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Transformation in Language and Literacy: A Collaborative Approach

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Literacy Studies

by

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Abstract

In classrooms across the United States today, there is an increasingly diverse student population in terms of language and cultural diversity as well as a mismatch between teachers' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and that of an increasingly diverse student population. Of this group of culturally and linguistically diverse students, the majority are Latino/a. When comparing the achievement of Latino students and Anglo students, there is a well documented achievement gap between Latino students and their Anglo counterparts starting in the early years of elementary school. Since the connection between literacy success in the primary grades and later academic achievement is well established as well as the connection between parent involvement related to academic success, this study investigates enacting relationships between home and school by providing culturally relevant and/or bilingual reading materials for Latino students and their families. The findings suggest that providing culturally relevant and/or bilingual reading materials between home and school increases literacy learning opportunities for diverse learners as well as provides opportunities for collaboration between teachers, diverse learners and their families.

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Introduction

Envision a classroom of eager students on the first day of school awaiting a year full of discovery and learning. Look more closely and you will see amongst the enthusiastic faces, a small girl named Ellen with her desk strategically placed by the teacher away from her other classmates where she works alone with beans reproducing letters of the alphabet. While the teacher interacts with the rest of the class, this solitary girl is left to her own devices on this first day of school and many days that follow to “sink or swim” in her pursuit of language and literacy. This girl is from a Swedish immigrant family who entered school in the United States in the early 1900’s not knowing the English language. She never recovered from her negative experiences with literacy and into adulthood could not bring herself to read a book due to the negative feelings reading evoked from years of her different cultural and linguistic experience being looked at as a deficit in the school setting. Ellen is not a fictional character and this, unfortunately, is not a fictional account. This story is of my grandmother’s experience as a child of Swedish immigrants who entered school in the United States without knowing English and with a diverse cultural and linguistic background compared to her teacher and other classmates.

A historical perspective is important when considering the experience of culturally and linguistically diverse learners in classrooms across the United States. In the early 1900’s, 86 percent of the foreign-born population originated from European countries (Schmidley & Gibson, 1999). Current immigration statistics show evidence of vastly different trends. The *Census 2000 Brief* indicates that in the 1990’s, over half of the immigrants to the United States were from Latin American countries (Malone, Baluja,

Constanzo, & Davis, 2003). McKay and Wong (1996) suggest that immigration from European nations is vastly different compared to immigration from countries within the Third World, such as countries in Latin American, due to unequal power relationships between the Third World countries and Europe as well as the United States who were involved in the colonization of these countries. These issues of power can translate into issues in second-language acquisition and the development of a competent identity with English being considered the language of prestige, power, success, and in some instances domination (McKay & Wong, 1996; Peirce, 1995; Valdes, 2000). A domination perspective is the polar opposite of a focus on collaboration between teachers and diverse learners and their families which is at the heart of this study.

For the purposes of this study and due to the frequent occurrence of these terms in the research and articles reviewed, the terms Latino or Hispanic will be used throughout to describe individuals who trace their origin or descent to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central America, and South America (National Center for Education Statistics-Institute of Education Sciences, 2009). The Hispanic population in the United States is increasing dramatically with records indicating that in 1980 there were 14.6 million Hispanics in the United States, in the year 2000 this number increased to 35.3 million, and by the year 2020 the projection is that there will be 59.7 million Hispanics in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Evidence suggests that this population is a group whose educational needs are not being met in classrooms across the United States as evidenced by high drop-out rates and a well-documented achievement gap between Anglo and Latino children (Carlo, August, McLaughlin, Snow, Dressler, Lippman, Lively, & White, 2004; Donahue, Finnegan, Lutkus, Allen, & Campbell, 2001; Proctor, Dalton, & Grisham,

2007). The results from the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that 44% of Hispanic students are reading at or above grade level compared to 75% for White students (Proctor et al., 2007). In addition, Latino students perform lower than other minority groups with 35% of Hispanic fourth graders scoring below the 25th percentile on the NAEP in 2011 (Gay, 2000; National Center for Education Statistics-Institute of Education Sciences, 2011; Proctor et al., 2007).

When considering the performance of Latino students, it is important to consider the dynamic relationship between ethnicity, primary language, and social class and how these factors interact to impede literacy learning or foster literacy learning opportunities (Au, 1998). According to recent census statistics, linguistic diversity has more than doubled over the past three decades with 20 percent of the population in the United States speaking a language other than English at home and with 62 percent of this population indicating Spanish as the language spoken in the home (American Community Survey, 2010). Important in this regards is the consideration that the majority of learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are in classrooms with teachers who are monolingual and who are unfamiliar with diverse learners' cultural backgrounds (DaSilva Iddings, Risko, & Rampulla, 2011). Researchers in the field of education and in second-language acquisition consistently stress the connections between a competent cultural identity which includes linguistic diversity and social interactions including interactions between the home, the school, and the broader society (Au, 1998; Cummins, 1986; Edwards, McMillon, Turner, & Laier, 2001; Jimenez, 2000; Peirce, 1995). Risko (2011) terms interactions between students and teachers as "teaching with humanity" which describes an honoring of students' experiences as well as their cultural and linguistic

histories (p. 4). It is critical that teachers consider who students are in terms of their cultural and language backgrounds in order to promote this stance of “teaching with humanity” which honors students’ identities as well as what they bring to literacy learning and to other learning opportunities in the classroom. In other words, “teaching with humanity” is at the heart of forming a competent identity.

When educators do not consider linguistic and cultural differences in their instruction, a deficit mentality can develop with respect to children and their families which at its essence views diverse cultural and linguistic groups as the source of “the problem” in terms of academic achievement (De Gaetano, 2007; Edwards, McMillon, Turner, & Laier, 2001; Flores & Riojas-Cortez, 2009; Jimenez, 2000). De Gaetano (2007) discusses that teachers can develop a deficit mentality not only in terms of their students but also in terms of Latino parents when educators and other school personnel view parents of Latino students as not caring about their children when Latino parents do not engage in traditional parent involvement roles. However, when researchers in the De Gaetano (2007) study focused on alternate ways for Latino parents to get involved in the education of their children, the parents were enthusiastic and parent involvement increased as parents connected their culture and language with the learning process

The purpose of this investigation is to explore a collaborative approach to literacy learning in terms of building relationships between home and school with this approach fostering literacy learning and academic achievement for Latino students. In educational journals on classroom practice, articles discussing meeting the educational needs of an increasingly diverse student population are common (Donnelly & Roe, 2010; Manyak, 2010). However, what the current study addresses and what is uncommon to find in this

literature are examples of educators connecting school literacy learning and home literacy learning by providing families with access to reading materials that are bilingual and/or culturally relevant to families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The question for this study is: how does utilizing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books enact collaboration between home and school to increase literacy learning opportunities for students and families?

Background of the Study

The theoretical frame for this study draws on a diverse constructivist orientation which encompasses themes from social constructivism and critical theory (Au, 1998; Cummins, 1986). The research is framed using Cummins' "Empowerment of Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework" which provides an organizational structure for a diverse constructivist perspective (Au, 1998; Cummins, 1986, p. 24). The following section provides an overview of a diverse constructivist orientation as well as a discussion of Cummins' framework which exemplifies how theory is the foundation of practice. Next, a review of the literature regarding the experiences of students from diverse language and cultural backgrounds within the school system focusing on language, funds of knowledge, and family literacy is detailed.

Theoretical Frame: Diverse Constructivism

A "diverse constructivist perspective" as described by Au (1998) has its roots in constructivism which includes a focus on active engagement in meaning-making and the varied nature of knowledge especially as this knowledge applies to membership in different social groups (p. 298). Social constructivism is a more recent conception of constructivist thought with an emphasis on changing conceptions of literacy, the

functions of literacy in different communities, and the idea that learning is situated in the context and culture that it occurs (Au, 1998; Rueda, 2011). The idea of situated learning, in this context, has an emphasis on social interaction in learning with influence from Vygotsky, the theorist most influential in terms of the social constructivist perspective (Au, 1998; Rueda, 2011). A criticism of constructivist thought is that it does not take into account diversity in learners regarding cultural differences, linguistic differences and social class differences (Au, 1998). Therefore, Au (1998) proposes a “diverse constructivist orientation” which addresses these criticisms by expanding social constructivism to include an emphasis on collaboration over power relations and a focus on including the knowledge base of students and minority communities instead of a sole focus on privileged mainstream knowledge claims (p. 298).

Au (1998) uses Cummins’ theoretical framework as a starting point and as a structure to organize a “diverse constructivist perspective” since Cummins’s framework is consistent with social constructivism but also includes as a major theme, empowerment for minority students, which is evident in all aspects of the framework (Au, 1998; Cummins, 1986). The practical application of the framework comes from the central focus of whether dominated groups in society are empowered by their experience in schools or are disabled by the school experience (Cummins, 1986). Cummins (1986) gives examples of minority groups such as Finnish students in Sweden and Burakumin students in Japan who are considered low-status, or outcast, groups in these countries and perform poorly academically in both countries. However, when these low-status groups do not have this dominated group status, such as Finnish students in Australia, or the Burakumin students in the United States, they no longer experience academic failure but

success (Troike, 1978 as cited by Cummins, 1986; Ogbu, 1978 as cited by Cummins, 1986). As stated by Cummins (1986):

...widespread school failure does not occur in minority groups that are positively oriented towards both their own and the dominant culture, that do not perceive themselves as inferior to the dominant group, and that are not alienated from their own cultural values. (p. 22)

The key elements in Cummins' framework include a focus on incorporating the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students into their school experience, including minority communities as an integral part of the school community with a focus on forming collaborative partnerships between home and school, and a pedagogy of reciprocal interaction between student and teacher with a focus on collaborative learning and higher level cognitive skills (Au, 1998; Cummins, 1986).

