you think you can’t or you think you can, you’re right. You need to have faith and the conviction you can do it.*” She explained to me that was why she said whether there was room or not, there she was.

*It’s not that I like conflict, but I will let you know, you’re not going to bully me. It’s ok, you know. Back up. You’re over there, I’m over here, let’s talk. (...) You’re not going to just belittle me. You’re not going to just do whatever you think you can. Just hold on a minute. Tell me what you think of me, what you need from me, and why you’re treating me this way. Let’s talk about it. Right on their face, no problem at all. Room or nor room, here I am.*

This was another clear example of how Victoria positioned herself as an equal, empowered for dialogue. In my reflective journal, I wrote a poem for Victoria, which appears in Figure 15 below.

<p>When teachers do not learn, who is to blame? When “listen” means “shut up” shall I silence my song? recite your sermon? When you shout at my tears, shall I hold you in respect? honor your authority? When your truth reigns over my budding voice,</p>	<p>shall I become your subject? or fuel your power trip? or welcome humiliation? as if obedience opened doors other than oppression Thank you, I pass. I sing. I create. I rejoice. I resist. Your majesty I depose. Long live your liberty! Now, we can dialogue.</p>
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Figure 15. A poem for Victoria

I asked Victoria how she moved from corporate America to education. “I always wanted to teach and I always taught, even though I was in a corporate setting, I did corporate training.” She enjoyed it and “everybody saw I was good at it.” When her company hired someone, she would train them and put together the manuals. “Any time there was outside training that needed to be done, they used to send me, so I would learn and then come back and train the rest of the department.” She was in that company for 13 years, during which she

went up in rank and position. In her last job with them, she wrote her own job description. “How about that, huh? What a job! <laugh> ... what we needed was like a business coach, somebody who not only could train the person on how and what to do but give them the understanding of why.” She worked for an international transportation company and used to go to the Caribbean, Central, and South America. She did coaching one-on-one as well as training in a classroom setting. “So I figure that’s why everybody told me ‘You should really be a teacher. What are you doing here? You should really be a teacher.’ And I did enjoy that.”

I asked her to expand her idea of pursuing a specialist degree in educational leadership. *“That’s the next goal after the master’s, once I’m established professionally. I’ve looked into a three-year plan.”* She told me about different options she had been considering. She sounded both enthusiastic and determined.

**Victoria’s identity revisited.** Here I present identity issues related to her change of context. Victoria remembered instances of culture clash between her home culture and the host culture, in which she felt closer to the latter. *“I had to go out with chaperon. I was not allowed to stay over anywhere, not even at my cousin’s. (...) When I moved out, I didn’t tell my parents.”* Victoria expanded on this. She told me at 21 she had finished her associate’s degree, and found a job in Huge Park City. So she got ready to rent an apartment, without telling her parents. Her brother helped her move.

*I wrote a very nice letter to my parents, left it on my room door, and closed the door.*

*I had written to them, “I’ll call you in three days when your rage is gone. My brother knows where I am.” They got to know when they came back from work that evening.*

*That was the only way I could emancipate.*

After that, Victoria went to visit all her aunts and cousins during the same week *“to give them the chance to say what they had to say to my face. One of my cousins said “Hi Cousin! I hear you moved out! Yay! <laugh> She was the only one who said a word.”*

In her introduction to the group interview, Victoria said she had been in the U.S. for more than 41 years, *“so I’m more American than Cuban, partly because 90% of my academic*

*life has taken place here in the U.S.* But I'm very proud of my heritage and I make sure that I proudly represent it everywhere I go."

In her e-journal, she wrote, "I love being bi-lingual." She wrote about going to church the day before and enjoying the feeling of belonging with other bilinguals. "Although, there were just a handful of us there who could read Spanish, it made me feel so good that I could read and understand both languages." Later, she added, "I'm teaching Spanish to a lady now, who's a little more than beginner" (f2f). She told me she felt proud at some student reactions to the versatility of Spanish. "*She says, 'Wow, with one word you say the whole sentence!' <laugh> I go, You know, we don't waste time.*" The word in Spanish was "traígame los;" the English equivalent is "Bring them to me."

Culturally, Victoria displayed clarity about her identity. "*Sometimes I'm shocking to them [the host culture] because I express what I feel. I'm no white bread always trying to get on with everyone, just get along.*" Professionally, she felt proud to be teaching. "*I'm a teaching assistant for the county in K-3, doing pull-out. Soon, I hope to become a full-time teacher after I get my MAT-TESOL.*"

**Victoria's advocacy.** Victoria sent me an email about the relevance of biliteracy to become an educator, according to her experience. She wrote, "I've chosen the ESOL field because I know what is like to be a student in ESOL. Given my experience and desire to help others, it is a perfect fit." She admitted not all ESOL students spoke Spanish, but she felt their circumstances were "very similar to mine when I came to this country." She expanded, "My parents were uneducated; they did not know the language, culture or customs. They did not know what they did not know and needed to know to help me be successful in school." She remarked on how valuable her experience became for the advocacy of others. "I can give that knowledge to new families. For the families that do speak Spanish, I can be an advocate and communicator from and to the schools and in the community." Her determination was firm, "Our children are our future. I want to invest in that future and have my life experience contribute to keep the legacy of freedom and personal responsibility alive." In our face-to-face interview, I brought her back to this email. Her voice trembled and her eyes filled with tears as

she said, “It’s true. (...) I have the experience of *everything my parents went through, of what I went through*. If I don’t keep that alive, who is going to? Nobody’s going to. They don’t understand its value.” By “they” she meant majority Americans.

Victoria admitted she was not a perfect mother, “*But I learned from it. What’s important is to be consistent. Just like with students. They need consistency, care, and information.*” After graduation, Victoria was determined to “*think what I can do in the community, how I can help my students and their families, what I can do to continue being a positive instrument in the world around me.*” I asked her whether she wanted to make things easier for the ones coming behind her,

*No, not necessarily easier, but I want them to know they are not alone, that the path they walk has been walked many times before. First, that it’s possible to walk the path and not be alone. Then, there is information that can help make their journey far more pleasurable than the one we had to battle.*

In this way, Victoria used her empowerment experience for advocacy.

### **Victoria’s Evaluation**

What follows is Victoria’s response when I asked her how participating in this study impacted her.

I had made a commitment to this project. It is important to me. It is hard to believe that over 40 years ago I immigrated to the US from Cuba. So long ago, yet the feelings are so fresh. Once again, I am going through a life changing transition, much like back then. (...) After 25 years of marriage, I am going through a most unpleasant divorce. The feelings of loss are also accompanied by feelings of wonder and excitement as to what life has in store. Much like the feelings experienced when I left my homeland for a 4-story walkup apartment in the inner city of West Huger Park City, Sweater Town. (J)

In our interviews, she stated, “*This is a good exercise for me. (...) It’s good to reflect and think of all the turns in my life. (...) Many people tell me I should write a book.*” And in the group interview, she added,

I was very excited to be part of this biliteracy project. I think it's important that we do not forget our roots and blend them together to create richer knowledge, represent where we come from, and show how much we add and gain by our previous experience. (...)  
*Before, I didn't give much importance to the fortune of being bilingual. It was something usual and normal for me, like my life history. I'd never given a thought to the impact of being bilingual, and what I can do as a bilingual in many areas. Or if I did, it was like in autopilot, not brewing it or reflecting how important it can be to master two languages. Participating in this project has allowed me to value it more and to be more aware of it.*

The study appeared to have opened a gate for Victoria's reflection and empowerment.

#### Findings in Victoria's Case

As for the other two cases, I follow Stake (2006) in what he calls "the case-quintain dilemma" (pp. 7-8) to present the findings in Victoria's case pertinent to address my three research sub-questions to show how they contribute to address my main exploratory question from Victoria's viewpoint. The form my exploratory question and sub-questions take for Victoria's case appears in Table 11 below.

Table 11.

*Main Exploratory Question (M) and Sub-Questions (1, 2, 3) for Victoria's Case.*

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Sub-questions	1	What factors does Victoria perceive as key to describe her biliteracy experience?
	2	What relevance, if any, does Victoria perceive her biliteracy experience had for her to become an educator in the U.S.?
	3	From Victoria's perspective, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on her biliteracy experience?
M		What elements constitute Victoria's perspective on the relevance of her biliteracy experience in order to become a CLD educator in the U.S.?

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#### Addressing Sub-Question 1: Key Factors in Victoria's Biliteracy Experience

The main factors perceived as key in Victoria's narrative are her uprooting and homesickness at arriving in the U.S. as a refugee and culture shock, on the difficult side, and

her empowering ESOL experience, the support of her family and mentors, and her feelings of belonging and empowerment on the other side of the coin.

In Victoria's case, the intervention of mentors involved both steadiness of support and assertion of expectations. The teachers she considered as key factors in her biliteracy journey were those who were demanding while supporting; those who believed in her and evidenced a concern for her academic excellence; cultural insiders who were generous enough to open the tall doors of a new culture and language to a little girl, invited her without prejudice, and welcomed her company.

The interaction of insider assistance and the self-responsibility her parents instilled into her educational goals resulted in a synergic brew to boost her motivation and strengthen her identity. She felt comfortable in her skin, and disregarded any labels on who she was, although she would rather be called a "dual-language person," than ESOL, ESL, ELL, or LEP. In the same way, she rejected cultural labels imposed by others, and demanded recognition of her individuality by reclaiming her own space in a context sometimes perceived as hostile.

Hence, the maintenance of her biliteracy increased in worth and importance to model the delights of bilingualism for others. What was her hardest storm to weather, her experience of biculturalism and bilingualism, became the compass to chart new nautical maps. In her choice of tools, technologies allowed her to enhance her English, through dissimilar devices such as television cartoons and internet searches, while books maintained and developed her Spanish. In a way, even the pseudonym she chose for this study, Victoria, is at the same time an English sovereign and an exclamation of triumph in the bilingual realm.

#### **Addressing Sub-Question 2: Relevance of Victoria's Biliteracy Experience to Become an Educator**

From Victoria's perspective, her biliteracy experience is relevant to her becoming an educator in the U.S. Her passage from corporate America to education came through the repercussion of her teaching skills in in-training courses and through her own vocation of being an advocate for others.

With that as a goal, she dipped in her ESOL experience and in the methods used by her first mentor, Mrs. Spencer, who gave her the gift of not having an accent and, with it, a weapon against prejudice. She still used the same approach with her students now. She capitalized an empowering ESOL experience to recognize herself as a bearer of valuable expertise as regards CLD students' needs, i.e., respect, high expectations, and the self-responsibility core of her family's teachings. Her advocacy spirit led her to look ahead, to plan future academic accomplishments, and to take her belief in equality and dialogue further than her classroom and into a school, as she intended to pursue an education specialist degree and become a school principal one day.

### **Addressing Sub-Question 3: Impact of Digital Technologies in Victoria's Biliteracy Experience**

Victoria's background did not allow her access to any kind of technologies in her Cuban childhood. However, once in the U.S., she embraced the pre-digital technologies available to her, mainly television, as tools to enhance her biliteracy development. Although digital technologies were now part of her daily life and significant for the maintenance of her biliteracy, during her acquisition years she favored books to develop her L1 literacy and television for English, especially Popeye's cartoons. Now, she used digital technologies as tools in her teaching, research, and professional development. She also planned to use them to provide support communities for L1-Spanish CLD students and educators in the future.

### **Addressing the Main Exploratory Question from Victoria's Perspective**

What elements constitute Victoria's perspective on the relevance of her biliteracy experience in order to become a CLD educator in the U.S.? The most noticeable elements in Victoria's perception were her breakthrough paths leading to empowerment. As for obstacles, she highlighted culture shock as the main hindrance to overcome, especially dealing with prejudice and the lack of information and interest for her cultural differences in the host society.

She treasured the support of her family and the intervention of host-culture insiders who acted as her mentors and who trusted her possibilities. This, together with the self-

determination and responsibility her family enforced, was what Victoria saw as main elements allowing for not only academic achievement but also her bilingual identity, both crucial to become an educator and an advocate for other CLD students. Victoria's vocation for service led her decision to leave a successful corporate career to become an educator, motivated by the possibility to advocate for others. The valorization of her experience as an asset for the advocacy of others inspired her ambition to make a better world. Figure 16 displays how Victoria's case addresses my exploratory questions. The role of this case in the exploration of the quintain appears exposed in Chapter 5.

### **Final Thoughts on Victoria's Journey of Dialogue**

Coming from an underprivileged home environment, Victoria's case pointed to elements other than the richness of her symbolic universe as crucial for academic achievement, such as the intervention of host-culture insiders, teachers, and mentors; for example, Mrs. Spencer, Mr. Marino, and Mrs. Lomb. The fragmentary schooling of her parents and the Odyssey-like elements in her family's lived experience appeared counter-balanced through the prioritization of self-responsibility and educational goals in Victoria's upbringing. The values her parents proclaimed were not only uttered, but also embodied daily as they practiced what they preached through tenacity and hard work.

Victoria's biliteracy ship sailed rough seas, made especially tempestuous by cultural differences. By means of perseverance, the eight-year-old political refugee who was sent back to fourth grade upon arrival proved educational preconceptions wrong as she soared to the top of her class, finished high school, and obtained graduate and post-graduate degrees. And she was not done, as she planned to pursue an education specialist degree in the future. The quotation by Winston Churchill she chose as heading for her case, "Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy," speaks by itself of Victoria's conscientization. She added, "It reminds me I am responsible for myself, I decide what I do, despite opposition or oppression" (E). By standing up to those perceived as oppressors, Victoria liberated them from their role and enabled them, and herself, for dialogue.



	Topics	Subtopics	Sub-questions			Main question	
			1	2	3		
Context	Background in country of origin		L			L	
	Spanish literacy and education in country of origin		L			L	
	ESOL experience in the U.S.		H	H		H	
Ordeals	Identity at play		M			L	
	What might have been		M			L	
	Uprooting and homesickness		L			L	
	Culture shock	Confusion		H	H		H
		Prejudice		H	H		H
		Information chasm		H	H		H
	Language shock	Reading and writing		L			L
		Self-doubt		L			L
	Breakthrough paths	Family		H			H
		Helpers	Mentors		H	H	
Friends and buddies			L	L		L	
Books			L			L	
Tools		Technologies		L		M	L
		Belonging		H	H		H
Acknowledgement		H	H		H		
Empowerment		H	H		H		
Identity revisited		M	M		M		
Advocacy		H	H	L	H		

(L) Low; (M) Medium; (H) High contribution towards findings, in accordance with Stake (2006).

The shading of the cells helps place the relative weights of contributions for each question.

(1): What factors does Victoria perceive as key to describe her biliteracy experience?

(2): What relevance, if any, does Victoria perceive her biliteracy experience had for her to become an educator in the U.S.?

(3): From Victoria's perspective, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on her biliteracy experience?

(Main Question): What elements constitute Victoria's perspective on the relevance of her biliteracy experience in order to become a CLD educator in the U.S.?

**Note: Victoria reviewed the level of contribution of each topic and sub-topic in her case during the final member check of her case report.**

Figure 16. Contribution of topics and subtopics towards findings in Victoria's case.

### Summary

This concludes Chapter 4, devoted to the presentation of the data for the three individual cases, starting with an overview of the chapter and guidelines on how to read the cases followed by the participants' profiles. Then, for each case, I went into context, ordeals,

and breakthrough paths, and the participant's evaluation of their participation in the study. Then, I addressed the exploratory question and sub-questions from the perspectives of each case, and added a reflective summary to close each case. The cross-case analysis follows in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION, AND INSIGHTS

The purpose of this multicase study was to describe and explain the perceptions of three Spanish-English CLD high achievers on their biliteracy journeys to become educators in the U.S. The main exploratory question was: What elements constitute the perspectives of three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers on the relevance of their biliteracy experience in order to become educators in the U.S.? The exploratory sub-questions were: (1) What factors do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive as key to describe their biliteracy experience?; (2) What relevance, if any, do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive their biliteracy experience had for them to become educators in the U.S.?; (3) From the perspectives of these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high-achiever educators, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on their biliteracy experience? As methods of data collection, I used a participant selection questionnaire, individual and group semi-structured interviews via Skype, e-journals for biliteracy autobiographies, e-portfolios of artifacts, my researcher reflective e-journal, and one face-to-face unstructured interview with participant Victoria only. Additionally, I integrated into the data the personal email communications with the participants and their member checks. Two external auditors reviewed all data collection and analytic procedures.

In this final chapter, I present the cross-case analysis, the answers to the exploratory question and sub-questions, a discussion from the viewpoint of selected literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and from critical pedagogy, my interpretation of the findings, and suggestions for praxis in education and future research.

### **Cross-Case Analysis and Findings**

The case-quintain dilemma (Stake, 2006) takes into account the importance of giving each case its value, without losing sight of the purpose of the study, i.e., a better understanding of the quintain. Figure 17 below shows the passage from cases to quintain in the

Questions	Case	Sub-topics																				
		Background in country of origin			L1 Literacy and education		ESOL experience in the U.S.		Identity at play		Culture Shock				Helpers			Tools				
		Background in country of origin	L1 Literacy and education	ESOL experience in the U.S.	Identity at play	What might have been	Uprooting and homesickness	Confusion	Prejudice	Information Chasm	Language shock	Family	Mentors	Friends and buddies	Books	Technologies	Belonging	Acknowledgement	Empowerment	Identity revisited	Advocacy	
1	F	L	M	H	L	M	H	L	H	H	H	H	H	L	L	L	M	H	H	H	H	
	S	L	M	M	L	M	M	M	M	M	H	H	L	M	L	H	H	H	H	M	M	
	V	L	L	H	M	M	L	H	H	H	L	H	H	L	L	L	H	H	H	M	H	
2	F	M		M				L	L	H	L	H	M	L			L	L	H	L	H	
	S	M	M	M			L	L	L	L	H		L		M	H	H			L	H	
	V			H				H	H	H		H	L				H	H	H	M	H	
3	F	H	H												H						M	
	S	M													H	H	H			H	M	
	V														M			H			L	
MQ	F	L	L	H	L	L	H	L	H	H	L	H	H	L	L	M	M	H	H	L	H	
	S	M	M	M	L	M	L	M	M	M	H	H	L	M	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	
	V	L	L	H	L	L	L	H	H	H	L	H	H	L	L	L	H	H	H	M	H	
Topics		Context			Ordeals							Breakthrough Paths										

(F): Fátima; (S): Séneca; (V): Victoria  
 (L) Low; (M) Medium; (H) High contribution towards findings, in accordance with Stake (2006).  
 The shading of the cells helps place the relative weights of contributions for each question.  
 (1): What factors do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive as key to describe their biliteracy experience?  
 (2): What relevance, if any, do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive their biliteracy experience had for them to become educators in the U.S.?  
 (3): From the perspectives of these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high-achiever educators, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on their biliteracy experience?  
 (Main Question): What elements constitute the perspectives of three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers on the relevance of their biliteracy experience in order to become educators in the U.S.?  
**Note: The participants reviewed the level of contribution of each topic and sub-topic in their individual cases during the final member check of the case reports.**

Figure 17. Going from the cases to the quintain

cross-case analysis. The figure groups Figures 9, 12, and 16, used in Chapter 4 to represent the contribution of topics and sub-topics to address the sub-questions and main question from the perspectives in the individual cases. This form of display, inspired in Stake’s worksheets (see Appendix C), simplifies the comparison and contrast of cases for each sub-question and sub-

topic, allowing for a less thorny passage from cases to quintain while illustrating the high complexity of interrelations. In the next sub-sections, I describe the quintain and explain those relationships.