Connecting Language, Identity, and Literacy

In matters of epistemology, ethics, and their relation to methodology/technique, a burning question is simply, What kind of world do we want to live in? How are our actions as researchers, activists, interpreters, scientists, educators, or other identities we perform through our daily professional practices, changing, and we hope improving, the conditions of knowledge about language and the mind and the teaching and learning of additional languages. (Thorne, 2005, p. 403)

Thorne (2005), like other researchers, when discussing language learning emphasized the importance of learning the target language which for the purposes of this discussion would be learning English, however, he emphasized that of equal importance

to language development is the continued development of the individual as a person or to put it another way, a development of a competent identity. A recurring theme across the research was the critical importance of the students' home language in regards to embracing bilingualism as a positive aspect of identity and using the home language as a resource for learning a new language. Au (1998) when discussing a diverse constructivist perspective emphasized the importance of bilingualism and biliteracy. She questioned why it is considered valuable to learn a foreign language at the high school or college level but that students in elementary school or even middle school can be made to feel the need to give up their home language in order to have full access to English (Au, 1998). Jimenez (2000) found in his study that students were consistently concerned about losing their native language in the process of developing bilingualism and a bicultural identity. Students in this study made frequent use of both English and Spanish to communicate and also used their bilingualism as a resource in assisting family members with "linguistic brokering" to translate lease agreements, tax forms, and other complex documents (Jimenez, 2000, p. 987). The students realized that being bilingual instead of monolingual was essential to their families and to their progress in school. Dasilva Iddings, Risko, and Rampulla (2009) in their study also found that a teacher encouraging students to use Spanish to talk about text and expand on class discussions assisted in comprehension and literacy learning. Students also used both English and Spanish for the purpose of "language brokering" and "co-construction of meaning" to assist each other by communicating in both languages about various translations of words which advanced their bilingualism and assisted in building understanding of academic content (Dasilva Iddings et al., 2009, p. 57). Utilizing Spanish as a resource for literacy

learning and embracing the advantages of Latino students' being bilingual and bicultural is essential in the development of a competent identity for students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Language and culture are both essential to the development of a bilingual and bicultural identity or in the words of Thorne (2005), a competent identity. Jimenez (2000) found that students found literacy and language learning more appealing if their Latino identity was supported. This connection between a bilingual and bicultural identity was a common theme in the research. An example of this connection with culture and a fostering of a competent identity was the De Gaetano (2007) study which found that when a team of educators focused on culturally responsive teaching and the development of bilingualism with Latino parents, as well as teachers and administrators; parent involvement increased dramatically. The parents were empowered by the researchers' primary focus on promoting their cultural identity and bilingualism instead of viewing their culture or language as a deficit in the school community (De Gaetano, 2007). Another example of this connection to culture was in the Taylor, Bernhard, Garg, and Cummins (2008) study where educators, students, and parents collaboratively engaged in a dual language authoring project producing bilingual books that were used in the classroom as a resource for bilingual texts. These studies found parents actively involved in the education of their children as the parents' cultural knowledge became instrumental which provided a repositioning of parents as instructors in their child's education instead of merely observer's of their child's education (De Gaetano, 2007; Taylor et al., 2008). A final aspect that was emphasized by Taylor et al. (2008) was that cultural identities can include "multiple homes" meaning the country where the student lives but also other

countries where the student has lived and where grandparents and other family members still reside (Taylor et al., 2008). Educators must consider that their own cultural experiences are often very different from the cultural experiences of many students within their classrooms and that educators' conceptions of "home" being one place, or one country, is very different from students' conceptions which can include "multiple homes" where students have beloved family members in this country as well as others. Educators need to recognize this disparity and make a focused effort to connect with students and parents from diverse cultures even with an act as simple as providing books that represent these diverse cultures in order to broaden understanding of another's experience as well as another's hopes and dreams. As stated by Rueda (2011) in his review of current research with students from diverse cultures and language backgrounds, "...the connections between literacy and culture are deep" (p. 84). For educators to address the achievement gap of Latino students, an understanding of the interrelatedness between language, identity, and literacy is essential.

Building Connections Between Home and School

I am a child. I come to you a teacher. Can you teach me to chart my journey, or must you use a standard measure to place me always in the shadow of others? I am a child. I come to you, a teacher. Will I go away from you ascending my strengths, or hobbled by my weaknesses? I am a child. I come to you a teacher. I bring you all that I am, all I can become, do you understand the trust? (Tomlinson, 2003)

This poignant quote provides a telling story of the power of teachers to connect with students in terms of who students are as well as to connect to students' hopes and

dreams for the future. When discussing diverse constructivism, Au (1998) emphasized the importance of considering literacy practices and literacy resources when teaching students from diverse cultures and language backgrounds in order to establish connections between home and school. Common in the research was the importance of this connection between the home and school and the concern that a disconnect between school-based literacy and the lives of Latino students could be inadvertently alienating (Moll & Luis, 1987; Jimenez, 2001; Taylor et al., 2008). The first approach from the research that addressed this disconnect was the focus on students' "funds of knowledge" which is a term originating with Luis Moll to describe bodies of knowledge developed through time which are cultural in nature (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p.133). In other words, funds of knowledge describe building on students' experiences with home and community in constructing new knowledge in the classroom (Jimenez et al.1996; Kong & Fitch, 2002; Moll & Diaz, 1987; Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2007; Rodriquez, Hines, & Montiel, 2009; Taylor et al., 2008). An example of drawing on students' funds of knowledge would be appreciating strengths and capabilities in regards to being bilingual instead of viewing bilingualism as something "un-American" (Crawford, 1995 as cited by Jimenez, 2001, p. 739). Jimenez et al. (1996) found that students who saw their bilingualism as damaging to their success in school were less successful readers than students who saw connections between Spanish and English and used their bilingualism to enhance their English with a search for cognates that were similar in Spanish and English. Successful Latino readers saw reading in Spanish and English as similar activities and were successful with comprehending English texts when provided the opportunity to use Spanish to clarify meanings (Jimenez et al., 1996; Moll &

Diaz, 1987; Dasilva Iddings et al, 2009). Another example of building on students' funds of knowledge would be bringing students' unique experiences and knowledge to assist in constructing new knowledge in the school setting (Kong & Fitch, 2002; Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2007). Kong and Fitch (2002) found in their study that students who participated in reading, writing, and talking about literature in the classroom were able to make sense of the text when they were able to connect the text to their own experience. A key to fostering funds of knowledge was to connect literacy learning in the school setting to the students' lived realities (Jimenez, 2001; Taylor et al., 2008).

A second approach for connecting with students and families from diverse cultures was a focused shift away from a deficit model. Throughout the research, there was a concern of viewing minority populations as population groups with deficits that need to be overcome instead of strengths and backgrounds that need to be built upon (Jimenez, 2001; Jimenez et al., 1996; Flores & Riojas-Cortez, 2009; Taylor et al., 2008). This deficit model viewed students' language proficiency, socioeconomic status, or ethnic background as the reason for low academic achievement (August & Hakuta, 1997 as cited by Jimenez, 2001; Gay, 2000). In other words, it was the students and families of culturally and linguistically diverse populations that were the problem; not the school system itself. This deficit model did not consider the missing link between literacy learning and a connection to students' funds of knowledge (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2007). Also crucial to this discussion of a deficit model is the consideration that a majority of research on literacy in the United States focuses on native speakers of English, who are White, middle class students (Jimenez et al., 1996). This lack of research on students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds needs to be challenged with a

focus on research that examines Latino students who are successful in their academic endeavors (Jimenez et al., 1996). In order to move away from the deficit model, teachers need to look for ways to bridge the gap between the dominant culture and the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students.

A third approach for connecting with students and families from diverse cultures focuses on parents. Researchers have consistently found that Latino families looked to the school for guidance and suggestions in regards to literacy activities at home (De Gaetano, 2007; Reese & Gallimore, 2000; Flores & Riojas-Cortez, 2009). Reese and Gallimore (2000) found in their study that 40 % of literacy activities in Latino homes involved materials that were sent home from school as well as a marked increase in reading aloud at home starting at a baseline of 27% percent at the beginning of kindergarten to 90% percent at the end of first grade. The research consistently showed that Latino parents want to know how to support their children's academic success but that schools must work collaboratively with parents to make explicit what parents can do at home or at school to support their children's literacy learning and academic success (Flores & Riojas-Cortez, 2009; De Gaetano, 2007).

A Collaborative Approach to Family Literacy

A focus on the bicultural and bilingual identities of Latino students and parents calls for teachers to consider an expanded view of literacy which moves away from the idea of literacy as simply extracting meaning from text in the pursuit of comprehension but instead conceptualizes literacy as multifaceted including an interaction between the reader, the world and the text at hand (Gavelek & Bresnahan, 2008). The New London Group (1996) when discussing an expanding view of literacy maintain that an increasing

focus on cultural and linguistic diversity empowers students to achieve “...the twin goals of literacy learning; creating access to the evolving language of work, power, and community, and fostering the critical engagement necessary for them to design their social futures and achieve success through fulfilling employment” (p. 1). An important consideration in terms of connecting with students and families from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds is that an expanding view of literacy must also include an expanding view of family literacy.

The centrality of family literacy in forging connections between home and school is crucial to building an atmosphere of collaboration between teachers, students, and families. Family literacy not only forges connections between home and school but also is essential in breaking down barriers between the home and school. Giroux (1997) emphasizes critical dialogue and multiple voices with the purpose of engaging personal experience and cultural resources in the process of learning and understanding. Freire (1970) also calls for dialogue with others which results in not only reflection but in action. Family literacy has the power to engage families, students, and teachers as they work together, speak together, listen together, and act together.

When considering family literacy not all programs provide this atmosphere of collaboration and dialogue. A concern with family literacy programs is that there can be a deficit perspective in regards to families from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds similar to what has been discussed regarding literacy learning (Auerbach, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Rodriguez-Brown, 2011). Auerbach (1995) frames the difference between family literacy programs as a contrast between programs which focus on intervention which originates from a deficit perspective or programs with

a focus on empowerment for families. A more expansive view of family literacy conceptualizes family literacy as intergenerational to support literacy for parents as well as to provide support for parents from low educational or economic backgrounds to assist in their own children's learning (Rodriguez-Brown, 2011). This more expansive view can include an enrichment model which sees family literacy as connecting with the home environment to recognize "...the knowledge, cultural ways, and discourses of the home" (Auerbach, 1995; Rodriguez-Brown, 2011, p. 742). In the following sections, two family literacy programs will be discussed in terms of a focus on the dynamic relationship between language and culture in forging connections between home and school in an expanding view of family literacy.

Project FLAME

Project FLAME is an intergenerational family literacy program specifically targeting limited English proficient parents with the goal of promoting literacy learning for both parents and children (Project FLAME). FLAME is an acronym which stands for "Family Literacy: aprendiendo, mejorando, educando (learning, improving, educating)" (Rodriguez-Brown, 2004). There are four main objectives of Project FLAME which include: increasing parents' ability to provide literacy learning opportunities for their children, increasing the role of parents as literacy models for their children, improving parents' literacy skills, and increasing and improving the relationship between home and school (Rodriguez-Brown, 2004). There are several ways that Project FLAME meets these objectives including providing literacy opportunities at home through providing access to books and teaching parents how to find appropriate books for their children including how to access books at public libraries (Rodriguez-Brown, 2004). All Project

FLAME sessions for parents take place in either Spanish or English depending on which language the parents can access (Rodriguez-Brown, 2004). Another way that Project FLAME meets these objectives is by giving parents the tools to be literacy models in their own right by increasing their own literacy and language proficiency (Rodriguez-Brown, 2004). In terms of the home-to-school connection, parents in Project FLAME develop collaborative relationships with teachers. This collaboration includes parents observing literacy learning in the classroom which provides parents a window into school-based literacy practices and what is expected of their children in terms of literacy learning (Rodriguez-Brown, 2004). This collaborative relationship with teachers is not a one-way monologue with teachers telling parents how to approximate school-based literacy learning but is an opportunity for dialogue about parents' own concerns and aspirations as well (Rodriguez-Brown, 2004).