### Contexts Compared and Contrasted

In the cross-case analysis, some differences and commonalities emerged related to contexts. Table 12 summarizes the differences and commonalities in perceptions about contexts across cases, which I explain next.

Table 12.

*Perceptions about Contexts across Cases.*

Context Perceptions	Fátima and Séneca	Victoria	
Symbolic universe	rich	poor	
Socioeconomic status	South-American high-middle class; financially independent	Cuban fieldworkers; survival economy	
School	private; high quality	public; rural; multi-grade classroom	
Different	Immigration reasons & freedom of movement	choice for better opportunities; free to leave and come back	political refugee; unable to return
	Opportunities back home	plenty	none
	Recovery from culture shock	difficult	easy
	ESOL experience	unmet learning needs and expectations	satisfactory;
Protection against prejudice?	none; strong Spanish accent; medium-deep skin	absence of a Spanish accent; light-fair skin	
Common	Placement on arrival	disappointing and frustrating	
	Attitude of educational administrators	misinformed and biased	

The three narratives made reference to the participants' familial and social backgrounds, with highlights on L1-literacy experiences, and the characteristics of the participants' educational experiences, all in their countries of origin. Fátima and Séneca's rich symbolic universe at home, high-quality private schools, and upper class socioeconomic status differed notably from Victoria's fieldworkers' home environment and multi-grade classroom in

rural Cuba. The reasons that brought them to the U.S. were also similar for Fátima and Séneca, a choice for better opportunities with the freedom to go back to visit relatives and friends back home as they pleased; while Victoria came as a refugee, with no option to go back to her homeland. Moreover, Fátima and Séneca thought they could have had educational, social, and job opportunities had they stayed in Peru or Colombia. Victoria, in contrast, believed Cuba would have given her no future, in any way comparable to the possibilities America offered her. This could be one of the ingredients that made recovering from culture shock easier for Victoria than for Fátima or Séneca.

When entering the American educational system, all three participants expressed disappointment and frustration with their placement, pointing to perceptions of educational administrators as misinformed and biased against their previous education abroad. As regards their ESOL experiences, Fátima and Séneca perceived their experiences as far below their learning needs and expectations; while Victoria exhibited satisfaction with her ESOL experience and thankfulness to her ESOL mentor, who gave her one of the gifts she valued most, the absence of a Spanish accent, which protected her like a shield against prejudice. This also differentiated Victoria from the other two participants, who did have evident L1-Spanish accents.

### **Ordeals Compared and Contrasted**

The cross-case analysis showed some differences and commonalities related to events perceived as ordeals. Table 13 summarizes the differences and commonalities in perceptions about ordeals across cases, which I explain next.

Culture shock was the most salient obstacle in all three cases. While Fátima and Séneca were still battling with its outcomes, Victoria appeared far better adapted. Uprooting, homesickness, and confusion when faced with a new environment and a different culture were recurrent elements in the three cases. Taking into account Victoria's primary socialization was still in progress when she came as a refugee at age eight, for her the conflict between both cultures presented lower resistance to change (Deaux, 1976) than for Fátima and Séneca, who arrived in the U.S. at ages 15 and 23, respectively. Séneca said it clearly when volunteering

Table 13.

*Perceptions about Ordeals across Cases.*

Ordeal Perceptions		Fátima (F) and Séneca (S)	Victoria
Different	Adaptation to C2	high resistance F: rejection of C2 and L2 in favor of C1 and L1 S: dual identity and confusion	valued both cultures and languages; bilingual identity and self-affirmation
	Language shock	hard and persistent	hard but short-lived (one year)
Common	Culture shock	uprooting, homesickness, and confusion; being subjected to prejudice; stereotyping of C2	
	Information chasms	difficulty accessing information about services for CLD students; lack of information or misinformation about C1 by C2 agents	

advice for others like him, *“When you’re older, the weight of your own culture is heavier, your customs are more deeply rooted, and it’s very difficult to modify them and adapt.”*

Perceptions of prejudice against them were present in their three narratives, together with identifications of the host culture as “they” and categorization of similar-culture L1-Spanish speakers according to the similarity-attraction principle into in-groups (Bochner, 1996; Byrne, 1969), and of the rest into out-groups, with their consequent stereotyping (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Tajfel, 1970, 1981; Ward, et al., 2005). The distance between American culture and those of the participants predicted difficult intercultural relationships (Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Hofstede, 1980; Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Ward & Searle, 1991; Williams & Best, 1990).

All three participants identified information chasms, i.e., breakdowns of communication originated in the unavailability or withdrawal of information about services crucial for the participants, or the lack of information on the part of American administrators about the participants’ first culture (C1), as part of their culture shock. The difficulty of these intercultural interactions was visible in the light of three divergent aspects; namely, the degree of cultural complexity of C1 and second culture (C2) in the three cases (Triandis, 1990),

the tightness of C2 versus the looseness of C1, and the individualism of C2 against the collectivism of C1 (Hofstede, 1983; Triandis, 1995).

As for the outcomes of culture shock, the degrees of accommodation varied. Fátima exhibited rejection of C2 in favor of C1, although with less racism and nationalism than suggested by Tajfel and Dawson (1965). Séneca presented fluctuation between C1 and C2 with discomfort in both resulting in identity confusion, which he perceived as dual identity. Victoria, on the other hand, was able to synthesize both cultural identities into a bilingual or “dual-language” identity, which allowed for better adaptation and self-affirmation.

As for language shock, Victoria perceived the impact was hard but short-lived, since she was able to acquire English in one year at age nine. Fátima and Séneca, on the other hand, described deeper difficulties with English, especially with writing, which led to self-doubt, evidenced as inability to publish in Fátima’s case; and in Séneca’s, a career change from political science to instructional technology as a way to circumvent the language barrier.

### **Breakthrough Paths Compared and Contrasted**

In the cross-case analysis, some differences and commonalities emerged related to breakthrough paths. Table 14 summarizes the differences and commonalities in perceptions about breakthrough paths across cases, which I explain below.

All three participants agreed the support provided by their families was the most powerful help to overcome their ordeals. They all considered their help crucial, not only from the members of their immediate families or the ones who lived with them, but also those who had stayed behind in their countries of origin and provided their support at a distance. For that particular communicational purpose, digital technologies—i-phones and the internet, in particular—played an important role, as they permitted immediate and frequent personal contact with caring friends and family back home.

The next important help was the one mentors provided by trusting their capabilities, respecting their cultures, and opening the doors to the new culture. These mentors had the characteristic of being host-culture insiders, willing to act as mediators between the newcomer



Table 14.

*Perceptions about Breakthrough Paths across Cases.*

Breakthrough Perceptions		Fátima and Victoria	Séneca
Different	Recognition of mentors	individually	collectively
	Technologies	Mainly pre-digital	Mainly digital; Presented lower L2 demands
Common	Familial support	Both from relatives in the U.S. and in their countries of origin	
	Digital technologies	i-phones and the internet used to reach relatives and friends	
	Host-culture insiders as mentors	Provided support, trust, and useful information	
	Friends and buddies	Support, acknowledgement, sense of belonging	
	Tools	printed books and predigital technologies digital technologies as empowerment and advocacy tools	
	Empowerment	From critical consciousness, acknowledgement, belonging, self-affirmation, and personal responsibility Gave way to the advocacy of others by becoming educators	

and the host culture. While Séneca identified them collectively, Fátima and Victoria acknowledged each by name and deed.

In all three cases, both family and mentors played an important role providing the participants not only with support in hard times but also with acknowledgement for their achievements and efforts. Although they also provided support and acknowledgement, the role of friends and buddies, on the other hand, was more related to the participants' sense of belonging to a community of equals.

The manner in which friends and buddies came into play was, however, different in each case. Victoria had no difficulties making friends in her new environment, according to her because of her young age when she arrived in the U.S. Living surrounded by an L1-Spanish community also helped her feel accepted and valued by members of her culture outside her home. Fátima and Séneca, in contrast, had a hard time trying to connect socially with members of the host culture, and lacked an L1-Spanish community in their environment, apart from their family members at home, or were rejected by L1-Spanish speakers belonging to a different C1, as in Fátima's case. Now, Fátima relied on her American husband for a more fluid relationship

with the both L2 and C2, while Séneca still felt a foreigner in both L2 and C2, but had found a small L1-Spanish community of equals with whom he related socially.

The participants' identities also suffered some transformation during their journeys. Séneca struggled with what he called "dual identity" perceived as a result of trying to conform to both cultures, but feeling uncomfortable in both. On the other hand, Fátima asserted even more her identity as L1-Spanish speaker, South American, and Peruvian, rejecting C2 unless when filtered by her American husband. At the other end, Victoria managed to develop a better-adapted identity as a bilingual or "dual-language" person. She felt comfortable and proud being bilingual, was not worried by prevailing labels or prejudice, but ready to stand up for herself. She even passed this positive attitude down to her two daughters.

As for the tools used in order to assist their biliteracy journeys, books and pre-digital technologies were common to all three cases; while digital technologies were highly important only in Séneca's narrative. In fact, digital technologies were so crucial for Séneca as to allow for a redefinition of career goals from political science to instructional technology, and of his identity from statesman to educator. All participants agreed digital technologies were good empowerment and advocacy tools, and used them with such purposes in their educational practices.

Empowerment was a salient path leading to the participants' academic accomplishments in all three cases. Rooted in the support received by family, the validation from mentors, and a regained sense of belonging and worth, empowerment developed from the participants' critical consciousness as a decision to stand up for themselves in the conviction success was possible. In turn, empowerment led to advocacy as a way to help others achieve what they themselves struggled for and succeeded in through the weapons of self-respect, self-responsibility, and sheer perseverance.

#### **Addressing the First Exploratory Sub-Question**

The first sub-question guiding the exploration of the quintain was: What factors do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive as key to describe their biliteracy experience? An inspection of Figure 17 above shows only one sub-topic appears to be

highly important in all three cases; namely, family. Other common sub-topics varied in degree. Table 15 shows an overview of the cross-case prominence of topics and sub-topics to address sub-question 1. The table reorganizes the cross-case analysis shown in Figure 17 for sub-question 1 only.

Table 15.

*Cross-Case Topics and Sub-Topics Contribution to Address Sub-Question 1*

Topics	Sub-Topics	Contribution to Sub-Q1
Narrative	ESOL classification and promotion	High
Ordeals	Culture shock: Prejudice Culture shock: Information chasm Language shock: L2 writing	
Breakthrough Paths	Helpers: Family Helpers: Mentors Belonging Acknowledgement Empowerment Advocacy	
Narrative	L1 literacy and education	Medium
Ordeals	What might have been Culture shock: Uprooting & homesickness Culture shock: Confusion	
Breakthrough Paths	Tools: Technologies Identity revisited	
Narrative	Background in country of origin	Low
Ordeals	Identity at play	
Breakthrough Paths	Helpers: Friends and buddies Tools: Books	

This means the most prominent factors the participants perceived as key in their biliteracy experiences were their ESOL experience, culture shock, especially in what refers to prejudice and information chasm, and language shock, in particular L2-writing; on the challenging side, and the help of family and mentors, the sense of belonging, and acknowledgements, all leading to empowerment; and a vocation of advocacy through becoming educators in the U.S., seen as breakthrough paths to academic achievement.

Figure 18 gives a scheme of the factors that addressed sub-question 1 and their interrelationships. LEP classification and ESOL experience were ultimately positive for Victoria, but challenging for the other two participants, leading them to language shock. The

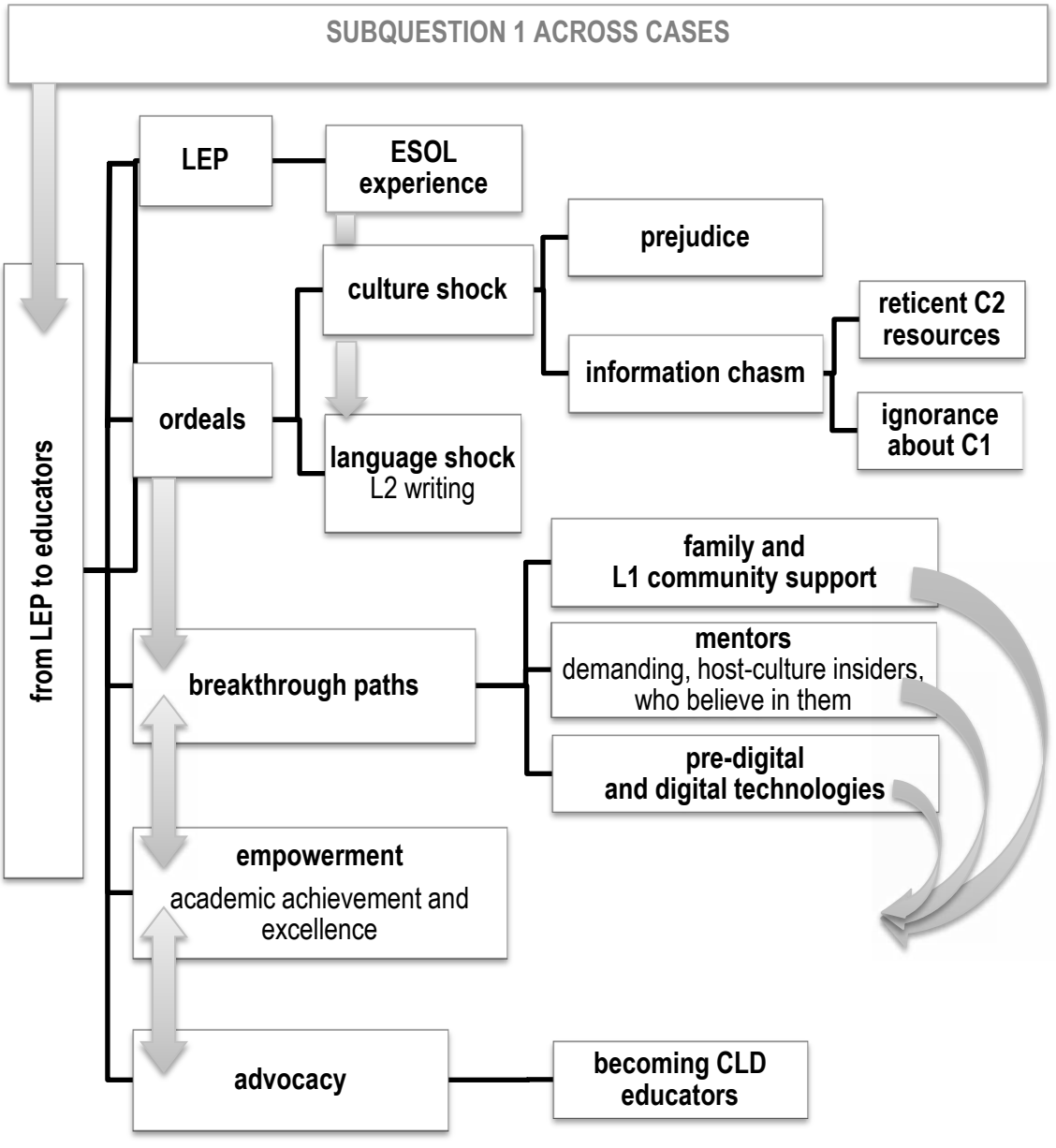


Figure 18. Addressing sub-question 1 across cases.

breakthroughs the main ordeals triggered opened their paths to academic achievement and excellence. The curved arrows show how main breakthrough elements, in turn, enable empowerment, which not only feeds and is fed by advocacy, but also humanizes the oppressed, allowing further breakthroughs. Importantly, it was the desire to become advocates that led these CLD learners to become educators. A deeper explanation of these interrelations follows.

Among the ordeals, culture shock stood out for all participants with prejudice and information-chasm aspects. Language shock, in the form of L2 writing difficulties, appeared in two of them; interestingly, those that came to the U.S. at an older age, having been trained more extensively in their L1 before acquiring English. In these two cases, another testing obstacle was the unavailability of information on possibilities and procedures to assist their academic life. Fátima and Séneca had to resort to their own assets—family, mentors, and their own purposiveness—to find information about resources offered to CLD learners. Moreover, all participants perceived the host educational system lacked information about their countries' educational systems and standards. As regards prejudice, all participants coincided in having encountered that barrier and its hurtful outcomes. Séneca explained,

*To achieve the salad effect is very difficult in American society. Honestly, I believe it's so difficult because here white-ism is hegemonic. And it's a kind of white-ism that concentrates on how to be different from all others in order to manipulate them. We will always be categorized as different, as "Hispanic." It would be great if this society could develop social mechanisms to allow for the salad-bowl incorporation into society, instead of the oppression of acculturation.*

The participants believed American society is, unfortunately, far from that ideal of respect and equality.

Among their breakthrough paths, family support was the most prominent in all three cases. This was not surprising, given that family is one of the most important values in Spanish-speaking cultures (Blair, Legazpi Blair, & Madamba, 1999; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006; Schneider, Martinez, Owens, 2006; Tienda & Mitchell, 2006). Next with high importance stood the intervention of mentors with the traits of being host-culture insiders, academically demanding, and who believed in and advocated for the participants. Also present but with lower importance was the support of their L1 community, represented in different ways by friends, buddies, and neighbors.

Empowerment appeared as a factor of academic accomplishment and cultural accommodation related to resistance against oppression. In the three cases, resistance took

the form of searching for reticent information, struggling for rights perceived as infringed, and offering unyielding personal effort in response to host-culture attitudes perceived as disrespect and disregard. In 1931, Argentinian writer Roberto Arlt called this type of resistance “prepotency of work,” (Arlt, 1977), i.e., the resistance strategy of overpowering oppressive authorities by means of individual self-responsibility and hard work. Rooted in critical conscience, the participants’ empowerment expressed itself as prepotency of work in order to resist oppression, and change their reality through emancipatory praxis.

Advocacy related to the willingness of becoming mentors for those who, like them, faced obstacles in their biliteracy journeys. All three participants felt having overcome their difficulties gave them knowledge and expertise which could now be put into good use for the benefit of those coming behind; as per Fátima, to become “angels” themselves. Advocacy was another expression of empowerment to contribute to the emancipation of others through emancipatory praxis.

Apart from the main factors above, the participants perceived identity changes, uprooting and homesickness, confusion related to culture shock, and education in the L1 as factors posing medium importance in their narratives. Additionally, pre-digital technologies, mainly television, audio, and video, appeared as tools of medium importance. Digital technologies had higher prominence in Séneca’s case thanks to his personal interest and abilities—since his college language training, to his bewilderment, made no use of CALL. The digital technologies he chose were the internet, for academic purposes; and i-phone communication, for family connection and support. With low prominence as key factors in their narratives, the participants identified their feelings of loss as regards roots and possibilities in the countries of origin.

### **Addressing the Second Exploratory Sub-Question**

The second sub-question was: What relevance, if any, do these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers perceive their biliteracy experience had for them to become educators in the U.S.? Figure 17 above shows only one sub-topic appears to be highly important in all three cases; namely, the advocacy of other CLD students. Nevertheless, all other topics—

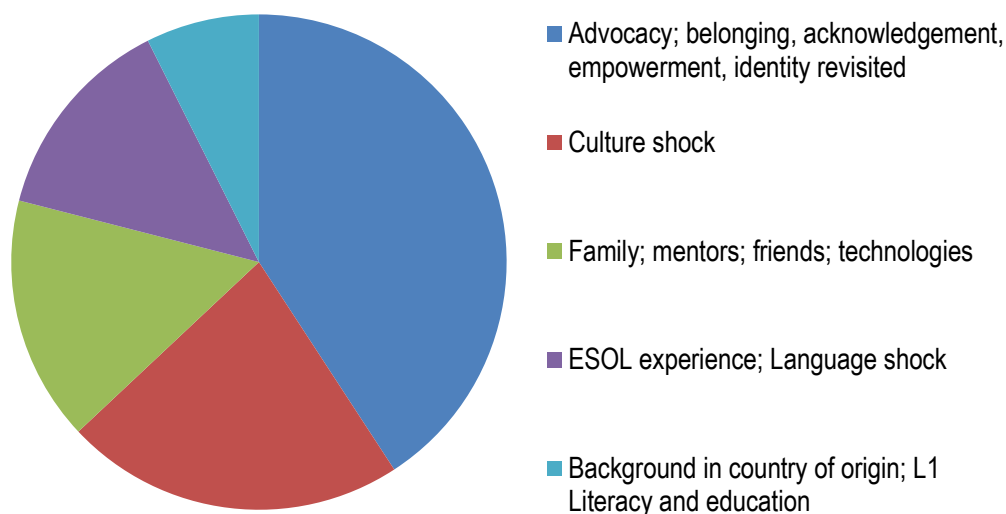
except for identity at play, what might have been, and books—have different degrees of bearing for this sub-question. Table 16 shows an overview of the prominence of topics and sub-topics to address sub-question 2. The table reorganizes the cross-case analysis shown in Figure 17 for sub-question 2 only. Figure 19 gives a rough idea of the relevance of the main biliteracy experiences in these three cases to becoming educators in the U.S., according to the participants' perceptions and attested by their member checks.

The three participants perceived their biliteracy experiences as relevant to becoming educators in the U.S. They observed such relevance was related to the ways in which they overcame their obstacles, i.e., their breakthrough paths, and to the obstacles themselves, their ordeals, because from them stemmed their determination to advocate for others by distributing their breakthrough schemes and their lessons learned in accommodating to their C2 and learning their L2.

Table 16.

*Cross-Case Topics and Sub-Topics Contribution to Address Sub-Question 2.*

Topics	Sub-Topics	Contribution to Sub-Q2
Breakthrough Paths	Advocacy Belonging Acknowledgement Empowerment	High
Ordeals	Culture shock: Information chasm	
Narrative	Background in country of origin ESOL classification and promotion	Medium
Ordeals	Culture shock: Confusion Culture shock: Prejudice	
Breakthrough Paths	Helpers: Mentors	
Ordeals	Language shock: L2 writing	Low
Breakthrough Paths	Helpers: Friends and buddies Helpers: Family Identity revisited Tools: Technologies	
Narrative	L1 literacy and education	Very Low or None
Ordeals	Identity at play What might have been Culture shock: Uprooting and homesickness	
Breakthrough Paths	Tools: Books	



Approximate composition of the perceived relevance of biliteracy experiences to becoming educators in the U.S. for the participants in this study

*Figure 19.* Addressing sub-question 2 across cases.

Looking into the nature of the relevance the participants perceived, the most prominent was the need to advocate for others so that they do not feel lonely when facing the traps set by ESOL classification and promotion, culture shock, and English writing. Advocacy was also related to instilling their critical conscience and empowerment into future generations by means of encouraging prepotency of work, i.e. resistance to oppression by overpowering the oppressor with the tenacity of their work, holding on to their cultural identities, and reclaiming their place in the host society—echoing Victoria’s motto “Room or no room, here I am!”

The participants perceived the links of their experiences to becoming educators with regard to their roles as mentors and advocates referred directly to the mentors and advocates they had in their own journeys, who they reputed as models to be followed and emulated (e.g., Mr. Pan, Ms. Lou-Lou, and Mrs. Spencer). Family members also had a part as models of teachers, accomplished professionals, and self-instructed “heroes” (e.g., Mamá Ekito, Séneca’s parents, and Victoria’s mother). In the cases of Fátima and Victoria, friends and buddies encouraged them to pursue careers in education, i.e., Fátima’s friend Sandra, and Victoria’s corporate co-workers. In Séneca’s case, it was technologies that were related to becoming an educator, as he chose the educational field of instructional technology as an attempt to



bypass his difficulties with English writing, but came to identify with his new profession of instructional designer wholeheartedly.

The participants' background in their countries of origin as regards their L1 literacy and their L1 education appeared relevant to their becoming educators in respect to aspects of their countries' educational system or costumes they found more appropriate to their future students than some of the ones they encountered as students in the U.S. (e.g., a higher level of academic demand, more detailed language corrections and feedback in written assignments, and groundwork for college in high school). As shown above, these preferences can be interpreted as symptoms of culture shock.

Belonging and acknowledgement found their part in the relevance of the participants' biliteracy experiences to becoming educators in the U.S. through their determination to provide both to all their students in general, and to their CLD students in particular. For example, the data sustained evidence referring to the creation of cultural centers, online communities, and field outings, as a way to facilitate feelings of belonging. At the same time, the participants valued the acknowledgement they received for their accomplishments, which led them to the commitment of becoming, in turn, acknowledgement providers for their students.

### **Addressing the Third Exploratory Sub-Question**

The third sub-question guiding the study was: From the perspectives of these three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high-achiever educators, what impact, if any, did digital technologies have on their biliteracy experience? Figure 17 above displays which topics and sub-topics related to technologies, mostly pre-digital ones; Séneca's being the only case in which digital technologies took central stage. Table 17 summarizes the topics and sub-topics that address sub-question 3. The table reorganizes the cross-case analysis in Figure 17 for sub-question 3 only. Figure 20 gives a rough idea of the relevance of technologies, both digital and pre-digital, according to the participants' perceptions in these three biliteracy experiences becoming educators in the U.S. I explain them next.

Table 17.

*Cross-Case Topics and Sub-Topics Contribution to Address Sub-Question 3.*

Topics	Sub-Topics	Contribution to Sub-Q3
Breakthrough Paths	Tools: Technologies	High
Narrative	Background in country of origin	Medium
Breakthrough Paths	Advocacy	
Narrative	L1 literacy and education	Low
Breakthrough Paths	Belonging Acknowledgement Empowerment Identity revisited	
Narrative	ESOL classification and promotion	
Ordeals	Identity at play What might have been Culture shock: Uprooting and homesickness Culture shock: Confusion Culture shock: Prejudice Culture shock: Information chasm Language shock: L2 writing	Very Low or None
Breakthrough Paths	Helpers: Family Helpers: Mentors Helpers: Friends and buddies Tools: Books	

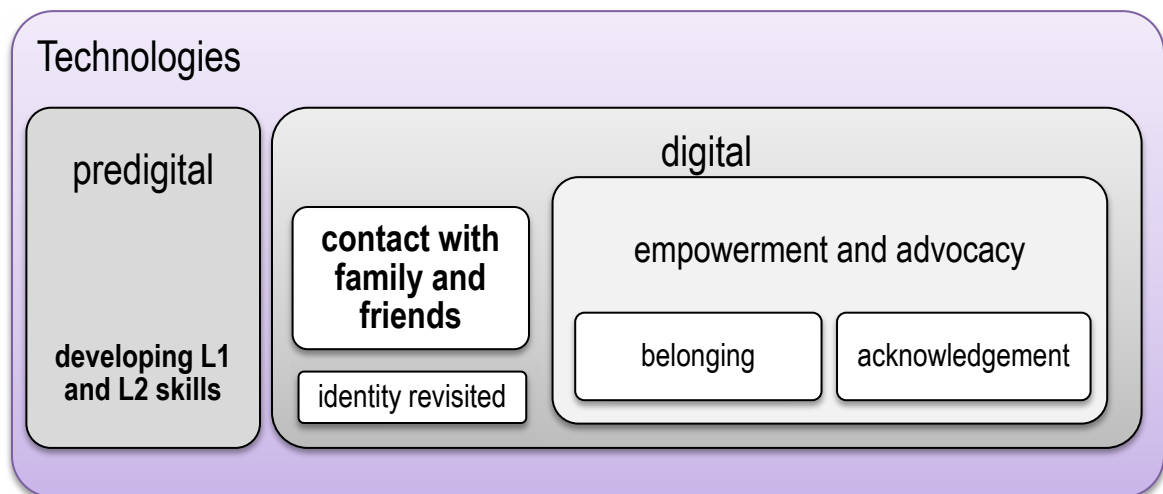


Figure 20. Addressing sub-question 3 across cases.

Although all three cases indicate the participants perceived technologies did have an impact on their biliteracy experiences, for Victoria and Fátima, the impact was not as life-changing as it was for Séneca, who connected technological impact on his biliteracy journey

mostly to digital technologies. In Victoria's case, the unavailability of technologies, not even residential electricity, during her childhood, implied almost no exposure to technologies of any kind. Once in the U.S., however, she embraced technologies and used them to develop her L2-literacy skills, mainly through pre-digital devices such as television and radio in the earlier stages, and through the internet later and still today. She also considered using the internet to empower others through online community building for L1-Spanish CLD students and teachers.

Fátima's privileged background in Peru gave her access to technologies since early childhood, such as audio-books, television, Hi-Fi audio, and video during the pre-digital age, and later computers and internet access in her teenage; all for the development of her L1 literacy. After she arrived in the U.S., she focused the use of digital technologies mainly on L2 acquisition. Now, she saw digital technologies as possibilities not only for biliteracy maintenance and development, but also for the advocacy and mentoring of others through the opening of web-based learning communities and cultural centers, with the intention of encouraging empowering feelings of belonging through online communities.

In Séneca's case, digital technologies were not only a tool but also a goal and a source of motivation. He felt intrigued by technologies, driven to master them and use them as a tool for the advocacy and mentoring of others through instructional design. The momentum of technologies in his experience did not cease, as he had a doctorate in instructional technology in his short-term plans. From his awe for the first computer in his parents' home, through their use as tools for empowerment, to a redefinition of his career with technologies as a field, digital technologies simplified Séneca's academic life and transformed his job possibilities and academic goals.

In a way, digital technologies met his needs of expression, which had been curtailed by L2 difficulties, and opened doors for self-assurance and feelings of belonging, to counteract, at least partially, his persistent struggle with culture shock. This helped Séneca redefine his identity as a recognized instructional designer and as an educator. Last but not least, digital technologies allowed Séneca to maintain close contact with his family abroad by means of video conferences and i-phone texting. This gave him the comfort of family support and

affirmed his sense of belonging as an antidote to loneliness and discouragement. It also provided him with family acknowledgement of his accomplishments.

### Addressing the Main Exploratory Question

The main exploratory question was: What elements constitute the perspectives of three L1-Spanish/L2-English CLD high achievers on the relevance of their biliteracy experience in order to become educators in the U.S.? Table 18 below summarizes the topics and sub-topics that address the main question and their overall preponderance. The table reorganizes the cross-case analysis in Figure 17 for the main question only.

Table 18.

#### *Cross-Case Topics and Sub-Topics Contribution to Address the Main Question.*

Topics	Sub-Topics	Contribution to Main Q
Narrative	ESOL classification and promotion	High
Ordeals	Culture shock: Prejudice Culture shock: Information chasm	
Breakthrough Paths	Helpers: Family Helpers: Mentors Belonging Acknowledgement Empowerment Advocacy	
Ordeals	Culture shock: Uprooting and homesickness Culture shock: Confusion Language shock: L2 writing	Medium
Breakthrough Paths	Tools: Technologies Identity revisited	Low
Narrative	Background in country of origin L1 literacy and education	
Ordeals	Identity at play What might have been	
Breakthrough Paths	Helpers: Friends and buddies Tools: Books	

The cross-case analysis showed ESOL classification and promotion; culture shock, in the form of prejudice and information chasms; family and mentors; belonging and acknowledgement; empowerment and advocacy are the sub-topics the participants perceived as most relevant in their biliteracy journeys to become educators in the U.S. These sub-topics

were not isolated but appeared interrelated and connected. Figure 21 shows an approximate idea of the interrelationships among sub-topics, explained next.

Faced with ordeals to overcome (in red in Figure 21), such as culture shock in the form of prejudice, information chasms, confusion, uprooting, and homesickness; language shock, and sometimes inadequate ESOL experiences, the participants resorted to breakthrough paths (in blue in the figure) opened by family and community support, mentors, technologies, the

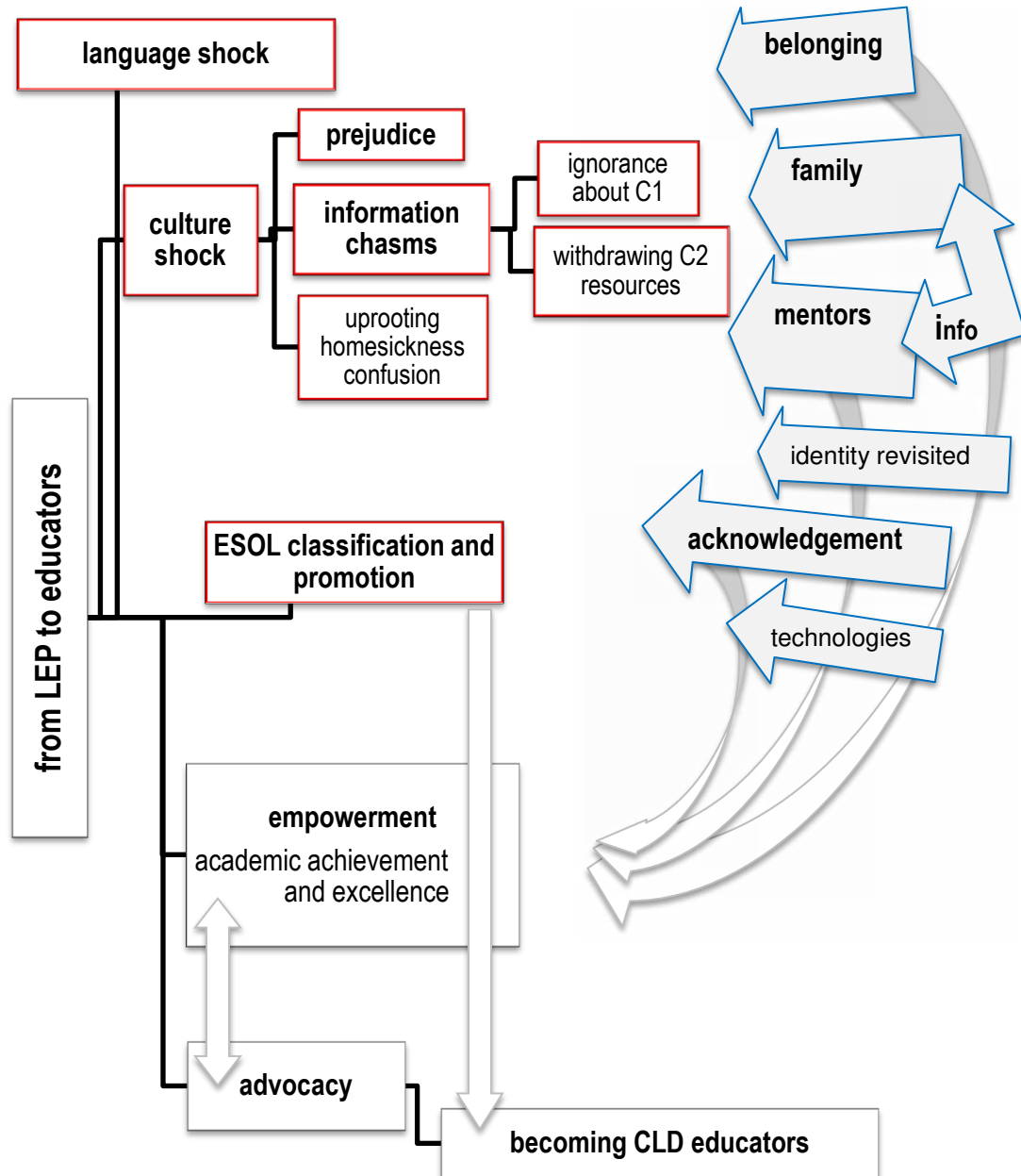


Figure 21. Addressing the main question. Main elements and their interrelationships.

information family, mentors and technologies provided; acknowledgement, and sense of belonging, together with some identity changes. The figure illustrates these elements as arrows facing the ordeals in order to conquer them. These elements supported and encouraged the participants to “keep going,” meet their educational goals, and excel academically.