The objectives in Project FLAME correspond with conceptions of family literacy focusing on empowerment instead of a deficit perspective. Empowerment in Project FLAME is not simply one aspect of this family literacy program but is the heart of working together with families. Auerbach (1995), when discussing family literacy connected to empowerment, emphasizes the importance of family literacy incorporating not only cultural and linguistic resources but also connecting personally to participants' concerns and how participants can utilize literacy to challenge oppressive conditions in their lives. Project FLAME challenges oppression by empowering families with the tools of literacy for themselves, by empowering families to be models of literacy while they share literacy with their children, by providing opportunities for teacher-parent dialogue concerning literacy learning, and by providing access to leadership in Project FLAME.

Project FLAME also has a central focus on parental involvement at school which allows for opportunities for collaboration between teachers and parents. Rodriguez-Brown (2004) discusses the importance of fostering dialogue between Latino parents and teachers because Latino families have such a high regard for teachers in terms of viewing teachers as “the experts” which leads Latino parents to question whether teachers even want their involvement in their child’s education. An important part of this collaboration between teachers and parents is the opportunity for dialogue in terms of expanding parents’ discourse related to literacy learning at school.

Gee (2001) when discussing discourse discusses analyzing discourse as part of an expanding view of literacy with an emphasis on critical literacy related to language and social practice. Gee (2001) states that critical literacy is central in “...giving voice to Discourses in interaction...These interactions are sites where power operates” (p. 17). This emphasis on discourse and power relations in social interaction relates to the earlier discussion of a social identity, language, and the power to speak in “...inequitable social structures...” (Peirce, 1995, p. 13). Since Latino families can be disempowered by viewing their contributions to literacy learning as inferior to school-based literacy and by being intimidated in their conception as teachers as the educational experts, a consideration of discourse and unequal power structures in interaction between parents and teachers must be considered.

Project FLAME addresses the consideration of discourse and unequal power structures by focusing on collaboration between teachers and parents while parents are actively involved in the classroom. This parent-teacher collaboration provides access to the school discourse which in Gee’s (2001) conception would be considered a secondary

“Discourse”. A “Discourse” as defined by Gee (2001) is an “identity kit” with a focus on social practice and social identity (p. 526). Gee (2001) elaborates on the importance of Discourse by stating,

After our initial socialization in our home community, each of us interacts with various non-home-based social institutions-institutions in the public sphere, beyond the family and immediate kin and peer group. These may be local stores and churches, schools, community groups, state and national businesses, agencies, and organizations, and so forth. Each of these social institutions commands and demands one or more Discourses and we acquire these fluently to the extent that we are given access to these institutions and are allowed apprenticeship within them. Such Discourses I call secondary Discourses.

The Latino parents, through Project FLAME, are accessing the “Discourse” of school and the social relationships associated with this Discourse such as interactions between parents and teachers as well as observing the interactions between students and teachers.

Essential to acquiring a secondary Discourse is access to social practice because Discourse is mastered through experiencing the social practices of the secondary Discourse community, in this instance the Discourse of school which is accessed as parents and teachers collaboratively work together (Gee, 2001).

The Pajaro Valley Experience

The Pajaro Valley family literacy project arose from the author, Alma Flor Ada, sharing her experience as a Latina author while sharing stories and books at a local elementary school in California (Flor Ada, 1988). When there was tremendous enthusiasm on the part of the students to this Hispanic author sharing her stories, the

director of bilingual programs decided that this student engagement could serve to foster a family literacy project aimed at greater interaction between parents and children (Flor Ada, 1988). The program's goal was to encourage parent involvement for Hispanics in their children's education in order to develop greater interaction between parents and children as well as between home and school (Flor Ada, 1988).

This family literacy project consisted of monthly meetings at a local library. The parents and children met separately at these meetings but with parallel programs with the children's program consisting of storytelling and other activities in a room near where the parents were meeting (Flor Ada, 1988). For the parent meeting, the first activity consisted of dialogue over topics such as their children being the future as well as the hope of the possibilities within that future, the importance of family relationships, the importance of the dynamic of parents being in the role of a teacher for their children, and the importance of Spanish for developing acquisition in English (Flor Ada, 1988).

After this dialogue, the parent meeting would turn to a discussion of children's literature because the program coordinators felt that this was an inviting topic for parents (Flor Ada, 1988). The author, Alma Flor Ada, read five books to all parents in a large group setting while dramatizing the actions and followed the reading with a few comments at the end as well as a brief dialogue (Flor Ada, 1988). After the large group reading of the books, the parents would break into small groups for a specific discussion about the book that they would choose to take home to share with their own children (Flor Ada, 1988). These discussions were led by teachers and consisted of dialogue about the books pertaining to descriptions of the book, interpretations from the book based on personal reactions, critical analysis of events and ideas in the story, and a creative phase where real-life

application was applied to the book (Flor Ada, 1988). Lastly, parents would write a collective book about their reflections and were provided blank books to take home to encourage writing at home by parents and children (Zubizarreta, 1996).

The focus of this family literacy program is dialogue and an emphasis on families' bilingual and bicultural identities. Quintero (2007) discusses the importance of students of all ages in telling their own stories which was an integral part of this project with students and parents using the collective book and blank books as a tool to tell their stories. Freire (1970) also emphasizes the importance of this "right to speak" as well as the crucial nature of dialogue when he states, "It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, not to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours" (p. 77). It is this focus on dialogue and forging connections between the culture of home and the culture of school that are essential to family literacy.

Context and Methods

Research Question

The research question served as the initial point of inquiry in terms of connections between home and school for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. This questioning stance led to the research question for this study: how does utilizing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books enact collaboration between home and school to increase literacy learning opportunities for students and families? In this section, the details of how this question was answered will be explored.

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Site

The context for the research was a mid-sized city in the western United States. According to the Pew Hispanic Center (2009), the Hispanic population in this western state has a median income of \$24,000 and a poverty rate of 24 %. Of this Hispanic population, 58% are native to the United States and 78% are of Mexican origin (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). Even though the population within this state is 26% Hispanic, 39% of the births in this state are Hispanic births (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). Since, home language was important to consider in this context and study since a focus was on providing bilingual books, 75% of the Hispanics in this state speak a language other than only English in the home (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009).

There were several elementary schools in this western city with four of the six designated as Title 1 schools (Nevada Report Card, 2008-2009). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2009), schools with a student population of 35% or more coming from low-income families can qualify for Title 1 status. The purpose of designating schools as Title 1 is to provide funding to assist in providing all children with a fair and equal chance at a high-quality education...”(U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). A Title 1 designation addresses the achievement gap between high- and low-achieving children, especially considering the achievement gaps of minority and disadvantaged students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Public schools using Title 1 funds include more than 50,000 schools using the additional funding that supports extra instruction in reading and math, preschool programs, after-school programs, and summer programs as well (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). A larger percentage of students

at Title 1 schools are at risk for academic failure compared to schools with a higher percentage of more advantaged peers.

This study took place at Mountain View Elementary School, a pseudonym, which is a Title 1 school with a Hispanic/Latino population of 30.2% and a free and reduced lunch rate of 57% (Adequate Yearly Progress Report for 2009-2010). The school was designated as High Achieving for the school year of 2009-2010 as well as being recognized as a Title 1 Distinguished School by the state's Department of Education (School Accountability Summary Report, 2009-2010). Since research supports the fact that an achievement gap exists not only based on economic status such as free and reduced lunch rates but also in regards to minority students such as African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic students, educators must do all possible to provide research-based practice to these student populations to provide the support necessary for academic success (Tomlinson, 2003).

Research Design

Charmaz (2000) described the researcher in qualitative research as an interpreter of realities and an interpreter of data within these lived realities. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) further stated that a researcher in qualitative research used interpretative methods with the purpose of understanding the "...worlds of experience...." that are studied (p. 21). To understand the realities of another and another's lived experience, the researcher was not seen as an outside observer who looked at participants as the "other" but the focus was on a co-construction of knowledge between researcher and participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Maxwell, 2005). It was this focus on relationships, a

development of understanding of another's world, and the hope of making a better world that drew the researcher in this study to qualitative research.

This research study is a case study. Lichtman (2011) described case studies as an examination of a particular group, an event, a program, a phenomenon, a project, or a person. A case study focuses on a particular aspect of the case but can also look at the many dimensions involved within the case (Lichtman, 2011). Case studies are a common form of qualitative research and are particularly common in the field of education (Lichtman, 2011; Stake, 2000).

To be more particular in terms of the different types of case studies, this study is an instrumental case study. The goal of an instrumental case study is to examine a particular group to provide insight into an issue and the emphasis is on the case playing a "supportive role" to facilitate understanding of the broader issue (Stake, 2000). This study examined a particular group, English Language Learners and their families. The study focused on how utilizing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books enact relationships between the culture of home and the culture of school for students and families. The study was designed to facilitate a deeper understanding of how schools can foster the home-school connection by recognizing what providing culturally relevant and/or bilingual books can do to meet the needs of this particular group.

Participants

As discussed by Lichtman (2011), a case study can involve studying a particular group. This case study focused on studying two particular groups: (1) Latino families and students involved in a Hispanic Parent Group whose children spanned the grades of kindergarten through 5th grade and who meet on a monthly basis and (2) Kindergarten

ESL students. These two groups were able to provide insight into the world of culturally and linguistically diverse learners and their families and therefore were provided with the option of participating in the study. Stake (2000) describes a particular group in case study as a "...specific, unique, bounded system..." (p. 445). This particular group was specific, unique and bounded in that the focus of the study was a better understanding of how providing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books affected reading at home for these Latino families as well as enacted relationships between home and school. Due to the limited funding for the culturally relevant and/or bilingual books, these two groups became the focus of the study as a specific grounded group instead of studying all Latino families in the school or providing books to families of all students at the school. The researcher also looked at a specific aspect of the case as discussed by Lichtman (2011) by focusing on reading at home and how reading at home is impacted when the home-school connection is fostered by providing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books. This specific aspect of the case was selected due to the culturally relevant and/or bilingual books providing a starting point for enacting relationships with students and families between the culture of home and the culture of school.