Aided by their critical conscience, they became empowered and ready for transformative action through persistence and hard work, in Arltian terms, prepotency of work, i.e., resistance against what they perceived as the oppression of the host-culture and educational system. Through prepotency of work, the participants were able to overpower the oppressiveness of administrators and circumstances to make room for themselves where they perceived there was “no room.” Once empowered and accomplished, the participants became advocates for other CLD students.

Thus, empowerment and advocacy sprung as emancipatory praxis in response to their biliteracy and bicultural ordeals in order to resist oppression and change their reality. For this, the participants used the help available to them via family, mentors, community, technologies, or books, where they could find support, information, a sense of belonging, acknowledgement for their efforts and accomplishments, and, in short, the strength to work hard for both academic achievement and cultural adaptation.

The participants perceived they could have never overcome the obstacles faced along their journeys from LEP to educators without the support of family and mentors, mainly through acknowledgement of their achievements and feelings of belonging to a community where they did not need to explain themselves culturally. The essential characteristic attributed to their mentors was being host-culture insiders who believed in the participants’ possibilities for academic achievement and excellence, and who gave them access to crucial information the participants perceived the educational system hid from them. Also, having a support network from a culture similar to theirs helped the participants’ feelings of belonging to a community of equals, who accepted them and understood them. Lastly, it was their empowerment that rid them of self-doubt and ignited the urge to advocate for others by becoming educators.

## Assertions

Taking into account Stake's (2006) approach to multicase analysis, I enunciate the findings of this multicase study as assertions. Going back to the problem presented in Chapter 1, these assertions intend to fill a slice of the gap in the research on achievement factors as perceived by L1-Spanish CLD students, and to add supplementary descriptions and explanations to the existing research on their academic underachievement and failure.

With the biliteracy lived experiences of these three participants in mind, I list below the breakthrough paths they perceived they trailed in order to overcome the obstacles in their way to academic achievement, followed by some considerations on these elements and their interrelations.

1. Family and L1-community support
2. Host-culture insiders as mentors
3. Access to information
4. Empowerment by means of conscientization
5. Advocacy of others by becoming educators

**Family and L1-community support.** The support received from family and members of a similar culture was the most significant of the participants' perceptions in this study. Fátima said, *"It is essential to find your anchor, to have a support network. Otherwise, you'll wreck your ship. There's no way you can do it alone."*

**Host-culture insiders as mentors.** The intervention of mentors appeared as a strong perception in the three cases. Because the mentors were cultural insiders, they had the keys to the bridges over cultural barriers. They understood cultural differences and accepted them as equally valid to their own ethos. They also offered their mentees the opportunity of a relationship that satisfied the emotional needs of L1-Spanish students, who tend to see "love for the students" (Fátima) as an essential characteristic of the ideal teacher.

**Access to information.** In their two forms of expression, information breakdowns were perceived as disorienting obstacles, difficult to understand and tackle, leading to feelings of frustration and deeper culture shock. One of the forms—the perception of a lack of information

about the educational systems and standards of the countries of origin on the part of host administrators—produced feelings of humiliation and rejection by representatives of the host culture. “*I was so frustrated,*” (Victoria); “*It was ridiculous!*” (Séneca); “*And now, what do I do?*,” (Fátima) were examples of reactions to this kind of obstacle. The other form—the perception of information that could help them either in their finances or wellbeing as reticent or altogether unavailable—produced feelings of helplessness and loneliness at first, followed by disenchantment and resentment when they acceded to the information by themselves, through internet or library searches, or with the help of family, mentors, or friends.

**Empowerment by means of conscientization.** If one characteristic appeared common to these three dissimilar participants, it was their tenacity. However, they all agreed hard work alone was not enough. They perceived their empowerment would not have been possible without the support offered by family and mentors—family as providers of love and understanding; mentors as guides in the academic and cultural jungles—who gave them a sense of belonging and acknowledgement of their efforts and attainments. Their critical consciousness allowed them to read their circumstances as places of disadvantage and oppression, but it was their helpers’ support that encouraged them onto emancipatory praxis. With these helpers holding their backs, the participants applied their critical consciousness to understand their situations, alert to any hint of oppression, and ready to resist and respond with prepotency of work.

**Advocacy of others by becoming educators.** Another aspect that appeared in the three cases was the desire to make the journeys of others less stormy than their own. They wanted to make other CLD learners feel they are not alone by providing them with the knowledge accumulated in their own journeys, and the strong belief that it can be done, “*que sí se puede*” (Fátima, Victoria).

The participants’ commitment to becoming advocates of all their students in general, and of their CLD students in particular, brings to mind Nel Noddings’ (1984, 1999, 2002) ideas on caring and its ethics in education. For Noddings, caring involves receptivity and a special kind of attention she identifies as the capacity of feeling with another, i.e., sympathy, which,



followed by reflection, engenders the motivation for caring. When the cared-for acknowledges the help received in a relationship of reciprocity, then caring has taken place.

This Deweyan interdependency allows the moral of caring to breed, according to Noddings, a sense of justice. Then, the cared-for learns the ethics of caring on the receiving end, and is ready to play, in turn, the role of care giver. This dynamics is clearly identifiable at the root of the participants' need to become advocates of others. Having received help from their mentors, they become mentors of others in pursue of justice. Fátima's, Séneca's, and Victoria's love for their students contributed what Noddings (1992, 2003) accuses the American educational system of lacking, namely, the moral primacy of caring.

### **Discussion**

In this section, I discuss in what ways the findings above relate to the relevant literature in the field reviewed in Chapter 2 and to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 1, in order to situate this study in the context of three main scholarly spaces: (1) the continua of biliteracy model; (2) previous research on CLD learners' identity and achievement; and (3) the theoretical framework of the study, critical pedagogy.

#### **The Continua of Biliteracy Model Applied**

Rooted in critical pedagogy, the continua of biliteracy model (Hornberger, 1989, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) when applied to the three cases in this study, contributes interesting discernments regarding the nature of these three biliteracy experiences. Figure 22 places the cases in the three continua of biliteracy contexts. All three cases appeared on the micro side of the micro-macro continuum, as they referred to individual experiences for which the macro context was the U.S. As such, they were bilinguals in a mostly monolingual macro context, with the exception of Victoria, who was more in contact with a bilingual community; although they all maintained Spanish monolingual home contexts. As for the oral-literate continuum, Séneca's case presented the least literate professional context, while Victoria's seemed more balanced, and Fátima's appeared to present the most literate demands.

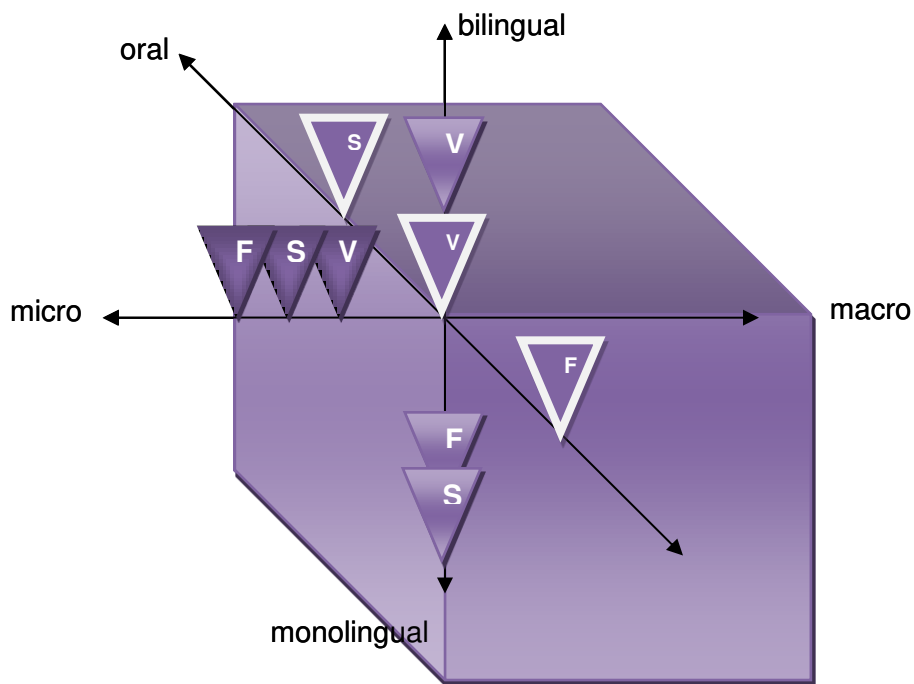


Figure 22. Biliteracy context for the cases in this study

For the biliteracy media continua, all participants had successive exposure to Spanish and English, the earliest for Victoria and the latest for Séneca. Scripts were convergent, with the exception of “w,” which is not present in the Spanish alphabet, and use of the apostrophe, which does not occur in Spanish either. The rest of the script elements are more numerous in Spanish than in English, so the script system was easily adapted through simplification. As for their syntactic structures, Spanish and English have units that are conceptually similar but built differently, which may present difficulties for L1-Spanish writers in particular when trying to write in academic English. Figure 23 illustrates the biliteracy media continua for the cases in this study.

The biliteracy content continua (Figure 24) showed more hegemonic extremes for the cases in this study, with more weight on the privileged majority, literary, and decontextualized ends, than on undervalued minority, vernacular, and contextualized contents. Finally, the continua of biliteracy development showed a transition from an L1 only start for all participants, to a current result of biliteracy equilibrium for Séneca and Fátima, and better development of L2 than L1 for Victoria. For the other two development continua, there was

more weight of the privileged production and written language extremes, in detriment of reception and oral language. Figure 25 below illustrates these observations.

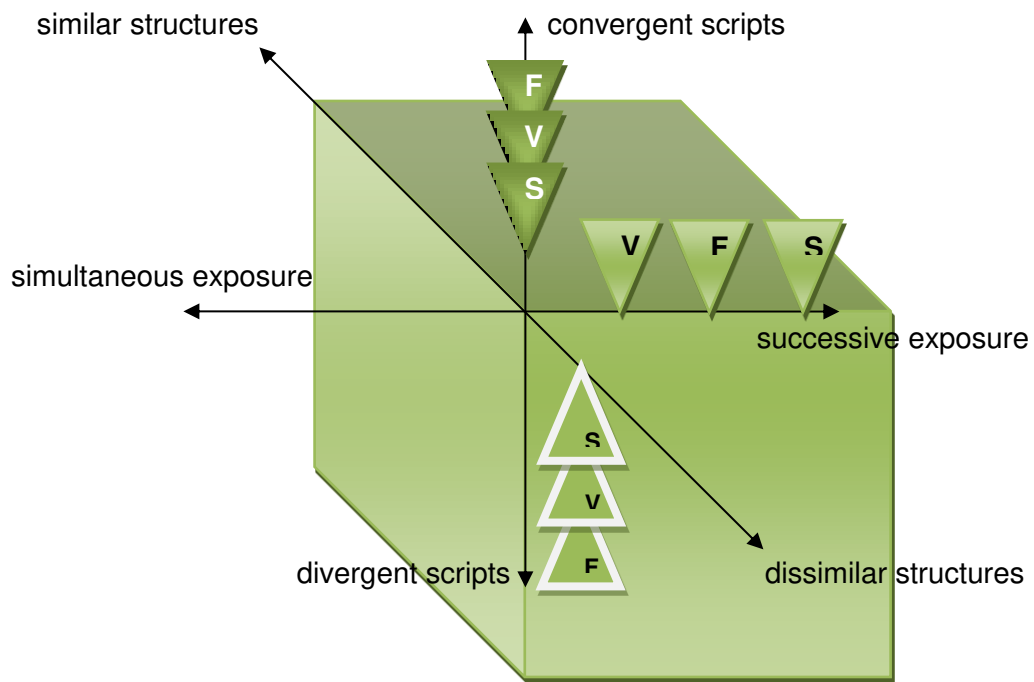


Figure 23. Biliteracy media for the cases in this study

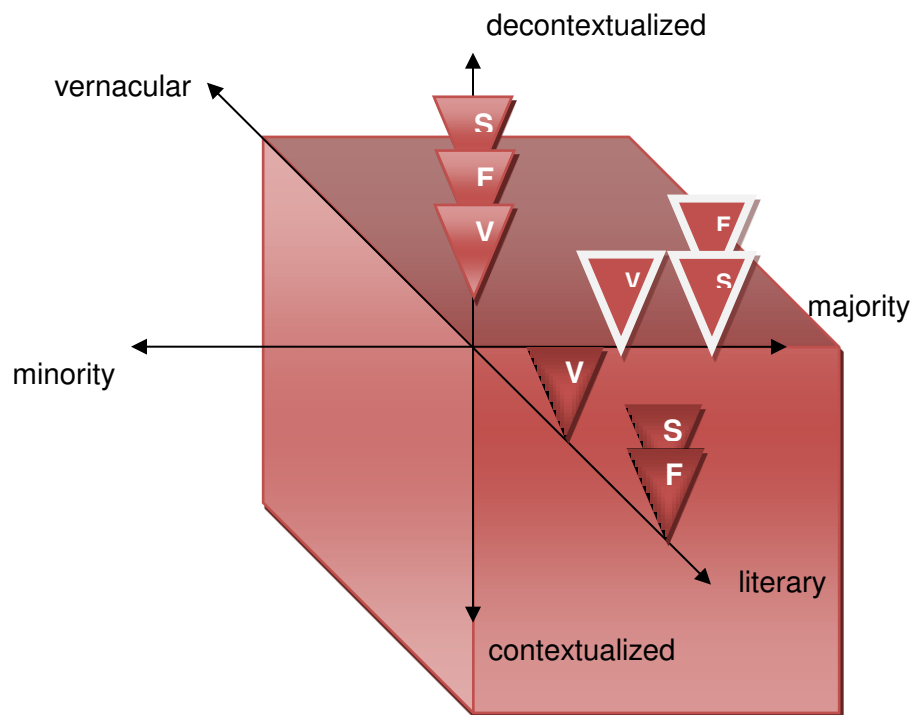
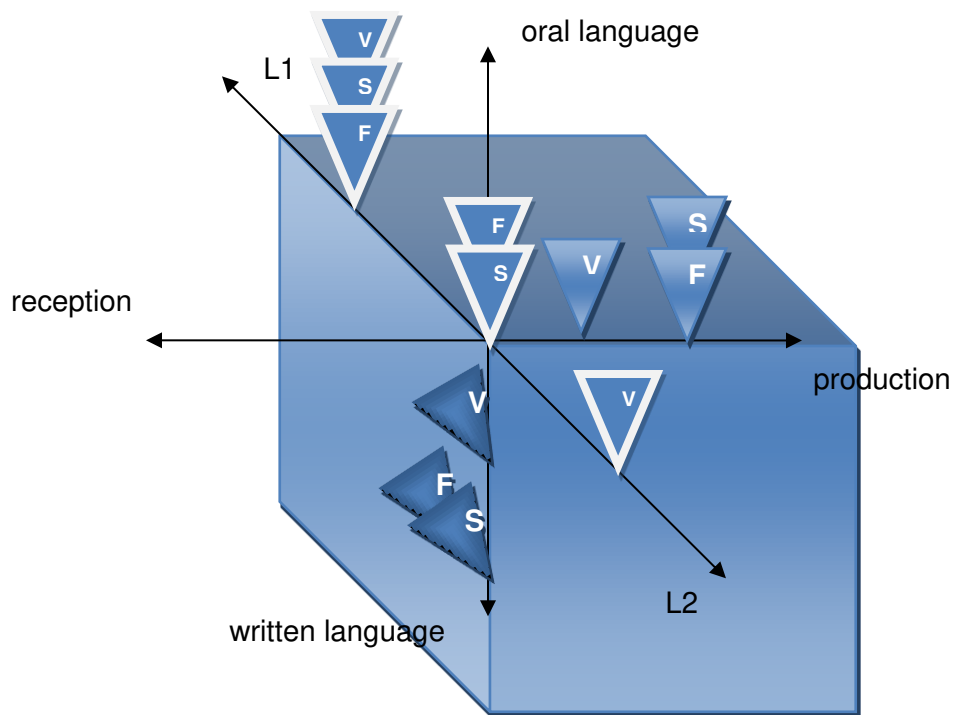


Figure 24. Biliteracy content for the cases in this study



*Figure 25.* Biliteracy development for the cases in this study

Taking into account the model identified weaker and more powerful ends in each continuum to highlight hierarchies of knowledge valued or devalued by the hegemonic culture, it was not surprising to note the positioning of the cases along the less privileged poles. The diagrams showed Victoria's case as relatively more centered in the four sets of continua, while Fátima and Séneca had more fluctuation around the peripheral underprivileged extremes. It may be interesting to explore whether this difference relates to cultural accommodation degrees in any way. If American classrooms were the realms of educational equity, CLD learners should be able to dwell along the poles that identify their existent knowledge, thus contributing to the emancipation of the oppressed and the empowerment of cultural and linguistic minorities.

#### **Conversations with Previous Research**

In this subsection, I engage in conversations with the current literature on CLD learners reviewed in Chapter 2, in particular, with studies focused on cultural identity, language choice, backgrounds, academic achievement, personal relationships, school attachment, access to books, academic English, scaffolding L2-English; home, school, and biliteracy; and the

oppression of CLD learners. These are the foci in the literature to which this study has something to say, either to agree or to differ. Such open-ended, constructive discussion follows.

### **Identity**

**Stages and components.** Phinney's (1993) model of ethnic identity development (presented in Chapter 2) helps analyze the commonalities and differences in the participants' identity development stages across cases. Fátima seemed to have stayed closer to the unexamined ethnic identity she brought from Peru, with no evidence of exploration. Séneca appeared embarked fully in ethnic identity search, following the crisis triggered by culture shock, which he capitalized to start identity questioning and exploration. Only Victoria seemed to have attained the ethnic identity achievement stage. She had a clear sense of her ethnic identity, understood the implications of being "Hispanic," decided to raise her children as Cuban, and was able to deal with stereotypes and discrimination. Supporting Phinney's (2004) findings, Victoria's high commitment was parallel to her psychological wellbeing, while Séneca's high exploration accompanied high perceived discrimination.

**Code-switching.** The link between cultural identity and language choice highlighted by Kim (2005) became noticeable in this study, as the participants' use of English connected to their degree of cultural adaptation. Victoria, the participant who felt most comfortable in the both cultures and considered herself part of both, used code-switching the most often, with an overall balance in the amount of English and Spanish used in her contributions. Fátima, in contrast, chose English almost exclusively for academic topics, and seemed to feel more comfortable using Spanish for everything else. At the other end of the spectrum, Séneca asserted his cultural identity and chose Spanish all through, with only a few instances of oral code-switching; used Spanish in email communications, but stuck to English in his e-journal. His determination fluctuated on the one hand, as a reminder of one of the participants in Kim's study who used "No quiero" (p. 256) instead of "I don't want to" when she wanted to express self-assertion; and on the other, as the self-defiant task of writing in the target language. These complex phenomena merit further exploration in future research.

### **Academic Achievement**

Although Victoria's rural-poverty background contrasted with Fátima and Séneca's rich symbolic universe and high-middle-class status, she still managed to become a high achiever in American education in a similar way as the other two participants did. This challenges previous research (LeCroy & Krysik, 2008; Ruffolo, Khun, & Evans, 2006) where differences in family background relate to the underachievement of CLD learners. It also contradicts the relations between underachievement and the educational attainment of the parents (Kerckhoff & Campbell, 1997), and poverty rates (Kao & Thompson, 2003). These studies should be replicated with control groups of high-achieving CLD learners, in order to control a possible bias created by the focus on underachievement typical of the deficit approach reviewed in Chapter 2.

On the other hand, this study agrees with the positive associations with academic achievement found for the perceived importance of education and the expectancies of success (Doll & Hess, 2004), motivation for achievement (Schultz, 1993), school attachment and involvement (MacNeal, 1995; Valverde, 1987), and school belongingness and satisfaction (LeCroy & Krysik, 2008; Ruffolo, et al., 2006). The study also supports the relationships with academic achievement found for personal relationships, especially with parents and peers, (Doll & Hess, 2004; Dupper, 2006; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Jacobson & Crockett, 2000; LeCroy & Krysik, 2008).

Even when their symbolic universes diverged, the three participants had access to books and were read to in early childhood. According to Bertha Pérez (2004), observing the literate behaviors of others and living literacy experiences with literate others helps develop literacy. The participants' access to books may support this view for their L1-literacy development.

**English scaffolding.** On the other hand, Fátima and Séneca's cases support the literature (Richards & Miller, 2005; Schulberg, Cavanaugh, Aguilar, Cammack, Diaz, et al., 2007) in the predominant fear of academic writing in educational contexts. Their difficulties with English appeared related to the lack of accommodation of their educational services to

their CLD educational needs, producing negative impacts on their self-esteem, as Blanton (2005) describes. In both cases, the participants perceived their target discourse communities were out of reach (Pennycook, 1999) and only a few insiders provided them with keys to open the doors to their empowerment as L2 and C2 learners—the doors they later managed to walk through with resolution and tenacity.

Fátima's case provides a good example of the importance of social interaction in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978), in this case L2 acquisition, through the expertise of a more capable other (Ellis, 1985; Hatch, 1978; Ulichny, 1995; Wong-Fillmore, 1985), when she realized how her difficulties relating to L1-English speakers hindered her L2 acquisition,

*I could not identify with anyone. (...) I didn't click with Americans. (...) I didn't know where to go. (...) American people sometimes feel so weird to me. (...) I've had unpleasant experiences. (...) Maybe that was why I was so scared to learn English, because I think if I had had more English-speaking people around me before ... then, it would have been a little easier. But I couldn't find any English speakers I could actually connect with. (G)*

In Fátima's and Victoria's cases, their initial mentors, Mr. Pan and Mrs. Spencer, took into account—whether knowingly or not—Walqui's (2007) scaffolding suggestions for L2-English learners in school contexts. They both focused on specificity of performance, and “just enough” assistance “just in time” (p. 206).

On the other hand, Fátima and Séneca perceived they did not have enough occasions of written practice, or sufficient corrections of their mistakes, to help them develop academic English writing more adequately. Their difficulties with the L2 and culture shock apply to Herbert's (1995) warnings that for immigrant students scaffolding is even more crucial, because culture shock may hinder academic achievement. This is evident in Séneca's over-compensatory behavior and Fátima's physical illness.

**Maintaining L1 literacy and bilingualism.** The findings in this study support Chung (2006), not only in her critical-pedagogy perspective, but also as regards the importance of the home as a context for the biliteracy experience of the three participants, mainly in what

respects the maintenance of their L1 literacy. Moreover, the cases in this study support previous research (Lutz, 2004, 2003) on the benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy, and the paramount importance of the acquisition of academic English for educational attainment, while strengthening Spanish establishes healthy links to identity, family, and culture (González, 2001; Orellana, Ek, & Hernandez, 1999; Schecter & Bayley, 2002). Similarly, the participants' ordeals reflect Valdés's (1996) and Zentella's (2005) cultural clashes regarding family duties, focus on the communal success rather than individual achievement, and misconceptions about the value of education for L1-Spanish parents.

**American education.** In support of Cummins's (1999) view that the American educational system oppresses CLD students with deficiency-centered labels and practices, Victoria interpreted ELL to mean "there's something wrong with you." With Cummins, she saw biliteracy as a solution rather than a problem, and felt proud to be bilingual. She was aware of the focus given to the deficit in detriment of the assets CLD students bring to the educational table, and would rather be called a "dual-language" person. In the same way, Fátima felt "dumped" into an ESOL program that produced "the deficits [it was] ostensibly intended to reverse" (Cummins, 1999, p. 17). Fátima was aware the ESOL services she was being offered were actually a disservice, as they were not in tune with her educational goal of entering the university. Withdrawing from the ESOL program turned out to be more empowering than staying in it to "waste time" instead of developing her academic English skills. This illustrates the role American schools—and American society—have in the underachievement of CLD students (Cummins, 1994).

Cummins (1994) unveils how the power structure of American society limits the students' critical thinking, "constricting their options for cultural identity formation, and eliminating their capacity for transformative social engagement," (p. 298). In the cases presented in this study, however, the critical consciousness the participants brought with them from their original contexts worked in favor of their emancipation through transformative praxis. Cummins's critical view sets the stage for a thorough discussion in the light of critical pedagogy.



### The Discussion from Critical Pedagogy

The discussion from a Freirean viewpoint revolves around the axes of oppression, conscientization, praxis, dialogue, empowerment, hope, identity, and critical literacy. I present the connections of these axes with the study next.

**Oppression.** Freire (1970b) describes oppression as the exploitation of one by another, or as an impediment of someone's self-affirmation as a responsible person. Through symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), the oppressed are dehumanized by their oppressors, who see only themselves as human. The experiences depicted in this study are examples of how American education oppresses CLD learners by devaluing their cultural and linguistic capitals and, consequently, by silencing their voices (Freire & Freire, 1994). *"Here everything's managed in terms of ethnia and race with a sociopolitical objective: to categorize people, to manipulate them"* (Séneca). In the participants' perceptions, English stood as the weapon through which American education became oppressive to them and other CLD students. Even now, when they were in possession of that weapon, their accent was still used to mark them as different and inadequate. Victoria made this evident when she valued her lack of Spanish accent as a shield against prejudice,

They hear somebody speaking in a Hispanic accent; they don't even give you a chance. They already have a prejudice. So if I learned to speak English without the accent, I would have an opportunity to be myself, to get them to know *me*, without the prejudice.

Thanks to their critical conscience, the participants in this study read their world in oppressor-oppressed terms.

**Conscientization.** According to Freire (1970b), critical conscience can be reached through several paths (problem posing, dialogue, codifications, and generative themes). The participants' home cultures stressed all subject matter is a historical product susceptible of debate, which is the premise of Freire's problem posing. Their curiosity and thirst of knowledge drove them towards the formulation of questions, the first steps on the way to codification, dialogue, and empowerment. The dialogue practices encouraged at home and

school, in C1 and L1, were transferred to C2 and L2 as an accepted step. The participants saw themselves as equals to the teachers, administrators, and other representatives of the host culture, and were ready to make their voices heard through dialogue, standing in terms of equality with their interlocutors. They verbalized their representations in concrete forms, thus making use of codifications, to explain their situations and stand for themselves. Some examples are Victoria's question "What does a Cuban look like?," Fátima's explanation of "the beauty of being Latina," and Séneca's reading of the term "Hispanic" as a tool for "manipulation." They used oppressive events that concerned them as generative themes, thus transforming oppression into emancipation through critical conscience.

The participants' critical conscience allowed them the identification of oppressive traits in their new environment, the legitimation of the C2 knowledge, and the disempowerment and illegitimacy of their C1 knowledge (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Fernández Aguerre, 2007; Schechter, 2005). They were able to make the necessary connections between knowledge and power (Giroux 2010) to result in their empowerment and to change their world from oppression to academic achievement through praxis.

**Praxis.** Conscientization is the premise for praxis, i.e. the transformation of the oppressive elements of one's reality (Freire, 1970b), or in Kincheloe's words, an "action that is informed by social theory for emancipatory outcomes" (2008, p. 67). The participants in this study engaged in emancipatory praxis when, having understood their realities in oppressed-oppressor terms, they exercised their empowerment to find breakthrough paths that brought them closer to their academic goals and further from the oppression of compliance and underachievement.

**Dialogue.** A crucial element in Freirean thought appears in the three cases, dialogue based on respect (Freire, 1973). In this form of social praxis, sharing is the result of reflection and political action; for Fátima, with Mr. Pan and her doctoral advisor; for Victoria, Mrs. Spencer and the Jewish teacher who invited her to community theater rehearsals; and for Séneca, Ms. Lou-Lou. They engaged in genuine communication (Spener, 1990) with the participants, and showed them their trust (Heaney, 1995).

Victoria took dialogue further, into her engagement with the members of the host culture. She did not accept being stereotyped or labeled, and resorted to dialogue and respect as a way to teach her interlocutors how she expected to be treated, as an equal,

*It's not that I like conflict, but I will let you know, you're not going to bully me. It's ok, you know. Back up. You're over there, I'm over here, let's talk. (...) You're not going to just belittle me. You're not going to just do whatever you think you can. Just hold on a minute. Tell me what you think of me, what you need from me, and why you're treating me this way. Let's talk about it. Right on their face, no problem at all. Room or nor room, here I am.*

Dialogue and the respect it implies acted as a counter-hegemonic tool for liberation and equity (Apple, 1996).

**Empowerment.** As a result of the evaluation of power structures conscientization allows (Freire, 1970b), empowerment follows. The participants in this study are prototypes of empowerment, as they were able to read through the fog of oppression and saw their realities clearly in order to change them. Fátima rooted her empowerment in hope, which encouraged her never to give up. Séneca was well aware of his difficulties with English, so he found a new niche in instructional technology, where he felt able, acknowledged, and accomplished. Victoria suffered culture shock, but her conscientization restored her humanity, and she could stand as an equal in dialogue with host-culture interlocutors, to ask questions and demand answers for her empowerment. Empowerment made the participants' biliteracy experience a part of education as freedom, as they transformed their world for their emancipation.

**Hope.** An essential ingredient in Freirean pedagogy, hope "is based on the need for truth as an ethical quality of the struggle" (Freire & Freire, 1994, p. 8). Because in sight of oppression, inaction implies hopelessness and despair, when stemming from the reality of the struggle, hope fuels praxis. Fátima's case is an example of Freirean hope as she lived her dreams, through rage, into love, ready for the struggles ahead, and fueled by hope, with her motto, "*I just have to keep going.*"

**Identity.** As mentioned in Chapter 2, critical scholars (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991; Kubota, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pavlenko, 2001; Ricento, 2005) maintain the falseness of the assumption that CLD learners are willing to abandon their cultural and linguistic identities in favor of the host culture and language. The cases in this study show identity issues are far more complex than that, involving duality, rivalry, and integration of identity through the jungles of culture shock and into a functional equilibrium of bilingualism and bicultural accommodation. The cases also support the vision that belonging to similar-culture L1 communities helps ease culture shock and promotes learner empowerment. In Séneca's words, "The day you start questioning your identity and start wanting to become who you are not, that day you stop being yourself and cease being somebody."

**Political clarity.** Séneca stands as a clear example of this Freirean concept. A premise for political praxis, political clarity pre-exists action, and permits a critical reflection "on day-to-day facts, and to the extent that we transcend our sensibilities ... so as to progressively gain a more rigorous understanding of the facts" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 91). Séneca applied his critical consciousness not only to describe reality or for his own empowerment, but with the higher purpose of achieving social change,

*I believe [your study] will reveal many things that have been going on for a while but haven't been exposed in a formal study. (...) I've also liked it because I'm interested in social issues, the exercise of power, and social mobility, which are all very determined by language. (...) All along, I've enjoyed our conversations, because they led me to reflect upon my journey and its value. It helped my own growth and it'll help others, which I feel is a very valuable social initiative, to which I am pleased to contribute.*

Freire considered political clarity a necessary characteristic of emancipatory educators.

**Critical literacy.** The participants' critical literacy—by self or by proxy, as in the case of Fátima's withdrawal from ESOL services by her parents—allowed them to identify contradictions in oppressor-oppressed terms, i.e. to read the world and transform it for their own emancipation. Explicitly, by unveiling relationships of power and inequality in their contexts, the participants' critical literacy allowed them to extricate what knowledge, skills,

strategies, and practices were the most empowering and transforming for them, in their contexts and circumstances. In Freire's words, critical literacy permitted "the reinvention of power" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 55) relationships in their world; it allowed for critical analysis of the dominant culture and made transformation possible (Giroux, 1988b). What defines these participants—probably distinguishes them from other bilinguals, and saves them from the statistics of doom—is their critical literacy.

Unfortunately, how the participants developed critical literacy was out of the scope of this study. It would be interesting to dig deeper into those mechanisms, find ways to systematically encourage them in other L1-Spanish CLD learners and infuse them into American classrooms for the true realization of education for all.

### **Contributions of the Study**

**Routes of empowerment.** The study has found the following routes of empowerment for the growing L1-Spanish student population in the U.S., based on the breakthrough paths the cases showed as supportive of academic achievement.

1. Assess and support the level of conscientization in the home environment.
2. Facilitate critical literacy in the CLD learners and their families.
3. Ensure each and every CLD learner is mentored by an educator who is a host-culture insider, an agent of conscientization, and an advocate of emancipation for their mentees.
4. Ensure teacher preparation in America provides not only competence in ESOL methods but also educates future and present teachers to be respectful of all students' symbolic capitals, especially those different from their own.

**Theoretical contributions.** The study expanded and deepened previous research on Spanish-English biliteracy, CLD learners, the connections between L1-Spanish CLD students and academic achievement, and their empowerment. It found these three L1-Spanish educators perceived their biliteracy experience as meaningful for their identity and empowerment. Thus, the study contributed to the consolidation of critical pedagogy as an appropriate framework for the understanding of biliteracy issues, against oppression and in favor of emancipatory biliteracy.

**Methodological contributions.** The use of qualitative methods provided rich contributions to educators and researchers. The study showed the possible advantages and disadvantages of digital technologies as qualitative data collection techniques. This gave case-study methodology rich data-collection and on-going analysis tools. In particular, the use of e-journals in the form of blogs, e-portfolios for artifact collection, digital recording and transcription software, teleconference for interviews, and a researcher's reflective e-journal showed new avenues for technology-infused qualitative research methods. The use of a critical interpretive approach for on-going data analysis supported the application of the dialectical method in qualitative educational inquiry (Ollman, 2008).

**Practical contributions.** The study contributed useful information to policymakers for their decisions concerning L1-Spanish CLD learners. The cases of these bilingual educators encouraged the acknowledgment of bilingual educators' unique view as emancipatory agents for CLD learners in America. It also showed how the biliteracy experience of CLD learners impacted their academic achievement and their professional choices.

**Political contributions.** Also, the study raised an awareness of the value of L2-English bilingual educators' biliteracy experience, and, consequently, allowed for the recognition of bilingual educators' unique au fait view as agents for the education and empowerment of CLD learners in American schools. Critical literacy research strives to discern what knowledge, skills, strategies, and practices are the most empowering and transforming, for what learners, in what contexts, and under what conditions. A critical approach to the biliteracy experience of L1-Spanish CLD learners can bring relationships of power and inequality to light and clear the way for multiplicity (the decentering of hegemonic views) and transformation, i.e., "the reinvention of power" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 55) relationships. Considering the participants in this study were high achievers, among the few who dodge the statistics of doom for Hispanic academic achievement, what is left for those who fail? The political path to attain equity in American education goes on. This study stands as evidence to come one step closer.

### Emancipatory Praxis

In tune with the critical-pedagogy framework in this study, suggestions for praxis are a matter of course. I present an open list of recommendations, grouped for the educational practice and research fields.

#### Suggestions for Educational Praxis

The cases in this study highlighted a number of experiences the participants perceived as conducive to their academic achievement in the U.S. In sight of the participants' breakthrough paths, I include some ideas worth considering for implementation in areas where L1-Spanish CLD learners and their educators could profit from them.

**The host-culture insider as mentor.** In the group interview, Fátima offered this piece of advice for other CLD learners like her, "*Find your anchor. Have someone that believes in your potential, encourages you, and doesn't let you down when you're frustrated or you don't want to move forward, brings you down to earth and helps you find a way out to go on fighting.*" Mentorship programs focused on the role of host-culture insiders as mentors of CLD learners may train educators and community members to help students find their way in their new environment, diminish culture shock, and support academic achievement.