The funding for this research project provided for up to five kindergarten students to participate by having access to the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books for five weeks. After the five weeks of the kindergarten strand of the study, other kindergarten students who were designated as ESL students had access to the books. The families and students who participated from the kindergarten group were from three different kindergarten classrooms in the school with one kindergarten classroom being a full-day kindergarten program and the other two classes being on a half-day kindergarten schedule.

The families who participated in the study received a letter of recruitment detailing the study which were signed and returned to school in the case of the kindergarten families or were given to the researcher at the Hispanic Parent Group meeting in the case of the Latino families attending this group. The response from parents who requested books sent home by returning the letter of recruitment was evidence of the desire to have books that are bilingual and/or culturally relevant with 13 ESL students and families out of 18 ESL students in kindergarten requesting books for reading at home.

For the Hispanic Parent Group, the study included funding for up to 20 families at the parent group to participate which allowed for full participation by families who wanted the books. This Hispanic Parent Group meets monthly at the school during lunch time with lunch being provided by the school for all parents and children who attend the one-hour long meeting. The principal and a school board member who is also a parent at the school direct the meetings with topics of discussion about various school related issues such as parent conferences and the new district report card with time for questions and concerns from the parents throughout the meeting. The school board member is bilingual and translates all information from the principal to the families and from the families to the principal. The response to the books being provided for reading at home was once again evidence of the desire for bilingual and/or culturally relevant books with almost all families at the Hispanic parent group taking the nine books that were provided to each family on a monthly basis for the two-month time span of this strand of the study.

Data Sources and Collection

Hubbard and Power (2003) discussed that the more data-collection tools that are used by the researcher, the more able the researcher is to answer the research question.

For this study, the question was: how does utilizing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books enact collaboration between home and school to increase literacy learning opportunities for students and families? In order to understand how utilizing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books enacted collaboration between home and school, the researcher used multiple data sources. The data sources included letters of recruitment to participate in the study which indicated interest in the books to be provided, a home reading log for recording students' and parents' opinions about the books as well as length of time spent reading (see Appendix A), a pre-survey about at-home reading before the provided books (see Appendix B), a post-survey about at-home reading after the provided books (see Appendix C), field notes, memos, parent interviews, and student journals. All data sources that were given to parents were translated and provided in both English and Spanish. The collection of the data sources that went home to students and families in either the "Bags of Books" (see Appendix F) or the "Bins of Books" (see Appendix G) occurred when parents returned the books each week in the instance of the kindergarten families or at the Hispanic Parent Group when the books were returned each month or at the end of the study.

Primary data sources included field notes and memos (Hubbard & Power, 2003; Maxwell, 2005). Field notes were observations at the research site such as interactions at the Hispanic Parent Group and the interviews with parents (Hubbard & Power, 2003). Memos, sometimes call analytic notes, were used for written reflection of the field notes and were a way to get reflections down on paper (Maxwell, 2005). Hubbard and Power (2003) emphasized the importance of researcher notes as typically the most important data source which was the case in this study. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) also discussed

the importance of researcher notes, specifically writing as self-reflection as a method of inquiry in the qualitative tradition. Throughout this study memos were consistently focused on interactions with the participants, discussions with the kindergarten teacher who served in the role of co-researcher, and interactions with the world outside the research context such as newspaper editorials about bilingual education and conversations with those who held strong opinions on providing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books to students. As discussed by Maxwell (2005), data in a qualitative study can include anything that is observed or communicated throughout the study as long as this communication or observation does not violate confidentiality or is ethically prohibited. The following chart details the timeline and types of data collected throughout the study for both groups involved in the study.

Timeline and Data Collection for Kindergarten Participants

October 10, 2011	Recruitment letter to parents
October 11, 2011	First set of five books sent home to five families with pre-survey, home reading log, and student journals
October 18, 2011	Second set of five books sent home to families Collected returned pre-surveys
October 25, 2011	Third set of five books sent home to families
November 1, 2011	Fourth set of five books sent home to families

November 1, 2011	Met with two parents during parent conferences for interview
November 8, 2011	Fifth set of books sent home to families with post-survey
November 15, 2011	Books collected with post-surveys, reading logs, and student journals

Timeline and Data Collection for Hispanic Parent Group Participants

October 17, 2011	Hispanic Parent Group meeting Demonstration of interactive reading and recruitment letter Nine books placed in each “Bin of Books” and bins given to thirteen families with pre-survey, home reading log, and student journals
November 21, 2011	Hispanic Parent Group meeting Pre-surveys returned Second set of books to families
December 19, 2011	Hispanic Parent Group meeting Collect books, post-surveys, home reading logs, student journals, and complete parent interviews

Data Analysis

Florio-Ruane (1999) posits that case studies typically involve interested outsiders who are working to learn about the interactions between students and teachers in their pursuit of teaching and learning. As an interested outsider, the researcher analyzed the data from this study in an attempt to understand the experience of the participants with

literacy learning through the use of bilingual and/or culturally relevant books. The researcher was allowed to come alongside parents to assist in a developing understanding of the experience of having bilingual and/or culturally relevant books available and how these resources impacted literacy learning opportunities in the home. The researcher focused on the “experiential knowledge” of the case taking the stance of a researcher who was an interpreter of realities and an interpreter of data within these lived realities instead of simply an objective observer with only a reliance on empirical data (Charmaz, 2000; Stake, 2000, pp. 443-444). The analysis of this data within the participants’ lived realities started as raw data, and then further analysis brought a structure and an order to this data to gain meaning and insight (Hubbard & Power, 2003).

Data analysis in this study started at the beginning of the study in the form of memos and field notes that the researcher wrote and kept in a field journal starting with the positive response from parents requesting the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books (Hubbard & Power, 2003; Maxwell, 2005). These memos and field notes continued throughout the study in response to data or in response to researcher reflections about the study. Data analysis and the research process were recursive which included analyzing data as it became available and this recursive process continued throughout the researcher process (Hubbard & Power, 2003; Maxwell, 2005). Besides a focus on the recursive nature of the research process, the researcher also focused on a triangulation of the data in order to reduce the risk of bias (Maxwell, 2005). The use of multiple data sources gave more credibility to the findings in the study (Maxwell, 2005). As typical for a qualitative case study, the focus was not on generalization but was on credibility through triangulating descriptions in a continuous manner throughout the study,

meticulous attention to the activities of the case, and focusing on the “experiential knowledge” of the case (Stake, 2000, pp. 443-444).

The first step in the data analysis beyond a focus on memo writing, taking field notes, and ensuring that there was a triangulating of data was an indexing of field notes, memos, home reading logs, parent surveys, parent interviews and student journals. Indexing was utilized to create a table of contents that listed categories and themes that were noted in the data and the page numbers or location of the data source (Hubbard & Power, 2003). Indexing was a starting point for data analysis since the process allowed a discovery of themes that were constructed from the data (Hubbard & Power, 2003). Upon completion of the first round of data analysis, the themes centered on access to books, the language barrier, and parents’ and students’ overwhelmingly positive response to culturally relevant and/or bilingual books. The second step in the data analysis after the indexing was coding the data by taking a recursive look at the data with the goal of rearranging, or fracturing, the data into themes with the purpose of looking for similarities and differences in the categories to develop theoretical concepts (Maxwell, 2005). In developing theoretical concepts in this stage of analysis, the focus was on insight into what was going on in this case (Maxwell, 2005). It was during this phase of data analysis that the themes of access, empowerment, engagement, and language became recurring themes throughout the data. By focusing on multiple data sources and this meticulous analysis of the data, a compelling case developed originating in the discoveries in this study (Hubbard & Power, 2003).

Researcher Role and Assumptions

The role of the researcher in this study was as a participant-observer because the researcher was not a part of the school as a teacher but instead participated as a parent who had volunteered at this school for the past four years including being a member of school and district committees that have regular meetings throughout the year. This role enabled the researcher to gain a different perspective on the workings of a school from the standpoint of a parent but also included expertise as a teacher with 12-years of teaching experience. This role as a participant involved working with an experienced kindergarten teacher who was the co-researcher to reflect on the impact of providing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books to kindergarten students as well as to the school's preexisting Hispanic Parent Group. The other role as a participant involved meeting with the Hispanic Parent Group where the researcher had the opportunity to meet with parents about reading the provided books at home and also demonstrated interactive reading strategies that the parents could use at home with their own children. The researcher was also an observer of interactions related to the study which assisted in developing understanding regarding collaboration between home and school as well as insights into educators fostering literacy learning and future academic success for students from diverse language and cultural backgrounds.

As a teacher at the elementary level for 12 years, the researcher's objective has always been to provide a quality education for all students within the classroom. When the researcher's own children started school is when the researcher realized the tremendous advantage they had in regards to having a parent who found the educational system easy to navigate due to experience not only as a teacher but also from a

background as a middle-class European American in a school system geared for middle-class European Americans. The researcher's experiences and that of her own children were represented in the children's literature within the classroom each day and as someone who grew-up in an elementary school very similar to her own daughters' elementary school, the school procedures and parent involvement requirements were second-nature like many other middle-income European American families. However, this is not the case with all families within schools today. An important aspect of the current study was the concern that in the current educational climate of high stakes assessment and scripted curriculums that students from diverse cultural and language backgrounds are in many ways left behind by a system that trumpets "No Child Left Behind" because there is no room in an already crowded curriculum for consideration in regards to diversity in culture and language. Within the current educational system, there is a critical need to understand home-school partnerships with respect to different cultures (Orozco, 2008). As discussed by Edwards, Laier, McMillon, and Turner (2001) in a study that exemplified a failing school, the researchers found that cultural issues were as important as curriculum and classroom practice and that schools at risk of not fostering children's academic improvement were schools that resist connecting school failure with a lack of connection with the home environment.

Findings

The findings in this study add essential understandings regarding diverse learners and their families, specifically Latino students and their families, in their pursuit of literacy learning and collaboration between home and school. A consistent theme in the findings was that through collaboration between home and school, diverse students and

their families were actively engaged in the literacy learning process through the use of culturally relevant and/or bilingual books. The notion of collaboration in this study specifically refers to teachers, students, and parents working together to support literacy learning. This interactive relationship is based on a co-construction of knowledge with educators, students, and families working collaboratively to increase understanding and knowledge regarding what culturally and linguistically diverse families need in order to navigate the educational system successfully. The findings include three important themes all focusing on collaboration between home and school. In the following sections, the three themes will be discussed and include: *A Collaborative Stance: Bilingual and Culturally Relevant Books*, *A Collaborative Stance: Utilizing Language as a Resource* and *A Collaborative Stance: Students' Bilingual and Bicultural Identities*.