**Let's go out.** Victoria's experience going to the community theatre rehearsals with one of her teachers was empowering for her. She remembered with emotion her teacher took her, to these little plays at the neighborhood community theatre in English, a Jewish playhouse. She would take me like after school in the evening or like at the weekend on a Saturday. I went a few times. And she took an interest. And she would take me to just look at the rehearsals or help with make up or costumes or whatever, just be there. And it was wonderful.

Other students may benefit from such outings, organized by school staff in a personalized way. In Freire's (1997) words, "It is important to remember that it is not from what is done in the classroom alone that [the teacher-mentor] will be able to support the students in reconstructing their position in the world" ( p. 321).

**Culture shelter.** The participants volunteered some advice for other CLD learners like them and asked me to include them in my report. Some of those orbited around how to overcome culture shock,

*Feel better to do better. You need to feel well to do well. When I felt a lot better, I did a lot better. (Séneca)*

Overcome sadness. When you're having a depressive moment, take it as a cloud, it's going to come and then it's going to go. Don't get anxious about it. (Fátima)

*[Your family] are always there to get your back, to hold your hand, and to help you keep going ... fortunately, because otherwise everything would nose dive; always do it with your family's support" (Séneca).*

These CLD learners found it hard to connect with their host-culture peers. Probably, they are not the only ones. The creation of school or community culture clubs or cafés may provide students who feel culturally isolated and their families a feeling of belonging, support, and acceptance.

**Empowerment workshops.** Other pieces of advice volunteered by the participants revolved around ways of empowerment,

Do it! Every step that I take is an entire process of fear and doubt and questioning my ability, questioning myself. But when it comes to taking the step, I jump and do it! (Fátima)

*Treasure your accomplishments. I would pay attention to things accomplished. Value every achievement. Value the effort you invested and don't give up. That generates a feeling of success and helps you keep going. (Séneca)*

*Keep your head up. My new tactic not to get stressed is to do things well, help those around me, and keep walking with my head up, high up! (Fátima, G).*

Empowerment workshops could give both CLD learners and their educators an opportunity to put their critical consciousness to use, or develop it, and derive emancipatory praxis.

**Challenge me, Teacher.** Teacher education programs should make a point of raising awareness of the importance of presenting challenges to students in order to feed their



empowerment as learners. This does not mean to make things unnecessarily difficult, or to make them boringly easy, but to challenge students in a way that promotes the development of their autonomy to learn.

**Please, correct me.** Fátima and Séneca identified one of the causes of difficulties with academic English writing as the insufficient corrections and feedback in their papers. This is how Séneca explained it,

*The problem is they won't correct you here. It's the American culture. Everything's too lenient, too masked. (...) We can't learn on our own what we don't know we lack. (...) They tell you "that sounds perfect, that's very good, that's excellent." Then, the day of your presentation (...) they spew all your errors at your face, all you've done wrong and all you could have improved. That's too late. (...) ...All kind of marks and corrections, with constructive criticism ... that's what one needs in order to learn. (...) They're all experts with PhDs in English ... people who know about writing, so you trust them. But they won't make any thorough corrections, no way. But then when I give my documents to the committee, they tell me, "This is wrong. What are you saying here? Why are you saying this this way?" So that cultural component ... that they won't tell you "No, this is wrong ... or change it here" but it's all so light, so lax, so courteous, and so very polite. It's a double morality. Sometimes I wonder whether what they intend is to let us do everything wrong, because they think, if we correct him and he gets it right, then he'll come and take my place.*

L1-Spanish CLD learners expect to be corrected, to be told what can be improved clearly so they can improve it and learn. Therefore, they may interpret a teacher's leniency not as respect for their cultural differences, but as neglect of their possibilities of improvement and attainment. This is also connected to the next issue.

**Culture-shock shimmy.** American educators would benefit from a deeper knowledge about culture shock in CLD students, and so would their students and their families. A higher awareness about culture shock, its symptoms, and outcomes in our schools might help prevent our CLD learners from feeling stereotyped, as Séneca made clear in his advice, "Expect being

*stereotyped. Certainly! Fancy telling people you're from Colombia. You immediately become a member of guerrilla or drug traffic.*” Higher awareness of culture shock may help our CLD students shake it off sooner and with lesser consequences.

### **Suggestions for Future Research Praxis**

What follows are some draft questions inspired by this study, and intended to encourage future research praxis. The numbers aim at facilitating reference, and do not denote any hierarchies.

1. In what ways and under what conditions might critical literacy facilitate empowerment for the academic achievement of L1-Spanish CLD learners in the U.S.?
2. In what ways and under what conditions do L1-Spanish learners who are high achievers in American education develop their critical literacy?
3. In what ways, if any, do digital technologies add to the wellbeing of immigrant and international students through distance family support?
4. In what ways, if any, is the relevance of digital technologies in biliteracy experiences related to age and country of origin?
5. In what ways, if any, do gender roles impact the biliteracy experiences of L1-Spanish students?
6. In what ways, if any, does the positioning in the continua of biliteracy model relate to different types of culture-contact adaptations?
7. How can American school counselors improve their preparation to serve growing multicultural student populations?
8. In what ways, if any, does code-switching relate to cultural identity and to culture-contact adaptation types?

### **My Insights**

The months elapsed since the proposal defense (November 7, 2011) have been filled not only with hard work, but also with unexpected obstacles, pleasant surprises, and feelings of frustration and accomplishment. In this section, I share some of my insights during the development of the study.

## On Online Methods

**Blogs and data-collection flow.** Having online access to the participants' blogs permitted daily monitoring of their progress, so that I could acknowledge their contributions and encourage them as needed. They could also choose to blog by email or from their mobile phones—two convenient options available in Blogger.

**Blogs and continual confirmation of consent.** Because the participants were owners and sole authors of their blogs, they had the choice to stop sharing their blogs with me at any time. This feature of online data collection acted as a continual confirmation of consent to participate in the study.

**Email over blogs.** The purpose of the blogs was for the participants to enter their narratives in e-journal form. This use of blogs proved inconvenient for the participants in this study. Not frequent bloggers outside this research, they resorted to what they use every day with more ease than blogs, i.e., email. This led me to hypothesize blogs could have worked better with participants who were bloggers before being asked to use blogs for data collection. In the same way, I extend this assumption to any other tech-tool: the participants will be more likely to use the tool successfully for data collection if they have used the tool before for other purposes and feel comfortable with its daily use.

**IRB blues.** Going through the IRB process was the first obstacle online methods presented. Actually, the obstacle was not the online methods per se, but the assumptions I had made about other people's familiarity with life online. I can describe myself as a tech-geek, which may be a positive aspect until I assume everyone else lives attached to digital gizmos like I do. I should have been aware an IRB revision chair may not be acquainted with the characteristics of the online methods I proposed to use. My lack of awareness caused unnecessary delays in the IRB process, because my protocol did not spell out clearly enough how online methods work. No knowledge about technology should be taken for granted—that is a lesson learned—and detailed explanations should be made available to reviewers in the IRB protocols, so that no unnecessary delays occur because of misunderstandings about the capabilities of e-methods, especially concerning the confidentiality and integrity of the data.

**Skype phone and the introspection boost.** As I referred above (see Chapter 3), the participants in this study were in charge of scheduling the time and length of our interviews. They usually chose the evenings, and, to my surprise, our sessions usually lasted far longer than planned into several hours. In time, two of the three participants made comments on the introspection friendliness of our interviews. They explained their being on the phone while I was on Skype gave them the chance to lie comfortably in their recliner, bed, or bathtub, which seemed to make introspection easier than in a face-to-face situation. Séneca expressed *“I feel I’m talking to myself.”* Likewise, Fátima described *“I can close my eyes and all these memories flood my mind.”* What they said brought echoes of my incursions in Freudian psychoanalysis. In my e-journal I wrote, “Maybe the absence of the face-to-face tension allows for a kind of interviewer-interviewee interaction similar to the one of the psychoanalyst and the patient in psychoanalysis, where there is no eye contact, and the stream of thoughts flows.” This possibility may deserve further research.

#### **On Becoming a Qualitative Researcher**

Of the many differences qualitative inquiry has with quantitative research, the one that impacted me most was the changes the former produces on the researcher. Being a qualitative researcher implies a development into something initially unknown with each study, a transformation into a different, hopefully improved, researcher. Because this was my dissertation study, the metamorphosis was even more radical. I had to start by understanding my growth from teacher into researcher would involve discovery as well as pain.

As I felt I was losing my teacher-self into the researcher, I was relieved to recognize the advocate was intact. I clasped my advocate-self and held on to it, whenever the teacher-self felt threatened. That helped. It brought some peace into what had first appeared to be a battlefield. In time, the open-mindedness of the teacher prevailed, and trust grew for that suspicious new me who was trying to gain center stage in my identity. The teacher, more mature and seasoned, guided the impetuous researcher into a contained, guarded path—one with the guardrails of several decades in the classrooms and communities of L1-Spanish

learners of English. The teacher was safe. The researcher was free to grow. The advocate supervised the process.

Why so much hassle? Because this was about becoming a qualitative researcher, a more self-threatening, self-impacting, self-changing, and self-proving task. The threat of the vanishing teacher seemed to be under control. For other threats, no control was possible. Would I accept to surrender control over who I would become at the end of this study? Was the Ph.D. carrot worth it? There was certainly more at stake than three letters after my name. It was whom that name would denote that was going to become another.

I remembered my childhood dream of becoming an astronaut to visit other worlds; and my happiness in my 20's, 30's, and 40's as a world traveler who could say "I've been there." I welcomed the opportunity to travel again, in my 50's, into an unknown universe, to visit the worlds inhabited by my participants, and then say "I've been there" and tell others about it. I felt transported to previous reincarnations in search for method acting, something that would allow me to become the participants while being myself, but an open myself, open to change and growth, open to the intercourse and impregnation needed for conception and birth. I was ready.

### **On Qualitative Research Ethics**

Having dealt with all the encumbrances about me, I could now concentrate on the real focus of my research, the participants and their experiences. I knew I was asking a huge lot of these three people. How could I be respectful of their time and endeavors while requesting interview schedules and diversions from their busy lives? What I did was take the bull by the horns. I openly told the participants about my worries and put them in control of the ticking clock. I made very sure they felt they could stop an interview, blog writing, and their participation in the study whenever they felt like it. I knew this was about them. Each of them knew it, too. As a result, interviews that were planned to last between 30 and 60 minutes, lasted two or three hours. I had to be ready to place everything else on hold to be able to be all there with each of them as they opened their perceptions and experiences to me, together with their hearts.

Building rapport with the participants was not just a necessary step in the data collection process; it was a series of events in each of their lives and in mine. Each interview, each email, each reading of their blogs brought us closer. I felt a connection with my study participants, got angry at the people who had hurt them, appreciated those who had supported them, and admired those who had advocated for their success. In this quest, they were the heroes. Consequently, I was careful not to include anything they disclosed under that rapport without their consent, by means of thorough member checks. This avoided what Duncombe and Jessop (2002) call “faking friendship” (p. 107) for the commercialization of human feeling. In contrast, the shortened social distance between us allowed for empathy, making rapport egalitarian and reciprocal (Oakley, 1981).

### **On Advocacy**

As a critical educator, I am, of course, committed to advocacy. Consequently, I systematically ask myself the tough Freirean question, what is the hidden history of otherness contained within my narrative of liberation? Who do I exclude, marginalize, or oppress? And then, I am determined to walk the path from advocacy to action; first, finding the lost pieces of the puzzle and filling the gaps with hope; then, exerting political clarity into emancipatory praxis.

The multiple oppressive traits the participants in this study faced in our educational system cannot be coincidences. Rather, our educational system operates in a way only functional to certain dominant interests. The “double morality” unveiled by Séneca may go deeper into the roots of our educational policies, where they become entangled with immigration policies, politics, and societal Darwinism—not to call them discrimination and segregation—none of them representative of the values that make America proud.

If our educational system has traits of domestication instead of liberation (Freire, 1972a, 1972b) of CLD students, our educational agents should support their students’ conscientization to allow for their reading of the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987) and its contradictions in order to resist educational oppression (Freire, 1970b) through emancipatory praxis. Conscientization regarding the CLD biliteracy experience as an objective of teacher

education could be a good start to bring about liberation from those oppressive educational and societal traits.

### **Final Thoughts**

In this study, I explored the perceptions of three L1-Spanish CLD high achievers on their biliteracy journeys to become educators in the U. S. Their journeys were successful but not easy—obstacles were steep and many: culture shock, academic English writing, prejudice and disrespect against them, and information chasms resistant to bridging. They managed to break through, thanks to the support of their family and L1-community, the interventions of host-culture insiders as mentors, and gained access to useful information. Their critical conscience permitted their empowerment, and they decided to fight for change through the advocacy of others by becoming educators.

With those findings, I confronted previous research, and I addressed any gained insights relevant for educational practices and research. There are still unanswered questions about how to create conditions to facilitate critical literacy in our learners, about what conditions those are, and what digital technologies can contribute to the wellbeing of immigrant and international students through distance family support. In this way, I hope to have brought some interesting revelations to the attention of educational researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners, and helped open the door to the inclusion of biliteracy objectives in American classrooms as transformative goals for biliteracy research, pedagogy, assessment, and empowerment.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Instruments and Guides

## Contact for Referrals

Dear X,

I'm trying to find participants for my dissertation study *From Limited-English-Proficient to Educator: Four Spanish-English Biliteracy Journeys* (eIRB #6420). If you can think of a college graduate who may bring to mind the profile below, please refer them to me [evisedod@mail.usf.edu](mailto:evisedod@mail.usf.edu) or to the study website at <https://sites.google.com/site/elizabethvisedo/codes> for further info about the study. Potential candidates...

1. ...are speakers of Spanish as a native language
2. ...were classified as ELL, ESL, LEP, or LESA by the American educational system at any point during their education
3. ...graduated from a public college in the US with a GPA > 3.01
4. ...work or intend to work in education in the US

Thank you so much for helping me at this crucial stage in my dissertation process!

Best,  
Elizabeth Visedo, Doctoral Candidate  
ESOL Instructor - Graduate Associate

## Participant Selection Interview Protocols

1. In the questionnaire you wrote you came to the US in (YEAR). Where have you lived since then?
2. Do you have any plans to relocate (again) in the future?
3. In the questionnaire you also wrote your educational background. How similar or different is your family's background?
4. Were your parents teachers like you? What do they do?
5. How about your siblings? What do they do?

## Online Tutorials

Tutorial	Link
How to create a blog	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rA4s3wN_vK8">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rA4s3wN_vK8</a> <a href="http://www.blogger.com/tour_start.g">http://www.blogger.com/tour_start.g</a>
Blogging from your mobile phone	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSa3a56G3-g&amp;feature=relmfu">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSa3a56G3-g&amp;feature=relmfu</a>
Tele-conference software download	<a href="http://www.skype.com/intl/en-us/get-skype">http://www.skype.com/intl/en-us/get-skype</a>
Tele-conferences	<a href="https://support.skype.com/en-us/">https://support.skype.com/en-us/</a>
Member check	<a href="http://www.google.com/google-d-s/documents/">http://www.google.com/google-d-s/documents/</a>

## Participant- Selection Questionnaire

Section 1														
<i>Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire. Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge.</i>														
<i>Please highlight the answer/s that best approximates your situation. Type in the spaces provided.</i>														
01. Date of Birth →	Month:	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	Year:
02. What is your native language?	English		Spanish		Other (Please specify):									
03. Gender →	Male		Female											
04. In what country were you born?														
05. Length of residence in the US, in years plus months →	Years						Months							
06. Have you obtained a teaching degree in the US? →	Yes										No			
07. If you replied "Yes" in (06), did you obtain your degree at USF? →	Yes										No			
08. If you replied "No" in (07), please specify where you obtained your degree:														
09. If you replied "Yes" in (06), what degree have you obtained?	BA	MAT	MEd	Other (Please specify):										
10. What is the specific area of your degree?	Early Childhood			Elementary		Secondary		Higher		Adult				
	Special		Gifted		Other (Please specify):									
11. When did you obtain your teaching degree?	Month:	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	Year:
12. What educational level do you serve at present?	None		Kinder		1-2		3-4		Other (Please specify):					
	5-6		7-8		9-10		11-12							
13. Do you intend to further your education in the future? →	Yes										No			
14. Please, explain why and how, or why not.														
Section 2														
<i>Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge.</i>														
<i>The following questions refer to your literacy experiences in Spanish and in English.</i>														
<i>Please highlight the answer/s that best approximates your situation or provide a short answer. Type in the spaces provided.</i>														
15. Where did you learn to read in Spanish?	At home		Other(Please specify):											
	At school													
16. How old were you when you started learning to read in Spanish?	Who taught you?													
17. Where did you learn to read in English?	At home		Other(Please specify):											
	At school													
18. Where did you learn to write in Spanish?	At home		Other(Please specify):											
	At school													

19. Where did you learn to write in English?	At home	Other(Please specify):		
	At school			
20. Were you identified as culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), English as a second language (ESL), English language learner (ELL), limited English proficient (LEP), or limited English speaking ability (LESA)?	Yes	No	If yes, in what grade/s?	
21. If you answered Yes above, in what grade did you exit that category?				
22. How often did you have access to a computer at school?	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Seldom or Never
23. How often did you have access to a computer at home?	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Seldom or Never
24. How often did you access Internet at school?	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Seldom or Never
25. How often did you access Internet at home?	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Seldom or Never
26. How often did you access the Internet somewhere else?	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Seldom or Never
Where was it?				
<b>Section 3</b>				
<i>This section is about digital technologies (for example, computers, laptops, iPads, iPods, Internet, etc.) How would you characterize your skills for:</i>				
27. solving technical problems on your own?				
28. learning how to use technologies?				
29. keeping up with new technologies?				
30. using different technologies?				
31. keeping safe on the internet?				
32. applying netiquette?				
<i>This section is about technologies used for reading and writing.</i>				
33. What technologies do you use most frequently for your own reading and writing?				
34. How often do you resort to technology for your own reading and writing?				
35. Do you know what technologies K-12 children use outside school, how often, and for what purpose?				

**Thank you!**

(Instrument-assessment participants received the following end page.)

**Dear Pilot Study Volunteer**

Please use this page for your suggestions on how to improve these questionnaires.

**Thank you!**



## Protocol Samples

### *Individual Interview Protocols (General)*

1. In your posting dated [mm/dd] you made reference to [add quote]. Could you expand on that?
2. What did you mean exactly when you wrote [quote]?
3. Do you remember anything else you would like to share with me about the circumstances/context/protagonists/background of that [event]?
4. How did that [event] contribute to your present perspective?

### *Protocol for the first interview with Fátima*

1. Was the B.A. you obtained in 2004 a teaching degree?
2. Were the ELLs in Bee School mostly Spanish speakers?
3. Could you expand on your EFL learning experience in Peru?
4. Was Mamá Ekito your mother's mother or your father's?
5. How were you classified as ELL? Did you take a test?
6. What was the worst obstacle to enter UG?
7. Is your husband Peruvian or American?

### *Protocol for the third interview with Séneca*

1. When you say you felt better, did you feel better because you were doing better, or were you doing better because you felt better, or was there another reason?
2. How long had you been here when you started the master's?
3. Did you encounter any negative reactions to your accent?
4. What led you to decide to enter the Education Specialist program? Why in Instructional Technology?
5. Those two identities you mention, are they balanced or does one prevail over the other? What does that depend on? Are those identities connected to roles or to something else?

## Participant Guides

### *Artifact e-portfolio guide*

#### *Dear Participant:*

Your artifact e-portfolio is an opportunity to support your biliteracy autobiography with relevant evidence in the form of images, audio, texts, video, or art, past or present; or any other contribution you believe will help others understand your perspective of the biliteracy experience. Feel free and get creative!

#### *Guiding Questions for Artifacts*

What evidence can support the narrative of your biliteracy journey? For example:

1. Photographs of places, events, and/or people?
2. Music and/or songs?
3. Texts, books, poems, drama?
4. Films and/or videos?
5. Paintings and/or sculptures?
6. Any other contribution you believe will help others understand your perspective of the biliteracy experience?

You can upload these to your blog, make reference to them, or email them to me. Remember I will always be happy to assist you along the way. Do not hesitate to contact me with your questions and comments.

### *e-Journal guide*

#### **Dear Participant:**

Your biliteracy autobiography is a narration of the unique experiences you lived regarding both Spanish and English--a journey only you can describe. For that reason, the questions that follow are intended to inspire you and trigger your memories. You do not need to address all the questions or to follow any specific sequence in your journal. Daily journal entries are encouraged because writing daily generally makes writing easier to manage. As you write, memories are likely to start popping up in your mind in random order. Just enter your thoughts as they come to you, in Spanish, English, or both. Remember I will always be happy to assist you along the way. Do not hesitate to contact me with your questions and comments. Happy writing!

1. How would you describe your language heritage?
2. How are your family and ethnic histories aligned with your language heritage?
3. In your journey towards biliteracy, what special settings, events, people, texts, and tools do you perceive as crucial in your experience?
4. Describe how any special settings, events, people, texts, or tools influenced your commitment to learning Spanish and English.
5. Explain how any special settings, events, people, texts, or tools relate to your use of Spanish and English.
6. Some bilingual autobiographers describe feeling a "Spanish side" and an "English side" of their personalities. How about you? Describe whether you perceive Spanish and English sides in your personality, roles, actions, or thoughts.
7. In your experience, how have English and Spanish stood opposed or become allied to one another?
8. What do you associate with each language?
9. How did/do Spanish and English interact with your use of technology, your academic achievement, and your success in American society?
10. How are Spanish and English related to your identity?
11. How did language impact the evolution of your private/public self?
12. Have your language choices ever become a political act, that is, a means of positioning yourself in relation to power?
13. Have you ever exaggerated or lied about your ability to speak, read, or write in Spanish or in English?
14. Think of all the roles you play. How are Spanish, English, and biliteracy connected to each role? How did those associations come to be?
15. In your lived experience, what losses and gains do you associate with Spanish, with English, and with biliteracy?
16. What are your first memories of being read to and reading in Spanish? And in English?
17. In your experience, what elements currently influence your choice of Spanish or English when you read and write? And when you speak?
18. Have you ever experienced resistance to speaking, reading, writing, or learning in Spanish or English?
19. Have you ever experienced a love-hate relationship with Spanish, English, or your biliteracy?
20. When and how did you become aware of the advantages/disadvantages regarding your Spanish literacy, English literacy, and biliteracy skills?

#### **Blog tutorial**

If you are not familiar with blogs, here are some links that may be of help.

How to create a blog: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rA4s3wN\\_vK8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rA4s3wN_vK8)  
and/or [http://www.blogger.com/tour\\_start.g](http://www.blogger.com/tour_start.g)

***Informed Consent***

By sharing your blog with me you will be renewing your acceptance of the terms of the Informed Consent Form for this study, which you have signed and returned to the Principal Investigator.

***Research Questions***

The focus of the study is the experience of biliteracy from the perspective of four participants, including you, who are native speakers of Spanish, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners of English, who graduated college as high achievers (GPA > 3.01) and became educators in the U.S.. The main question that should guide your participation is: **What elements constitute your perspective on the relevance of your biliteracy experience in order to become a CLD educator in the U.S.?** The sub-questions are: **What factors are key to describe your biliteracy experience? What relevance did your biliteracy experience have for you to become an educator in the U.S.? What impact, if any, did digital technologies have on your biliteracy experience?**



## Appendix B: eIRB Documents

### Informed Consent

Study ID:Pro00006420 Date Approved: 2/2/2012 Expiration Date: 2/2/2013



#### Informed Consent Form

##### Informed Consent to Participate in Research Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

##### IRB Study # 6420

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study.

We are asking you to take part in a research study that is called: From Limited-English-Proficient to Educator: Four Spanish-English Biliteracy Journeys. The research will be done fully online.

The person who is in charge of this research study is Elizabeth Visedo. This person is called the Principal Investigator (P.I.). However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge.

##### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to gain a deep understanding of the biliteracy lived experiences of four L1-Spanish educators from their own perspectives. The study is part of Elizabeth Visedo's doctoral dissertation.

##### *Study Procedures*

1. If you agree to volunteer as a potential participant in this study, you will be asked to download and sign this form and email it back to the P.I. In order to become a candidate for the study, you should return the signed informed consent form to the P.I. by email within a week of its reception.
2. After the P.I. receives your signed informed consent, she will email you two questionnaires in which you will provide information for selection purposes. She will ask you to complete the questionnaires electronically and return it to her by email.
3. This screening process will search for four participants who:
  - Are native speakers of Spanish
  - Have been classified as culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), English as a second language (ESL), English language learner (ELL), limited English proficient (LEP), or limited English speaking ability (LESA) by the US school system at some point during their education
  - Are college graduates with GPA > 3.01
  - Work or intend to have a career in education
4. If your responses to the questionnaires correspond to the population of interest in this study, the P.I. will need to interview you for about 10 or 15 minutes, over the phone, chat, audio-conference, or video-conference, as the last step in the participant selection process. In this first interview, she may ask you about complementary details for the information you provided in the questionnaire and about your time availability.
5. There is a chance your demographic characteristics are different from what the study demands. Then, you may not be selected as a participant.
6. If you are selected and agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to create a private blog under the P.I. guidance to write your biliteracy autobiography by means of an e-journal and artifact e-portfolios to be kept in your blog. You will share your blog with the P.I. for the duration of the study. It will be up to you to inform the P.I. when you have provided all the information you are ready to share for the study.
7. In the meantime, the P.I. will also contact you to interview you via video-conference in order to clarify or deepen the information you provide in your blog. Each online interview will last from 30 to 60 minutes and will be held at a date and time arranged between you and the P.I. All data collection will be done online, including blogs and video-conferences for about 40 days during 2012.
8. Video-conferences will be audio-recorded and the recordings transcribed for their analysis. Only the P.I. will have access to the audio recordings, but other people in the research team may have access to the transcripts. The digital recording files will be stored in the P.I.'s safe box for two years and then they will be deleted and the discs containing them will be formatted. The transcripts will have your self-chosen pseudonym, not your real name, and will not be linked to you in any way. Please, sign this informed consent only if you agree to be interviewed and audio-recorded.



Study ID:Pro00006420 Date Approved: 2/2/2012 Expiration Date: 2/2/2013

#### ***Alternatives***

You can choose not to volunteer as a potential candidate for participation in this study and not to participate in this research if you were selected as a participant.

#### ***Benefits***

We don't know if you will get any benefits by taking part in this study, other than the satisfaction of helping to further educational research and higher awareness of your lived experience.

#### ***Risks or Discomfort***

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

#### ***Compensation***

We will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study. However, after the study is completed, you will receive encouragement and guidance to use the information you provided to write and publish your own biliteracy autobiography.

#### ***Confidentiality***

We must keep your study records as confidential as possible. The private blog you create is yours and you are its sole author. You have the control over who you share your blog with and for how long. This study requires that you share your blog with the P.I. only and delete it after the study is over. Electronic copies of your postings and your video-conference audio files will be stored in the P.I.'s personal safe box for five years, in accordance with USF policy for retention of study records. The records will be accessed only to transcribe and analyze their contents. Your anonymity will be ensured at all times.

However, certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The research team, including the P.I. and all other research staff.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.) These include:
  - The University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the staff that work for the IRB. Other individuals who work for USF that provide other kinds of oversight may also need to look at your records.
  - The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are.

#### ***Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal***

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study, to please the investigator or the research staff. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your student status or job status.

#### ***Questions, Concerns, or Complaints***

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Elizabeth Visedo at 813-333-5195.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida at 813-974-5638.

If you experience an unanticipated problem related to the research call Elizabeth Visedo at 813-333-5195.



Study ID:Pro00006420 Date Approved: 2/2/2012 Expiration Date: 2/2/2013

***Consent to Take Part in this Research Study***

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please download, sign, and return the form to the P.I. by email, only if the following statements are true.

**I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have kept a copy of this form with me.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study



**eIRB Approval**



DIVISION OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE  
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669  
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799  
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-5618

February 2, 2012

Elizabeth Visedo  
Secondary Education

RE: **Expedited Approval** for Initial Review  
IRB#: Pro00006420  
Title: From Limited-English-Proficient to Educator: Four Spanish-English Biliteracy Journeys

Dear Elizabeth Visedo:

On 2/2/2012 the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above referenced protocol. Please note that your approval for this study will expire on 2/2/2013.

Approved Items:  
Protocol Document(s):

[Protocol 2](#)                      1/30/2012 4:25 PM                      0.02

**Consent/Assent Documents:**

Name	Modified	Version
<a href="#">Informed Consent Form.pdf</a>	2/2/2012 10:35 AM	0.01

Please use the stamped/watermarked consent form found under the Attachment Tab.

Please note, the informed consent/assent documents are valid during the period indicated by the official, IRB-Approval stamp located on the form. Valid consent must be documented on a copy of the most recently IRB-approved consent form.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

- (6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
- (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,



John A. Schinka, PhD, Chairperson  
USF Institutional Review Board

Cc: Various Menzel, CCRP  
USF IRB Professional Staff

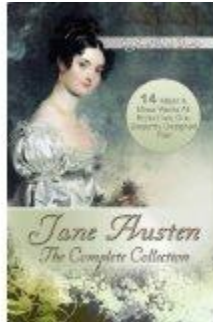
## Appendix C: Samples of Data and their Analyses

## Samples of Artifacts

Fátima Film - Casablanca  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1\\_a57ZNU6o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_a57ZNU6o)

Song - Sinatra  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yqGujr2-Jw>

Books



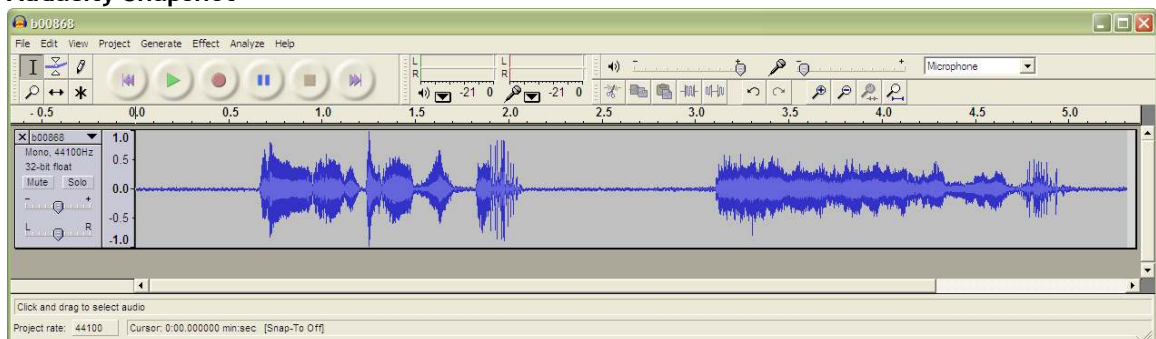
Séneca Video - Come as you are by Nirvana  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vabnZ9-ex7o>

Victoria Cartoon - Popeye the Sailor  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cdkc91wx3NQ>

Books



## Audacity Snapshot



Audacity simplifies editing audio files.

## From Questionnaire to Interview Snapshot

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire. Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge.

Please highlight the answer's that best approximates your situation. Type in the spaces provided.

01. Date of Birth → Month: 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 **10** 11 12 Year: **1982** Comment [EV1]: Age: 29 years old

02. What is your native language? English **Spanish** Other (Please specify):

03. Gender → Male **Female**

04. In what country were you born? **Peru**

05. Length of residence in the US, in years plus months → **Years 11** **Months 8** Comment [EV2]: Age of arrival: 1577

06. Have you obtained a teaching degree in the United States? → **Yes** No

07. If you replied "Yes" in (06), did you obtain your degree at USF? → Yes **No**

08. If you replied "No" in (07), please specify where you obtained your degree: **UF**

09. If you replied "Yes" in (06), what degree have you obtained? **BA** MAT **MEd** Other (Please specify):

10. What is the specific area of your degree? Early Childhood Elementary Secondary Higher Adult  
Special Gifted Other (Please specify): **ESOL**

11. When did you obtain your teaching degree? Month: 01 02 03 04 **05** 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 Year: **2009** Comment [EV3]: So the MEd was from 2009 to 2011?

12. What educational level do you serve at present? None Kinder 1-2 3-4 Other (Please specify): **Undergraduates before that** Comment [EV4]: Which programs?  
5-6 7-8 9-10 11-12 **9-11** Comment [EV5]: What subject?

13. Do you intend to further your education in the future? → **Yes** No

Page: 1 of 86 | Words: 30,053 | 100%

Note how I used the body of the document for color coding and the comments on the margin for initial codes and preparation of consequent interview protocols.

## Victoria's e-Journal Snapshot

04/16/12

I love being bi-lingual. Yesterday I was attending Divine Mercy Sunday Service at church and the program was printed bi-lingually in English and Spanish. Although, there were just a handful of us there who could read Spanish, it made me feel so good that I could read and understand both languages. Those of us who read along and sang and chanted in Spanish acknowledged each other with a glance through out the service. Participation in the service in both English and Spanish was very special.

Posted by Victoria at 7:22 PM 1 comment.

---

Thursday, April 12, 2012

April 12, 2012

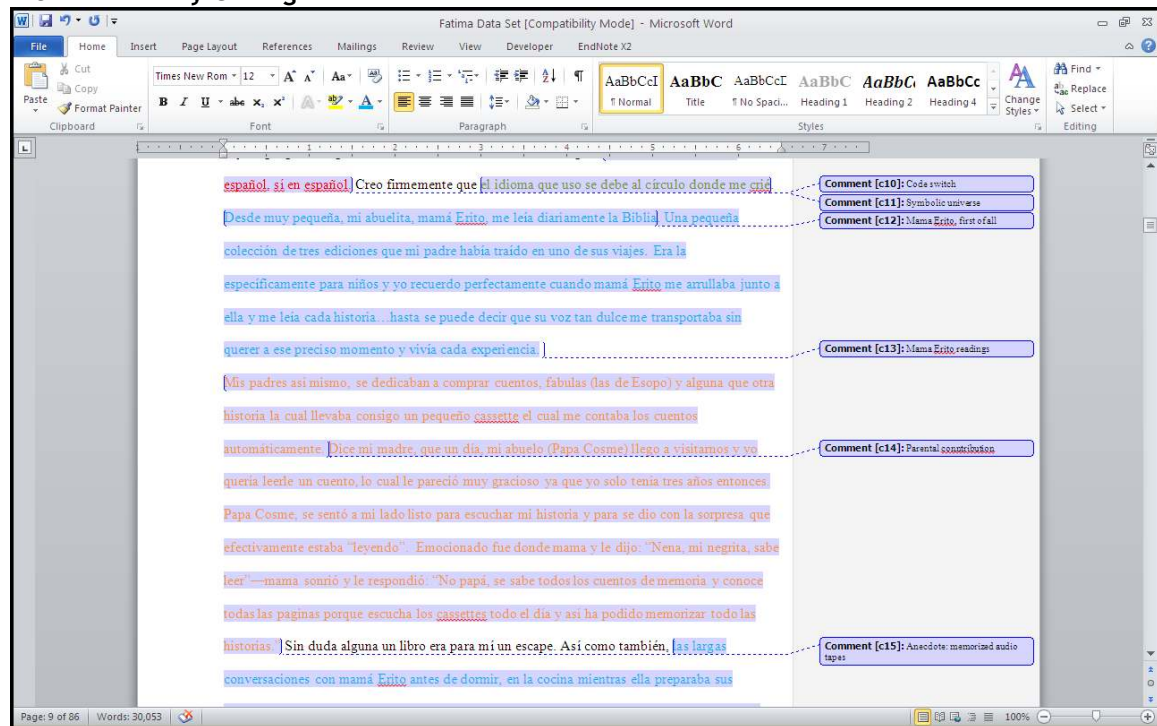
I finally made it to the blog. I've made this commitment, which I feel is important, yet it has taken me longer than expected to get started. I ask myself, why? Is life too crazy busy right now, unmanageable? Perhaps, but at 50 years old and transitioning again into a new life, the task of remembering and reflecting on that first big transition...moving to the U.S. from Cuba is bitter sweet. That time was and is again a time of change and contradictions, the pain of loss and the excitement of new horizons.