A Collaborative Stance: Bilingual and Culturally Relevant Books

A theme gleaned from this study was the critical importance of connecting language, culture, and literacy learning in a collaborative stance between teachers, Latino students and their families. This collaborative stance includes providing an atmosphere within schools and classrooms with a principal focus on students, parents, and teachers working together to increase transformative literacy learning opportunities along with increased possibilities for future student achievement outside the walls of the classroom. The following findings showed evidence of the possibilities for collaboration between home and school by using bilingual and/or culturally relevant books to engage diverse learners and their families in literacy learning. The findings include: (1) An increase in at-home reading, (2) Affirmations about at-home reading, (3) Parent involvement and at-home reading, (4) Requests for more at-home reading.

An increase in at-home reading

The Latino parents responded in the *Home Reading Survey* (see Appendix B) that prior to the study they were accessing books to read to their children in their homes, at the store, and at the library; however, when these parents were provided bilingual and/or culturally relevant books all parents responded that their reading at home increased. For the parents who received the books weekly, the *Home Reading Log* (see Appendix A) responses showed that parents were reading with their kindergarten children on average 5 times per week with time spent reading over the 5-week period of the study ranging from 6.6 hours of reading to 12.4 hours of reading at home with their child. When the books were provided over the span of a month instead of new books coming home each week, the time spent reading decreased; however whether the books were provided weekly or monthly, the parents all responded that their time reading with their children increased. . Since the majority of the children in this study were kindergarten students, this increased reading at home with a parent is supported by *Emergent Literacy Theory* and *Family Literacy Theory* with findings that show that children's early reading success is most closely correlated to a quality literacy environment which the books in this study helped to provide (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

Affirmations about at-home reading

The Latino parents consistently responded positively to the experience of having access to the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books for at-home reading. The first example of the books providing a positive literacy learning experience for the parents was in the *Home Reading Log* (see Appendix A) where parents rated the bilingual and /or culturally relevant books as "Great", "Okay", or "Did not Like". The parents

consistently responded with positive ratings of the books such as “Great” or “Okay” with no indication in the *Home Reading Log* of any books that the parents did not enjoy. The second example of a positive literacy learning experience consisted of parent responses to the *Home Reading Survey (Part 2)* which was given at the end of the study (see Appendix C). In this second survey, all parents responded that having the books sent home was a positive experience, that they spent time talking about the books with their children, that it was easier to find books to read, and that their children asked to read more frequently. Other comments from parents in the survey included that they noticed the books “Work on imagination”, that their child would come home with the bag of books and want to be read to, and that the parents wanted their child to learn more words as a result of reading the books.

Parent involvement and at-home reading

This study showed evidence of the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books providing an atmosphere within the home that supported parent involvement in literacy learning. The first example of this atmosphere that promoted parent involvement came from parents who the researcher met during parent conferences. The kindergarten parents who participated in the study were given the option of meeting with the researcher after their regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference and two parents came to talk with the researcher with the assistance of a translator. These parents responded to each question from the researcher positively when questioned about the books in the study including the following comments which were paraphrased since the parents responded in Spanish through a translator:

- One parent commented on enjoying the pictures in the books and the discussion about the pictures with her child. She said her child especially liked the bilingual *Curious George* books, and she and her child enjoyed talking together about these books.
- Another parent commented that the books made reading at home more pleasurable and that her child was more excited about reading.
- Both parents commented on the books being read by older and younger siblings as well as the kindergarteners in the study. One kindergarten student was having his older brother read the books to him, and another kindergarten student was being joined during the reading times at home by a younger sibling who was 3-years old.
- Both parents requested more books for reading at home.

The simple act of providing access to these books made reading at home a more frequent family activity and provided opportunities for discussion between parent and child about the content of the books as well as the pictures. Krashen (1998) provides insight into the importance of access when he discussed that the average Spanish-speaking family in the United States had only 22 books in the home including all books and not only children's books . Krashen (1998) further emphasized that the simple act of providing interesting books for students is a powerful incentive for reading. Access to books that children and parents can access and enjoy together is essential to a literacy-rich environment which supports literacy learning and the connection between home and the school.

Requests for more at-home reading

Providing this access to books for the Latino families and students was met with an overwhelming response for requests from parents, and at times urgent pleas, for more books. In terms of the kindergarten students in the study, more than two-thirds of the families with students designated as ESL requested the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books to read to their children at home. At the Hispanic Parent Group there was almost full participation with 17 requests for books from a group that has attendance numbers of up to 20 mothers and fathers attending the group. This level of parent interest in the books continued throughout the study.

This continued level of parent interest in the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books was not simply an initial curiosity but it became clear that the books played a significant role in literacy learning at home because of the considerable effort that parents made to ensure their children received the books. A primary example of this effort on the part of parents occurred at the final meeting with the Hispanic Parent Group when the researcher offered families the opportunity to continue at-home reading with the books now that the study was complete. At the end of the meeting, parents eagerly approached the researcher requesting books for their children that they wanted to take home that same day. The researcher emphasized to these eager parents that they would indeed get the books but that since today was the last day of the study the books were being checked-in to be placed in classrooms for the teachers to send home after winter break. When the parents heard that they would not get the books until after the two-week break, the parents initiated the idea of having the books sent home with their children that same week before the start of winter break. This eagerness for the bilingual and/or culturally

relevant books was not only evidenced by parents at the Hispanic Parent Group, but was also seen with parents taking the initiative to contact the school personally about their desire for bilingual and culturally/relevant books to read at home. One mother came to school twice with the purpose of talking to the ESL translator to ensure that her daughter received the books for at-home reading. Another mother called the ESL teacher's assistant at the school to find out how she could exchange the books she had for more books since she was not able to make the Hispanic parent meeting that month and then took the initiative to bring in the two bins of books she had been reading at home to be replaced with more books. Parents in this study not only responded positively with requests for the books but also took the initiative to ensure that their families continued to receive the books which was evidence of collaboration between home and school with the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books serving as a starting point for this collaborative stance.

The opportunity in this study for parents to access bilingual and/or culturally relevant books provided an opening for the language and culture of the families to be acknowledged and affirmed. De Gaetano (2007) when discussing low parent participation rates for minority groups emphasizes that an issue that must be considered is that school parent involvement policies can overlook the diverse needs of minority families by assuming that they have the same experience and needs as White, middle-class parents. De Gaetano (2007) further states when considering parent involvement that "...a one-size-fits-all framework does not address ethnic diversity..." (p. 146). The heart of collaboration in this study was the importance of connecting with families through dialogue about what diverse learners and their families need in order to be

actively involved in their child's literacy learning. This dialogue between students, parents, and teachers resulted in findings reflecting a need which is seemingly simple: provide bilingual and/or culturally relevant books to increase literacy learning opportunities for Latino students and their families.

A Collaborative Stance: Utilizing Language as a Resource

A central finding in this study was that using the families' home language as a resource for literacy learning and communication was a key factor in families being able to read the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books and also was essential for communication with these families. An example of the importance of utilizing the home language, which for the Latino families in this study was utilizing Spanish, came from the nightly homework assignment at this school. Reading for 20 minutes each night is a requirement for homework at the school where this study took place, so providing books in a language that parents can access is critical to completing this seemingly "simple" homework assignment. An important finding from this study was that in order to empower Latino students and families to read together at home and to foster communication with the school, resources must be provided in the language that the parents can access. The bilingual format of the books and materials in this study provided this access.

Using Spanish as a Resource: Bilingual Books

Access to bilingual books was a topic that parents in this study consistently made positive comments about and was also a topic of parent requests for books being provided specifically in the bilingual format. A note that was received from a mother expressed

this appreciation for the bilingual books and the connection between the home language and school-based literacy learning. This mother wrote in English,

This books are great in our house. Mom is bilingual. Dad is Spanish speaking only but he's been taking English classes and it was great to hear him reading this books to our son. So our family is taking advantage of this program. Thank you.

Another parent, a father, talked to the researcher at the Hispanic Parent Group regarding how helpful the books were to his wife who could only read in Spanish. He told the researcher that the bilingual books provided his wife the opportunity to read the books to their son and to also discuss the content of the books because the books were in Spanish which was the language the mother could access. Another indicator that the bilingual format of the books was instrumental in providing opportunities for literacy learning was found in the pre-and post-surveys about the books. Parents consistently responded that they wanted access to books in both Spanish and English and that their children enjoyed reading the books in both Spanish and English. Providing bilingual books provided these parents with access to books that could be read at home, to engage in dialogue about the books, and complete a common homework requirement.

Using Spanish as a Resource: Bilingual Written Communication

Providing bilingual parent communication was instrumental in connecting the language of school with the language of home in this study. There were several indicators that providing communication in both Spanish and English allowed parents to participate in the study and to participate in literacy learning with their children at home.

First of all, when parents responded to the recruitment letter from the researcher indicating interest in the study and the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books, 19 out of 24 families responded to this letter utilizing the Spanish translation. All the materials, including this recruitment letter, were provided with an English translation and a Spanish translation for parents in this study. Second of all, the surveys, reading logs, and other communication with parents including written communication from parents were in both English and Spanish and indicated that some parents used solely Spanish, some used a combination of English and Spanish and some used only English to respond. The third example came from a conversation between the researcher and a translator concerning the importance of bilingual written communication. This translator reiterated the importance of written communication being provided in a bilingual format because of the Latino families who could only access important school-related correspondence if the communication was in Spanish.

Using Spanish as a Resource: Bilingual Oral Communication

Providing bilingual parent communication orally was also instrumental in connecting the language of home with the language of school in this study. At each meeting of the Hispanic Parent Group there was a translator to relay to parents what the researcher was communicating pertaining to reading at home with their children, interactive dialogue during reading, and other aspects of the study. The translator would translate to Spanish what the researcher was saying as well as translate to English questions or comments from parents for the researcher. This translation provided a back-and-forth dialogue between the researcher and parents that would have been impossible without Spanish and English translation. A translator was also provided when the

researcher met with parents during parent/teacher conferences to discuss how parents and children were enjoying the books at home because the parents who attended the conferences spoke only in Spanish.

As emphasized by Escamilla, Chavez, and Vigil (2005), many in education whether teachers or administrators see language differences as problems or deficits that need to be “eradicated” rather than as a resource that can be built upon (p. 133). This study consistently showed that schools have the opportunity to build bridges with the communities they serve by giving families the tools to be partners in their children’s education and specifically to foster an atmosphere of literacy success inside and outside of school by providing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books to foster literacy learning for families and students. Connecting with families in a personal way is essential to effective parent-to-school dialogue and this study supported the critical importance of providing this dialogue whether written or verbal in a language the families can access.