Over 40 years have gone by, but feelings have no knowledge of the calendar. They are dependable, constant and true. Feelings also have extremes and generally extremes are not good in neither direction. Feelings must be tempered, and never ignored. They guide us from where we have been to

Done | Internet | 125%

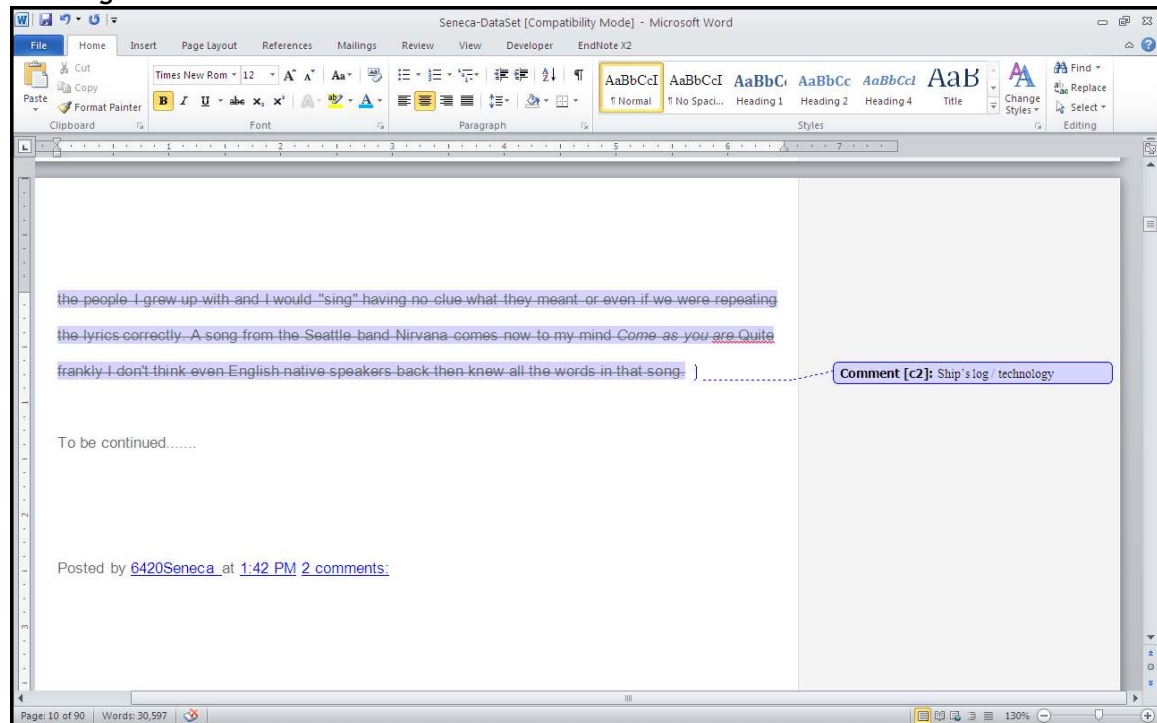
Note how I was able to add comments with questions or reflections onto the participants' blogs.

## e-Journal Entry Coding



The same coding procedure used for the questionnaires also simplified data coding and preparation of interview protocols from the participants' blog entries.

## Crossing Out What Has Been Used



Crossing out what I had already used as quotations in the report helped me to avoid reusing the same exponents.

## Using Red Font for Member Check Additions/Corrections

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document titled "Seneca-DataSet [Compatibility Mode] - Microsoft Word". The document contains a transcription of a conversation. Several segments of the text are highlighted in red, indicating areas where the researcher was uncertain or needed clarification. Two red comment boxes are visible on the right side of the document, each pointing to a red-highlighted segment. The first comment, labeled "Comment [EV27]: Ship's L...", points to the red text: "fines de] semana con los padres y con la familia.". The second comment, labeled "Comment [EV28]: Ship's L...", points to the red text: "casa:". Below the transcription, there are two English translations in parentheses: "E: (I tell him when the home environment gives importance to learning, the child learns to give importance to it, too.)" and "E: (I ask him whether someone actually taught him the letters at home.)". The status bar at the bottom indicates "Page: 21 of 90" and "Words: 30,597".

Note how I used red font for sections in my transcriptions where I was not sure I understood correctly or where my transcription had gaps. This allowed the participant to correct and complete as necessary by listening to the edited audio files during member checks.

## Sample of External Coding

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document titled "Victoria - Data Set-DDF [Compatibility Mode] - Microsoft Word". The document contains a table with two columns: "THEME" and "DESCRIPTION". The table is as follows:

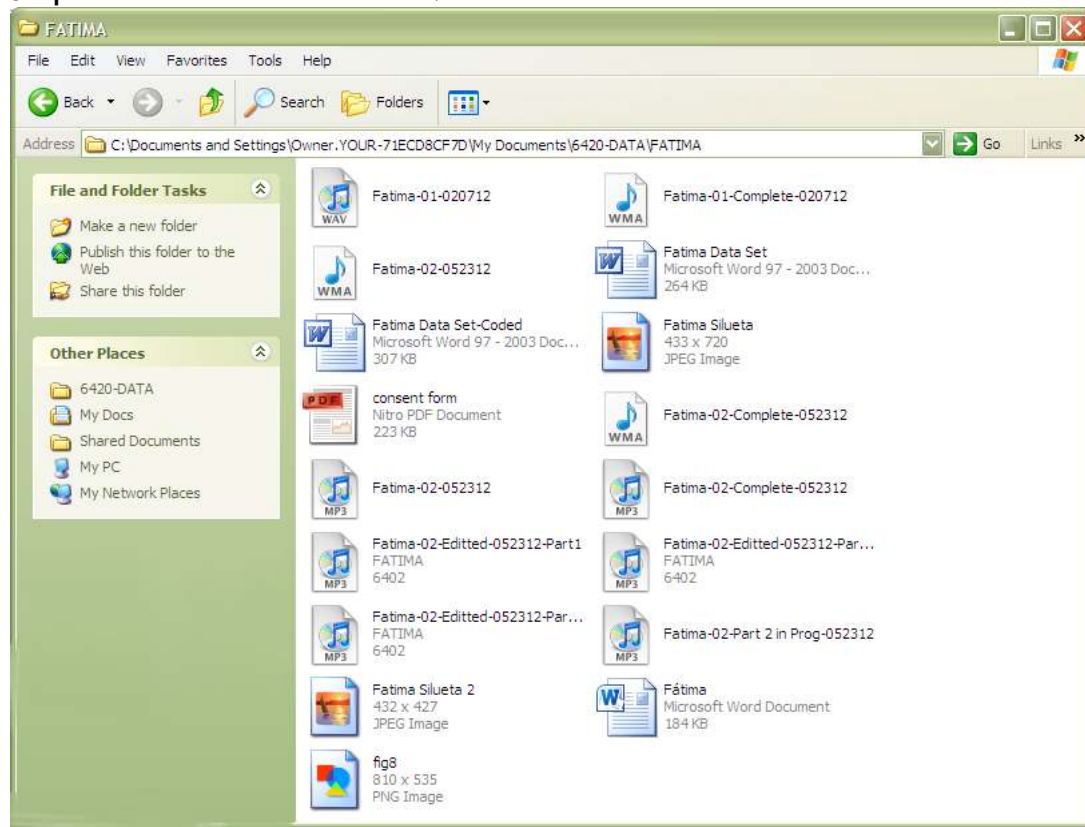
THEME	DESCRIPTION
IDENTITY	Identity refers to the ways she puts forth her ideas about being an immigrant and being a bilingual speaker who receives acknowledgments from other equally qualified speakers. Some of her identity stems from the uniqueness of her Spanish variety as compared to other more representative varieties in the United States and Europe. Language wasn't the only defining entity for this theme because the idea of education and reaching a certain education level also played heavily into her dialogue whether it was in regards to her own education or that of her parents. Another line of identity that did not stem from language was her discussion of coming from or being from "el campo." Sometimes, her identity as a Cuban was addressed in terms of political labels like political refugees. In terms of her development in the US labels like LEP or mainstream were important at that time for her. A possible sub category for this identity code involved her discussion on the "Los Pioneros," which given the situation in Cuba this experience might play more of a role in her overall story. Much of her discussion involve metaphorical language with one example that I thought stood out and could possibly also fit under her feelings and that is referring to herself as "el pan blanco." I entertained the thought of using this "pan blanco" as a theme alone because many of her experiences revolve around the fact that she does not see herself as this simple piece of white bread.
LIFE EVENT	At various points within her discussion, she chose specific offense that occurred within her life that illustrated her story. For example she talked about various experience she had with teachers throughout her life and the differences they made. As she has gone through a number of different professional lives, many of her events centered around her interactions as a corporate trainer versus being a teaching assistant among other roles.
LANGUAGE EVENT	(It's possible that this category is more of a subcategory of life events, however since many of her explanations involve things specifically tied to language, I thought this theme stood by itself.) This theme was tied to her discussions of bilingualism (whether in literacy, in culture or in growth).
FEELINGS	Her words showed a level of passion or interaction with her experiences that went above and beyond a simple description and she included sidebar (or almost anecdotal) comments on her feelings. For instance, the use of the Mexican expression "Si se puede." She had feelings on the way she felt she

The status bar at the bottom indicates "Page: 1 of 42" and "Words: 14,315".

Sample of coding by external auditor/critical friend DDF to allow for researcher triangulation.



### Snapshot of the Fátima Folder in Medias Res



Note concurrent data collection and analysis.

### Sample Worksheets (Stake, 2006; Reproduced with permission.)

#### Analyst's Notes While Reading a Case Report

Code Letters for this Case: V

Case Study Report Title: Victoria's Journey

Analyst: OV

Analyst's Synopsis

Uniqueness among Other Cases: better cultural adaptation

Prominence of Topic 1 in This Case: H

Prominence of Topic 4 in This Case: H

Prominence of Topic 2 in This Case: L

Prominence of Topic 5 in This Case: L

Prominence of Topic 3 in This Case: H

Prominence of Topic 6 in This Case: M

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Topic 1: H

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Topic 2: L

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Topic 3: H

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Topic 4: H

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Topic 5: L

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Topic 6: M

Conceptual Factors:

Findings:

- I. Community support
- II. Mentors
- III. Conscientization
- IV. Advocacy

Possible Excerpts for the Multicase Report (noting case report page number): see doc

**The Topics of a Multicase Study**

Topic 1: Ship's Log  
 Topic 2: Paying the Price  
 Topic 3: Battleship

Topic 4: All Hands on Deck  
 Topic 5: Pleasure Cruiser  
 Topic 6: At Helm

**Ratings of Expected Utility of Each Case for Each Topic**

Rater: DD

Utility of Cases Original Multicase Topics	Case C	Case F	Case S	Case V
Topic 1	H	H	H	H
Topic 2	H	H	M	L
Topic 3	H	H	H	M
Topic 4	L	M	L	H
Topic 5	L	M	M	H
Topic 6	L	H	H	H

H=High utility; M=Midling utility; L=Low utility. High utility means the Case appears to be one of the most useful for developing this Theme. As indicated, original Themes can be augmented by additional Themes even as late as the beginning of the cross-case analysis. Descriptions of each Topic can be attached to this worksheet, so that the basis for estimates can be readily examined.

**Generating Topic-Based Assertions from Case Findings Rated High**

Rater: EV

Case F	Topics					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Finding I	H			H	H	
Finding II				H		
Finding III		H	H			H
Finding IV	H		H	H		H
Finding V			H	H	H	H

H=High utility; M=Midling utility; L=Low utility. A high mark means that for this Topic, the Case Finding is of high importance. Parentheses around a Topic number mean that it should carry extra weight in drafting an Assertion.

**Generating Topic-Based Assertions from Merged Findings Rated High**

Assertions	From Which Cases?	Topics					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Merged Finding I	all	H	H		H	H	
Merged Finding II	all	H			H	H	H
Merged Finding III	all	H	H	H			H
Merged Finding IV	all			H		H	H

The Findings are Case-based, not Topic-based. From an entry in a cell at the intersection of a Merged Finding with a Topic comes impetus to compose an Assertion. H=High importance; M=Midling importance; L=Low importance. A high mark means that for this Topic, the Merged Finding or Special Finding is of high importance.

## Snapshot of the Researcher Reflective e-Journal

[Share](#) [Report Abuse](#) [Next Blog»](#)[Create Blog](#) [Sign In](#)*EV Researcher Journal*

Saturday, April 16, 2011

**Instrument Tests**

After I received my pilot participants' feedback, I modified the wording of several of the questions. The feedback from one tester said the questions sounded too scholarly. She said although of course she understood what I meant, she would have liked a style that was "menos academico" (=less academic), something that appealed more to her heart. I thought she had a good point there, so I made modifications accordingly. Following the feedback from the other tester, I changed the layout of the Participant Selection Questionnaires so that they looked less cluttered to improve readability. I think both changes have certainly improved the quality of the instruments.

Posted by Elizabeth Visedo at 6:36 AM 0 comments

Reactions: [OK \(0\)](#) [Please contact auditor \(0\)](#)

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**About Me****Elizabeth Visedo**[View my complete profile](#)**Blog Archive**

- ▼ 2011 (1)
- ▼ April (1)
- [Instrument Tests](#)

Watermark template. Powered by [Blogger](#).

Note the auditors could use the tool Reactions to give their OK to the entry or to request being contacted.

Initial Case and Cross-Case Analyses Visualized

Sub-questions	Subtopics	Séneca	Topics and Question
1 2 3	Background in country of origin: Lifestyle, symbolic universe		Ship's Log
1 2	Spanish literacy and education in country of origin		M
1 2	ESL classification and promotion		
1	Uprooting and homesickness		Paying the Price
1	Identity at play		M
1	What might have been		
1 2	Culture shock: Adrift		Battleship
1 2	Culture shock: No room		M
1 2	Culture shock: They don't get us		
1 2	Language shock: Reading and writing		
1	Language shock: Self-doubt		
1	People: Family		All Hands on
1 2	People: Mentors		Deck
1	People: Friends and buddies		M
1	Tools: In writing		
1 2 3	Tools: Technologies		
1 2 3	Belonging		Pleasure Cruiser
1 2 3	Acknowledgement		M
1	Self-empowerment		At Helm
1	Identity revisited		M
1 2 3	Working for others' empowerment		
Sub-questions	Subtopics	Victoria	Topics and Question
1	Background in country of origin: Lifestyle, symbolic universe		Ship's Log
1	Spanish literacy and education in country of origin		M
1 2	ESOL experience		
1	Uprooting and homesickness		Paying the Price
1	Identity at play		M
1	What might have been		
1 2	Culture shock: Adrift		Battleship
1 2	Culture shock: No room		M
1 2	Culture shock: They don't get us		
1	Language shock: Reading and writing		
1	Language shock: Self-doubt		
1	People: Family		All Hands on
1 2	People: Mentors		Deck
1 2	People: Friends and buddies		M
1	Tools: In writing		
1	Tools: Technologies		
1 2	Belonging		Pleasure Cruiser
1 2	Acknowledgement		M
1 2	Self-empowerment		At Helm
1 2	Identity revisited		M
1 2 3	Working for others' empowerment		

		Cross-Case Analysis																				
Sub-topics		Background in country of origin	L1 Literacy and education	ESOL experience	Uprooting and homelessness	Identity at play	What might have been	Culture shock: Adrift	Culture shock: No room	Culture shock: They don't get it	Language shock: Reading and writing	Language shock: Self-doubt	People: Family	People: Mentors	People: Friends and buddies	Tools: In writing	Tools: Technologies	Belonging	Acknowledgement	Self-empowerment	Identity revisited	Working for others'
Sub-Q1	F	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	S	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	V	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sub-Q2	F	2		2				2	2	2	2		2	2	2			2	2		2	2
	S	2	2	2				2	2	2	2			2			2	2	2		2	2
	V			2				2	2	2				2	2			2	2	2	2	2
Sub-Q3	F	3	3														3					3
	S	3															3	3	3	3	3	3
	V																3					3
Main Q	F	M			M				M					M				M			M	
	S		M		M				M					M				M			M	
	V		M		M				M					M				M			M	

Appendix D: Audit Documents

I, Dustin DeFelice, have served as auditor and critical friend for the study "From LEP to educator: Three Spanish-English Biliteracy Journeys" (eIRB # 6420), by Elizabeth Visedo. In these roles, I have worked with the researcher throughout the study in capacities such as auditing her reflective journal, reviewing transcripts, coding, and data analysis, and assisting in emerging issues and final report review.

Signed: -----  
Date: 1/28/13-----

I, Oksana Vorobel, have served as auditor and critical friend for the study "From LEP to educator: Three Spanish-English Biliteracy Journeys" (eIRB # 6420), by Elizabeth Visedo. In these roles, I have worked with the researcher throughout the study in capacities such as auditing her reflective journal, reviewing transcripts, coding, and data analysis, and assisting in emerging issues and final report review.

Signed: -----  
Date: 01/28/2013-----

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Visedo was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, became a citizen of Spain soon after birth and an American citizen in December 2009. She learned English as a foreign language in Argentina, beginning at age 7. She also learned Catalan, Portuguese, Danish, Italian, French, and a little Chinese, later in life. She started working in adult literacy training using Freire's generative-word method with Buenos Aires Province marginal communities at age 13. She studied chemistry, physics, and mathematics before changing programs to graduate as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language in Argentina. Then, she did her graduate studies in Education Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires and postgraduate studies in Oxford, UK. She worked as a teacher of English as a foreign language in all educational levels and modalities in Argentina for 30 years, using humor as a pedagogical tool. In 2007, she started her doctoral program in the U.S. She has a research agenda that includes interests such as teacher education for CLD students in the U.S. and humor infusion into online courses.

Elizabeth Visedo can be contacted at [elizabeth.visedo@gmail.com](mailto:elizabeth.visedo@gmail.com)