A Collaborative Stance: Students’ Bilingual and Bicultural Identities

The findings in this study consistently showed that the students in this study were just as eager to access the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books as their parents proved to be throughout the study. The first example of this engagement on the part of students was evidenced in the *Home Reading Log* (see Appendix A) where the students rated the bilingual and /or culturally relevant books as “Great”, “Okay”, or” “Did not Like”. The students, like their parents, consistently responded with positive ratings of the books such as “Great” or “Okay” with no indication in the *Home Reading Log* of any books that the students did not enjoy. The second example of this engagement on the part of students was evidenced in the *Home Reading Survey* (see Appendix B) where it

was indicated that the students enjoyed reading books in both English and in Spanish. The third example was in the *Home Reading Survey (Part 2)* which was given at the end of the study (see Appendix C). In this survey, it was indicated that the students asked to read more often when given the opportunity to have the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books. The final example of student engagement came from student responses to the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books in journal writing. Several students completed journal entries adding descriptors of their favorite character or favorite part of the books that were sent home. The students at times would write in complete sentences such as, “My favorite part is when she cooks the bread.” This student was writing about the bilingual book entitled *The Little Red Hen*. At other times, the students would write in phrases such as “Puss in boots” sharing about another bilingual book or simply writing “Princess” when writing about *The Princess and the Pea*.

The students in this study consistently showed evidence of the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books which supported their bilingual and bicultural identities providing opportunities for the students to be engaged and excited about reading. One kindergarten student in particular exemplified this excitement over the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books. First of all, both researchers noticed that this student initiated returning her books each week without ever being reminded. She would place her “Bag of Books” filled with her books for the week on her teacher’s chair and when she noticed the bag was filled with new books, she would eagerly take the books to her backpack with a smile that emanated joy. Second of all, this kindergartener would initiate interaction with the researcher and her teacher about the books. Each week when the researcher came to the classroom to deliver the books, this young girl would smile at the

researcher or come up to the researcher to interact or initiate conversation about the books. She shared about reading the books with her older sibling, younger sibling, and her mother as well as would share which books were her favorites. Her kindergarten teacher was enthusiastic about her progress in literacy learning in terms of being able to be an engaged learner who could share her favorite books as well as tell why they were her favorite. In the words of her teacher, “That is huge!” When the study was over and the books were being shared with other Latino families who requested the books, this young girl told her teacher, “My little brother misses the books.” The researchers then made sure that she, and the other families requesting books, continued to get the books even after the study was complete.

Two other students from the study exemplified this eagerness on the part of the students to have their identity recognized in terms of their language and culture in order to engage in literacy learning. The first student was a fourth grade boy. On the first day the researcher brought the “Bin of Books” that were requested at the Hispanic Parent Group to this fourth grader, he asked; “Do you speak Spanish?” When the researcher responded “Un poco” and then added “Como Esta?” which were two expressions that the researcher remembered from high school Spanish class, this fourth grader started to talk excitedly in Spanish. This bilingual student was excited and proud to show the researcher the use of his Spanish language as evidenced by a big grin from ear-to-ear. The second example was another kindergarten student. After the first week of the study, this young girl excitedly showed the researcher her journal which was almost completely full with pictures and words about the stories she had read with her parents that week. Each week when the researcher went to exchange the girls’ books, she would smile and

always add “Thank you.” The last week of the study when the books were being checked-in so the books could be placed in classrooms to be sent home by teachers, this young girl stood with her backpack open waiting and hoping for another set of books.

This study gave evidence that when there is a collaborative stance between home and school with resources such as bilingual and/or culturally relevant books being provided to Latino students and families, the students and their families are not only engaged in literacy learning opportunities at home but also are able to access their bicultural and bilingual identities. Au (1998) emphasizes the importance of literacy being “personally meaningful” for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds which connects to the focus in this study on supporting students’ bicultural and bilingual identities (p. 309). The focus in this study on resources that provided families access to their home language and culture was part of this collaborative stance between home and school which supported literacy learning as a meaningful experience for students as well as for their families.

Discussion

The findings in this study describe how one elementary school utilized bilingual and/or culturally relevant books to enact collaboration between home and school to increase literacy learning opportunities for students and their families. Quintero (2007) emphasizes supporting multiple languages and identities which contribute to forming new relationships and meanings which is the foundation of this study with bilingual and/or culturally relevant books. The new relationships and meanings based on dialogue with families and students in this study provide important insights for teachers. The following section consists of a discussion of what the researcher terms “lessons learned” to

reinforce the conception that it was not only the parents and students who were impacted by the study but also the researcher who as a teacher learned important lessons for classroom practice. The lessons based on the data analysis include: *Lessons Learned: Possibilities for Students and Families* and *Lessons Learned: Possibilities for teachers*.

Lessons Learned: Possibilities for Students and Families

When a student's home identity conflicts with the culture of school this leads to "cultural discontinuity" which can negatively affect learning (Herrera, Perez, & Escamilla, 2010). A kindergarten student in this study exemplified in human terms the effects of cultural discontinuity and this disconnect between the language and culture of home and the language and culture of school. This girl started kindergarten as the only English Language Learner in her classroom. At first, she only spoke Spanish at school even though later in the year as she became more at ease she started to speak English in addition to Spanish. This kindergartener started each day of her school experience by coming to her teacher crying with her hands clasped tightly in front of her pleading to go home. As she continued crying and pleading, she would lead the teacher to the phone in the classroom hoping for the teacher to call her mother so she would be able to leave school and go home. This continued day-after-day until one day the teacher happened to read a book which contained words in Spanish as well as in English. This book happened to be the one and the only book from the school's reading program which contained words in Spanish as well as reference to the Latino culture. This wise, caring teacher used this opportunity to talk to the class about their fellow-student who could not only speak the Spanish words in this book but could actually speak Spanish fluently. During the reading of this book, this teacher used this girl as the "expert" to help pronounce the

words and used this girls' knowledge to discuss what each word meant. This teacher who was at this time also earning her TESOL endorsement was aware of building on the knowledge that this young English language learner brought to school as well as her identity. On the playground that day, the teacher noticed other students from class initiating interaction with this girl for the first time that year because they wanted to know this "expert" who they had overlooked until that day. This day was the beginning of a transformation for this student from crying and pleading to leave school to being an engaged learner who now says enthusiastically with a smile on her face, "I like school. I like my friends." This kindergarten student was also the most outwardly excited and enthusiastic participant in this study who would smile, wave, or approach the researcher to engage the researcher in discussion about the books each time she noticed the researcher delivering the bilingual and/or culturally books to her classroom.

This one student tells the story of many learners in classrooms who are seemingly disengaged or reluctant learners but who with the insight of a wise, caring teacher can become active, engaged learners by utilizing culture and language resources. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) conceptualize the opportunity that this teacher provided this student to access student knowledge as building on this student's "funds of knowledge" which enables teachers and students to engage in an exchange of knowledge connecting the family and the school while contributing to the content of lessons within the classroom. This call for educational opportunities within the classroom to embrace and build upon students' bilingual and bicultural identities and their funds of knowledge is echoed by numerous experts in the field of education as well as in the field of second-language acquisition (Au, 1998; Cummins, 1986; Herrera, Perez, & Escamilla, 2010;

Jimenez, 2000; Kong & Fitch, 2002; Moll & Diaz, 1987; Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2007; Thorne, 2005).

A central focus in this study was building on students' bilingual and bicultural identities as evidenced by the primary role the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books played in the study. This study provided an opportunity for Latino families to access books that were in both Spanish and English which supported their bicultural and bilingual identities. The focus in this study on using bilingual resources supports a changing conception of literacy as well as changing conceptions of language learning. In terms of literacy, the broader conception includes a move away from a focus on mastering a code in literacy learning to consider the impact of an individual's language on literacy including an emphasis on social interaction (Cummins, 2008; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). In terms of language, the broader conception of language learning parallels a broader conception of literacy with an emphasis on the language learner and the broader social world (Norton, 2010; Peirce, 1995; Wong & McKay, 1996). The findings in this study support these broader conceptions of language learning and literacy learning considering language as a bridge to literacy and increased social networks instead of language acting as a barrier to literacy and social interaction.

The findings in this study suggest that when students' and parents' bicultural and bilingual identities are supported that this support provides access to not only literacy learning opportunities but also provides access to broader social networks that impact the identities of diverse learners and families. The first example of this access was previously discussed in the example of the kindergarten student gaining access to broader social networks in terms of her interactions with other students in class, her teacher, and the

researcher who delivered the bilingual and/or culturally relevant books. The second example which specifically gives evidence to language providing access to broader social networks is the interaction at the monthly Hispanic Parent Group meetings which were central to this study. These lunchtime meetings which are held throughout the school year in the school library typically have twenty Latino parents, both mothers and fathers, attending the meetings. These meetings are orchestrated by a supportive principal and a supportive school board member who provide opportunities for bilingual dialogue with parents regarding topics of interest or concern. Providing parents the opportunity to participate in this study as well as to be engaged in discussions would not be possible without the commitment at this school to providing bilingual translation at these meetings which is provided by the school board member who is bilingual. The researcher who attended three meetings of the Hispanic Parent Group during the time of the study noticed the positive interactions and dialogue between parents, principal, and the school board member. Through not only being an observer of these interactions and dialogue but also as a participant, the researcher suggests that the reason that these parents are actively engaged each month in these meetings is because through bilingual dialogue the Latino families are accessing broader social networks with decision-makers at the school and at the district level which enacts collaboration and engages these families in their children's education.

The examples from this study provide evidence of the centrality of language and culture to engage Latino families and students in not only literacy learning through at-home reading but also to engage in expanding social networks, or in other works collaboration. Norton Peirce (1995) emphasizes in her conception of "investment" the

social identity of the language learner and the inter-play between power relations, social interaction, and language (p. 3). Norton (2010) uses “investment”, as a substitute for the term “motivation” or engagement in language learning, to describe the “...socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak, read, or write it” (p. 3). The concept of investment links language to accessing social networks as well as a developing a sense of identity (Case, 2004; Cummins, 2008; Peirce, 1995). When teachers give parents and students the tools to engage in literacy learning which in this study consisted of providing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books parents are engaged as they are given opportunities to build on their bilingual and bicultural identities.

This study connected language to accessing social networks at school in terms of requirements for at-home reading and opportunities for interactions surrounding school activities. Pierce (1995) found in her research that in second-language acquisition that a primary focus must be on the language learners’ social identity in relation to speakers of the target language, in this study that would be English speakers, and how this interaction must be considered in terms of “...inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction” (p. 13). In this study, most of the parents used Spanish to communicate and therefore it was necessary to provide translation whether it was oral in the form of having a translator at the Hispanic Parent Group meeting or whether the communication was written. This study suggests that access to language in the form of bilingual communication is central to accessing opportunities and interactions that support the home-school connection.

An essential finding from this study is that Latino parents and students actively engage in reading at home and in parent involvement at school when Latino families are provided books in a bilingual and/or culturally relevant format and translation to Spanish which supports the bilingual and bicultural identities of the Latino parents and students. Engaged readers are readers who are intrinsically motivated to read and who read frequently (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Research pertaining to student engagement in reading shows that reading engagement is enhanced when students read books that are relevant to their own lives and when students have access to a print rich environment at school (Cummins, 2011; Gambrell, 2011). Research pertaining to parent involvement indicates that Latino parents become more involved when there is an emphasis on their culture and language (De Gaetano, 2007; Taylor et al., 2008). Conceptualizing this connection between the home and the school is not a suggestion for educational practice but is indispensable to engage families and students in literacy learning is critical to a broader understanding of meeting the educational needs of diverse learners and their families.

Lessons Learned: Possibilities for Teachers

New knowledge not only better enables teachers to understand students and their world but also empowers the learners themselves...Observational studies help the teacher understand the student's world from the student's point of view rather than from that of the teacher's own culture. Students are the informants in teacher research,

helping us to learn both the recipes for behavior in their cultures and the learning strategies that they employ (Hubbard & Power, 2003).

At the heart of this study is not only enacting collaborative relationships between home and school, but also a broader understanding of the possibilities for teachers for connecting with diverse culturally and linguistics learners in order to have a deepened sense of the experience of literacy learning for diverse learners and their families. The essence of the possibilities for teachers in this study is for teachers to rediscover the power of their instructional decisions in terms of literacy learning and how these decisions affect the diverse learners in their classrooms. Cummins (1986) conceptualizes the role of teachers with diverse learners as a role where culture and language is “additive” instead of “subtractive” in terms of incorporating the minority culture and language into school and communicating to parents and students that their culture and language are valued (p. 25). When teachers embrace this “additive” stance towards culture and language, they open up possibilities for connections with diverse learners and their families in order to promote literacy learning opportunities at home and at school.

A central lesson learned in this study is that this “additive” stance towards culture and language not only empowers linguistically and culturally diverse students and families but also provides teachers with possibilities to transform classroom practice. The possibilities begin with teachers recognizing an issue or problem within their classroom and taking action to address this issue with a proactive stance of recognizing that past practice may not always be best practice. This study originated in this manner with the issue of providing access to books for Latino families and students. The first example of

this “additive” stance towards culture and language which can result in the transformation of classroom practice was experienced by the researcher in this study. As a granddaughter of an immigrant and as a daughter who heard stories of her own mother being discriminated against because of the stigma of immigration, the researcher was confident that she was an educator who was sensitive to students from diverse cultural backgrounds and who provided an atmosphere within the classroom which built upon the strengths and multiple identities of culturally diverse students. When the books were ordered for this study (see Appendix D and Appendix E), the researcher looked through her personal collection of hundreds of children’s books representing heroes such as Ruby Bridges, the African American girl who stood up to angry mobs who were fighting to keep the status quo of segregation in the south; Chief Seattle, the great Native American chief who stood for environmental awareness; Gertrude Ederle, the first woman to swim the English Channel in a time when women were not allowed to vote and Allen Say’s story of his *Grandfather’s Journey* as a man straddling the worlds of Japan and America in a time of war. This list of heroes and inspiring stories from children’s literature could go on and on. However, the realization that stopped the researcher in her tracks and brought a sickening feeling that washed over her like a tidal wave was the realization that in this vast collection of children’s literature representing a multitude of cultures, ethnicities, and perspectives; there were no books that represented the Latino culture or that were bilingual. This realization affected the researcher powerfully because she knew she was not alone: how many other teachers did not have the Latino population represented in their classroom libraries or in their literature discussions in the classroom? How does it affect Latino students when they are 37% of the school population in the

state where this study took place yet are not represented in books within the classroom? (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009).

The second example of this “additive” stance towards culture and language resulting in increased possibilities for teachers was experienced by the researcher in terms of communicating to the families in a bilingual format provided by either oral translation or written translation. During this study, translation and dialogue in both Spanish and English were provided to families in order to enable communication between the school and the home. However, the researcher found that this translation was not only essential to the parents but opened up broader possibilities for communication for the researcher. During the first meeting of the Hispanic Parent Group, the researcher personally experienced the language barrier that families from diverse linguistic backgrounds face due to the researcher relying completely on the translator to get the information to the mostly Spanish-speaking parents about the books available through the study, dialogue during reading, and the importance of reading at home. After the meeting, the researcher noted in her teacher notebook, “The format of having a translator right there was fabulous because I knew my message was getting across.” At each interaction with the parents whether it was at future meetings of the Hispanic Parent Group or at conferences talking to the parents, there was always a translator. The researcher noted again in her teacher notebook at the end of the study, “At first I was intimidated speaking because I was not able to speak Spanish. However, I became very comfortable with the dialogue back-and-forth with the parents and translator. I became comfortable initiating conversation with parents without the translator as well and became aware of times I knew I was not being

understood and then would ask a bilingual parent to translate.” In order to connect with linguistically diverse families communication is critical, so building on an additive stance towards language allows teachers opportunities to engage in dialogue with the families through providing translation for not only the families but for teachers to foster this interactive dialogue which is essential to building connections between home and school.

As discussed earlier, Peirce’s (1995) conception of investment and language learning emphasizes the interaction between identity, language, and broader social networks. The Latino families as well as the researcher established access to broader social networks as both researcher and participants experienced the possibilities that bilingual communication can provide in breaking down language barriers. The researcher personally experienced access to broader social networks through bilingual communication by being a part of the Hispanic Parent Group and being able to interact with Latino parents throughout the study and after the study at school activities. The Latino parents and the researcher established a relationship through these interactions with just recently a parent asking the researcher at a school event, “Where have you been?” referring to the researcher no longer being at the Hispanic Parent Group meetings since the research study was complete. This study supports Peirce’s (1995) findings that identity is dynamic instead of static and that language is the gateway to opening social networks.

Finally, teachers encounter possibilities not only through an “additive” stance towards culture and language but also by developing insight into another’s lived reality. Freire (1970) emphasizes transformative dialogue as an exchange of ideas where there is

critical thinking and a relationship with the goal of mutual understanding. Through this dialogue with families, the researchers had the opportunity to learn of another's experience. For example, one parent at the Hispanic Parent Group initiated a discussion with the researcher about not having the ability to read one of the children's books that had been sent home. This parents' vulnerability and honesty about having difficulty reading provided the researcher insight into the many layers of access when it comes to literacy learning opportunities in the home: access to books, access to language, and access to literacy for parents.

Teachers access opportunities for broader possibilities when they have the tools of language and literacy learning to meet students and families where they are and provide the proper scaffolding to help them reach their highest potential. In order to accomplish this "sky is the limit" mentality, teachers must remember as stated by Corson (1997) "...the purposes, effects, and types of literacy for any single group may be very different from those established and recognized in schools" (p. 680). Teachers are open to broader possibilities when they know and understand their students' struggles and successes in order to provide them with the keys to a lifetime of literacy. As stated by Gee (2009), "Literacy needs to be viewed as embedded in multiple socially and culturally constructed practices, not seen as a uniform set of mental abilities or processes" (p. 196). The goal must be to provide the keys to language and literacy learning for all students who enter the doors of all classrooms.

Implications

This study emphasizes the interconnected nature of literacy learning, language, and culture which has parallels to the interconnected nature of investment, language

learning, and social networks as conceptualized by second-language researcher Bonny Norton Peirce (Cummins, 2008; Norton, 2010, p. 2). The idea of investment in language learning parallels the conception of cultural discontinuity and provides teachers with a deeper understanding of diverse learners within their classrooms as well as provides a rationale for building on the home culture and language to engage students in literacy learning. Morrell (2007) when discussing the issue of high-drop out rates for minority groups emphasizes how the culture of marginalized groups is not represented in current conceptions of literacy which leads to decreased motivation and achievement. The concern is the lack of “meaningful links” that students from diverse cultures make with the traditional school curriculum (Morrell, 2007). This study consistently shows that Latino students and parents are actively engaged in literacy learning when given access to bilingual and/or culturally relevant books which built on their language and culture.

A World of Possibilities

In a time when teachers feel almost unbearable pressure to standardize what we do, it is important to begin with the conviction that we are no longer teaching if what we teach is more important than who we teach or how we teach (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 10).

The essence of this study is simple: provide books that families from diverse cultures and language backgrounds can access to foster literacy learning, collaboration and future academic success. Yet, in the researcher’s 12-years of teaching in public schools and in the search through vast amounts of educational literature for examples of providing bilingual and/or culturally relevant books to families; it was discovered that providing these books is not a common educational practice as evidenced by a lack of

literature to support or even discuss this practice. The questions that consistently troubled the researcher through this search of the literature was: As a predominantly monolingual nation, can educators embrace students' bilingual and bicultural diversity as a strength to be built upon to combat comments such as, "Why are you providing books in Spanish and English? Shouldn't the books only be in English?" Current research can provide perspective on these questions; however, in terms of language, feelings about language can usurp research-based realities about language.

To respond to those who cling to firm beliefs regarding moving the Spanish-speaking community towards a monolingual status focusing on an English-only stance, facts must be considered instead of feelings. First of all to consider in this pursuit of facts instead of feelings is that consistently in the research the goal for immigrants themselves and for policy-makers with regards to language is for Spanish-speakers to learn English because English is considered the language of power, the language that provides access to broader social networks and the language that provides a gateway to future success (Case, 2004; Cassidy, Garcia, Tejeda-Delgado, Garret, Martinez-Garcia, & Hinojosa, 2004; Taylor, Bernhard, Garg, & Cummins, 2008; Perry, Mitchell Kay, & Brown, 2008; Valdes, 2000). Second of all when considering facts in regards to language use, researchers have found that Spanish speaking families are indeed learning English and are acquiring English similar to other waves of immigrants and are shifting away from their native language (Valdes, 2000). Mexican immigrants like other Latino immigrants are transitioning to English and a bilingual and bicultural identity with 31.3 % of this population speaking more English than Spanish and 26.7 % speaking both English and Spanish (Valdes, 2000). The difference with Latino immigrants, particularly those from

Mexico, compared to other immigrant groups is that they tend to maintain their Spanish language because of their close location to border areas and the country of Mexico (Valdes, 2000).

The influence educators have to provide an atmosphere of collaboration for all students and their families is essential to not only educational success but success in life beyond the classroom. The transforming power of literacy and the opportunities it brings are simply stated in that old song by Louie Armstrong, "I think to myself, what a wonderful world." That is the possibility of what literacy can bring to the world: a wonderful world, a new perspective, change, transformation. As stated by Au (1998), "To overcome the barriers of exclusion posed by conventional literacy instructional practices, educators must work with an expanded vision of literacy strategies and concepts in school, so that school definitions of literacy are transformed. In this way, educators create the possibility not only of helping students to become proficient in literacy but of enabling them to be empowered through literacy, to use literacy as a tool in bettering societal conditions" (p. 308). It is not knowledge which is power but the ability to take that knowledge to the level of application to our own lives that brings transformation. Ah...the possibilities or to paraphrase Dr. Seuss, "Oh, the places we can go!"

Take Action

1. Get bilingual.

Do your bilingual students and families have access to books and school correspondence in a language they can access? When you send out book orders are options for bilingual children's books available to families?

2. Check your bookshelf.

Can your students access books about their culture or language in your classroom? Are all cultures within your classroom represented in the children's literature in your classroom?

3. Imagine.

Put yourselves in your students' shoes or better yet take a turn sitting in their desks at the end of a difficult day and imagine what coming from a diverse language and cultural background may be like for diverse learners as they experience school. What can you do to connect diverse students and families with the culture of school?

4. Be inspired.

Remember the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world".

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Appendix B
Home Reading Survey

1. What are your child's two favorite books?

2. Do you and your child go to the Carson City Library for books to read at home?

- Yes
- No

3. Do you and your child go the store to get books to read at home?

- Yes
- No

4. How many times during the week do you read a book to your child?

- 0-2 times
- 3-4 times
- 5-7 times
- 8 or more

5. Do you talk about the books while you read with your child such as interesting words in the book or about what is happening in the book?

- Yes
- No

6. Does your child have books at home that are his/her own books?

- Yes
- No

7. Is it ever hard to find a book that your child wants to read?

- Yes
- No

8. Does your child ask to be read to while at home?

- Yes
- No

9. Do you like to read books in Spanish to your child?

- Yes
- No

10. Do you like to read books in English to your child?

- Yes
- No

Appendix C
Home Reading Survey (Part 2)

- 1. What did you think of the “Bags of Books” that were sent home each week?**
 - The books were great!
 - There were some good books and some we did not like.
 - We did not like the books that were sent home.

- 2. Did you and your child spend more time reading together with the books provided by the “Bags of Books” than you did before the books were sent home?**
 - Yes
 - No

- 3. How many times during the week did you read a book to your child?**
 - 0-2 times
 - 3-4 times
 - 5-7 times
 - 8 or more

- 4. Did you and your child talk about the books and the interesting words in the books with the “Bags of Books”?**
 - Yes
 - No

- 5. Did the “Bags of Books” make it easier to find books that your child wanted to read?**
 - Yes
 - No

- 6. Did your child ask to read more at home with the “Bags of Books”?**
 - Yes
 - No

- 7. What did you think of having books sent home in Spanish and English?**
 - The books were great!
 - We wanted the books only in English.
 - We wanted the books only in Spanish.

- 8. Would you be interested in receiving more books from school that your child is able to read at home or that you are able to read to your child?**
 - Yes
 - No

9. What were your child's two favorite books?

10. Have you seen any changes in your child's excitement about books since the books have been sent home? What changes have you seen?

Appendix D
Book List for Kindergarten

- The Ugly Duckling by Luz Orihuela (Bilingual edition)
- Cinderella by Luz Orihuela(Bilingual edition)
- Sleeping Beauty by Luz Orihuela (Bilingual edition)
- Little Red Riding Hood by Luz Orihuela (Bilingual edition)
- The Three Little Pigs by Luz Orihuela (Bilingual edition)
- The Little Red Hen by Carol Ottolenghi (Spanish and English version)
- The Princess and the Pea by Carol Ottolenghi (Spanish and English version)
- The Three Billy Goats Gruff by Carol Ottolenghi (Spanish and English version)
- The Velveteen Rabbit by Carol Ottolenghi (Spanish and English version)
- The Gingerbread Man by Catherine McCafferty (Spanish and English version)
- Goldilocks and the Three Bears by Candice Ransom (Spanish and English version)
- Jack and the Beanstalk by Carol Ottolenghi (Spanish and English version)
- Curious George Cleans Up by H.A. Rey (Bilingual Edition)
- Curious George at the Aquarium by H.A. Rey (Bilingual Edition)
- Curious George and the Pinata Party by H.A. Rey (Bilingual Edition)
- Curious George Plants a Seed by H.A. Rey (Bilingual Edition)
- Curious George and the Firefighters by H.A. Rey (Bilingual Edition)
- Curious George visits the library by H.A. Rey (Bilingual Edition)
- Curious George by H.A. Rey (Bilingual Edition)
- Curious George: Dinosaur Tracks by H.A. Rey (Bilingual Edition)
- Perro Grande. Perro Pequeno. Big Dog...Little Dog by P.D Eastman
(Spanish/English Version)
- El Gato en el sombrero/The Cat in the hat by Dr. Seuss and Carlos Rivera (bilingual book)
- Tortillitas para Mama and other Nursery Rhymes (bilingual edition) by Margot Griego, Betsy Bucks, Sharon Gilbert
- Pio Peep-Traditional Spanish Nursery Rhymes by Alma Flor Ada

- De Colores and Other Latin American Folksongs for Children (Anthology/Spanish-English Version) by Jose Luis-Orozco
- Eric and Julieta-Como mama-Just like mom by Isabel Munoz
- Calavera Abecedario: A Day of the Dead Alphabet Book by Jeanette Winter
- N is for Navidad by Susan Middleton Elya and Merry Banks
- Quinto, Day and Night/Quinto, Dia y Noche By Ina Cumpiano (bilingual book)
- Marimba: Animals from A to Z by Mora

Appendix E
Book List for 1st-5th

- Borreguita and the Coyote by Verna Aardema
- Iguanas in the Snow and Other Winter Poems by Francisco Alarcon and Maya Christina Gonzalez
- From the Bellybutton of the moon and other summer poems by Alarcon/Gonzalez
- Angels Ride Bikes-And other fall poems by Alarcon/Gonzalez
- Laughing Tomatoes and other summer poems by Alarcon/Gonzalez
- A Gift from Papa Diego (Bilingual) by Benjamin Alire Saenz
- Amelia's Road by Jacobs Altman
- Return to Sender by Julia Alvarez
- The First Tortilla: A Bilingual Story by Rodolfo Anaya and Amy Cordova
- The Santero's Miracle (Bilingual) by Rudolfo Anaya and Amy Cordova
- Barrio-Jose's Neighborhood by George Ancona
- Charro: the Mexican Cowboy by George Ancona
- Fiesta USA by George Ancona
- Frida: Viva La Vida! Long live life by Carmen T. Bernier-Grand
- Rapunzel: A bilingual book by Fransc Bofill and Joma Joma
- My Name is Celia: The Life of Celia Cruz by Monica Brown
- My Name is Gabito by Monica Brown
- My Name is Gabriela: the life of Gabriela Mistral by Monica Brown
- Pele, King of Soccer by Monica Brown and Rudy Guttierrez
- Sol a Sol: Bilingual Poems by Lori Marie Carlson
- Lupe Vargas and her super best friend (Multilingual edition) by Amy Costales
- Dancing Miranda by Diane De Anda
- The Empanadas that Abuela Made (Bilingual) by Bertrand Delange Ventura
- Diego! Bigger than Life by David Diaz
- Diego! Bigger than Life by David Diaz
- Abuela by Arthus Dorros
- Papa and Me by Arthur Dorros

- Isla by Arthur Dorros
- Cuckoo: a Mexican Folktale by Louis Ehlert
- I Love Saturday y Domingos by Alma Flor Ada
- My Name is Maria Isabel by Alma Flor Ada
- The Gold Coin by Alma Flor Ada
- Dear Peter Rabbit by Alma Flor Ada
- Your Truly Goldilocks by Alma Flor Ada
- With love, Little Red Hen by Alma Flor Ada
- The Lizard and the Sun by Alma Flor Ada
- Tales our Abuelitas Told: a Hispanic folktale collection by Isabel Campy and Alma Flor Ada
- Gathering the Sun: An Alphabet in Spanish and English by Alma Flor Ada and Simon Silva
- Whoever you are by Mem Fox
- Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez by Kathleen Frull and Yuyi Morales
- A Very Smart Cat by Yolanda V. Fundora (bilingual edition)
- My Colors, My World by Maya Christina Gonzalez
- The Bossy Gallito (Bilingual) by Gonzalez
- The Storyteller's Candle by Lucia Gonzalez and Lulu Delacre
- The Day it Snowed Tortillas by Joe Hayes and Antonio Castro Lopez
- Calling the Doves by Juan Felipe Herrera
- La Miraposa by Francisco Jimenez, Simon Silva
- My Abuelita by Tony Johnston and Yuyi Morales
- Mama and Papa Have a Store by Amelia Lau Carling
- In my Family by Carmen Lomas Garza
- Family Pictures by Carmen Lomas Garza and Sandra Cisneros
- Magic Windows-Ventanas Magicas by Carmen Lomas Garza
- The Woman Who Outshone the Sun by Martinez
- Los Gatos Black on Halloween by Marisa Montes
- Juan Bobo Goes to Work by Marisa Montes and Joe Cepeda

- Dona Flor: A Tall Tale about a Giant Woman with a great big heart by Pat Mora
- Book Fiesta by Pat Mora
- Gracias Thanks by Pat Mora
- Tomas and the Library Lady by Pat Mora
- The Desert is my Mother by Mora
- The Rainbow Tulip by Pat Mora
- The Night the Moon Fell by Pat Mora
- Yum! Mmmmm! Que Rico! By Pat Mora
- Abuelos by Pat Mora
- Listen to the Desert by Pat Mora
- Becoming Naomi Leon by Pam Munoz Ryan
- The Dreamer by Pam Munoz Ryan
- Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan
- Hello Ocean by Pam Munoz Ryan
- Me, Frida by Amy Novesky
- Puss in Boots by Carol Ottolenghi (Spanish and English version)
- First Day Grapes by L. King Perez
- My Diary from Here to There by Amada Irma Perez and Maya Christina Gonzalez
- Lola by Loufane Gladys Rosa-Mendoza (Bilingual book)
- Curious George at the Baseball Game by H.A. Rey (Bilingual Edition)
- The Dog who loved tortillas by Benjamin Alire Saenz (English and Spanish version)
- A Walk with Grandpa/Un paseo con abuelo by Sharon Solomon
- Too Many Tamales by Gary Soto
- Chato's Kitchen by Gary Soto and Susan Guevara
- Chato and the party animals by Gary Soto and Susan Guevara
- Chato Goes Cruisin' by Gary Soto
- Snapshots from the Wedding by Gary Soto
- The Old Man and His Door by Gary Soto
- What can you do with a rebozo? By Carmen Tafolla
- What can you do with a paleta by Tafolla

- Dear Primo: A letter to my cousin by Duncan Tonatiuh
- This House is Made of Mud by Libba Tray
- Grandma's Gift by Eric Velasquez

Appendix F

“Bags of Books”



Appendix G
“Bins of Books”

