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Language Learning, Identity, and Agency:
A Multiple Case Study
of
Adult Hispanic English Language Learners

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Language Learning, Identity, and Agency:
A Multiple Case Study
of
Adult Hispanic English Language Learners

by

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Dedication

To my mother Diana, my partner Rodrigo, and my daughter Julia

for their unconditional love

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Language Learning, Identity, and Agency: A Multiple Case Study of Adult Hispanic English Language Learners

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For the past 30 years, researchers in the field of Second Language Acquisition (Block, 2007; Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001; Norton, 2000) have emphasized the need to integrate the language learner and the language learning context and to analyze relations of power and how they affect the language learner, the language learning processes, and the learner's identities. Several researchers (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; McKay & Wong, 1996; Skilton-Silverstein, 2002; Vitanova, 2005) have studied the connections between language learning, identity, and agency. The participants in these studies were immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia, or Africa living in the U.S., Canada, and Australia. Few studies (Menard-Warwick, 2004, 2009) have analyzed the experiences of adult Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. in relation to English learning and identity construction.

This dissertation reports on a study exploring how five adult Hispanic immigrants learning English in a major city in Texas negotiated their identities as English speakers and exercised agency in contexts where English was spoken. The study also analyzed the

learners' investment in learning English. The sociocultural theory of self and identity developed by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) was the framework which helped conceptualize identity and agency. The work of Norton (2000) on language learning and identity and her notion of investment were used to understand the participants' experiences learning and using English inside and outside the ESL classroom.

A qualitative multiple-case study was conducted to understand the experiences of the participants who were learning English in a community-based ESL program, where the researcher became a participant observer during the six months of data collection. The findings of the study show the complex identity negotiations that the participants underwent in the different contexts where they interacted in English. Social class, immigrant status, and other social factors, such as lack of access to English-speaking contexts, high prevalence of Spanish in contexts where the participants interacted daily, and positioning of the participants (by others and by themselves) as limited English speakers strongly influenced how they negotiated their identities as English speakers. Despite these social factors, the participants exercised agency and were highly invested in learning English.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This dissertation reports on a study about five adult Hispanic immigrants learning English in a major city in central Texas and their identity and agency negotiations as English speakers in their English class as well as in other contexts where English was spoken. In this chapter, I present a general overview of the research topic, the conceptual framework, and the need and purpose of the study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE RESEARCH TOPIC

In English-speaking contexts, knowing or not knowing English has direct consequences on immigrants' lives –from being able to find better jobs, to having English-speaking friends, being able to explain more clearly who they are and what they can do at work, or having the opportunity to know what their children are learning at school. Moreover, what people can or cannot do with the language they are learning has a direct impact on who they are, on how they perceive themselves, and on how other people perceive them. The ways in which language learners are positioned or position themselves in different social contexts (i.e., language learners, immigrants, undocumented immigrants, a person who speaks English with an accent, a nonnative speaker of the language, a person who speaks broken English, etc.) directly influences their identities (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 1997, 2000).

For the past 30 years, researchers in a variety of disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, and second language acquisition (SLA) have been studying the relationship between language learning and identity. Many SLA researchers have argued (Heller, 1987, 1988; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 1997, 2000; Pavlenko, 2002; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Rampton, 1995) that theories of SLA need to integrate the language learner and the language learning context. In so doing, relations of power and how they affect the language learner, language learning processes, and the learner's identities need to be considered and analyzed. These researchers, who have worked within a poststructuralist or socio-constructivist framework, have criticized SLA theories for their dichotomous descriptions of the language learner as either motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, or as a good or a not-so-good language learner. Block (2007) argues that there was a need in the field to move from viewing language learning as mostly a cognitive process to "more socially informed approaches to language-related puzzles" (p. 867).

For example, Norton Peirce (1995) argues that these essentialist distinctions do not capture the complex relationships that exist between language learners and the social world in which they use the target language. Norton Peirce draws upon Bourdieu to explain how relations of power are always present in interactions. Bourdieu (1977) argues that the value of speech cannot be separated from the value of the person that utters the speech. So if in the social world, language learners have to interact with people who believe that learners are "illegitimate speakers" (Bourdieu, 1977) because they speak "with an accent," because they were born in a different country and are "illegal"

immigrants, or because they look a certain way, it might be difficult for language learners to “be heard” and to claim their “right to speech” (Bourdieu, 1977). Consequently, Norton (2000) argues that when learners speak, they are not only communicating with target language speakers but also negotiating “a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world” (p. 11). Norton (1997) uses the term identity to signify "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (p. 410). The fluid nature of identity is important because "every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world" (p. 417).

Norton’s understanding of identity led to the creation of the concept of investment in the language, which takes into consideration the social aspects that influence the learners’ desire to learn and practice the language. Investment reflects “the complex relationship of language learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it” (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 9). Norton (2000) argues that if learners invest in a second language, they do so because they understand that they will obtain different material and symbolic resources that will consequently help them increase the value of their cultural capital (p. 10).

Directly connected to the notion of identity is the notion of human agency, which understands humans as agentive beings who are capable of analyzing critically the circumstances in their lives and of claiming or resisting them. Holland et al. (1998) state

that "[e]ven within grossly asymmetrical power relations, the powerful participants rarely control the weaker so completely that the latter's ability to improvise resistance becomes irrelevant" (p. 277). The concept of agency has emerged only recently in SLA, and few researchers (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Norton Peirce, 1995; McKay & Wong, 1996; Vitanova, 2005) have explored agency as it relates to language learning. As aforementioned, relations of power are a very important part of interactions and learners can be marginalized because of the way they speak, because of the way they look, or both. For instance, in the United States today, the xenophobia and the anti-immigration sentiment that exists toward Hispanics directly influence the way in which Hispanic language learners are positioned in society and in language interactions with other English speakers. However, like all human beings, language learners can accept, reject, or resist the circumstances around them and accept or challenge the ways they are positioned in social interactions.

A variety of research studies (Giroir, 2014, Kinginger, 2004; Lee, 2008, Miller, 2000; Menard-Warwick, 2004, 2009; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Warriner, 2004) have investigated the connections between language learning and identity, language learning and agency, and learners' investment in learning the language. All these studies have contributed to move SLA research into a new direction which understands language learners as having complex identities, which are constantly constructed and negotiated in social situations through the language they are learning. The research studies have analyzed the experiences of immigrant language learners in new environments and have shown that, in the majority of cases, the participants were marginalized and silenced by

"native" speakers and that they had to negotiate their identities and agencies in situations of unequal relations of power. One important point to notice, however, is that the participants in these studies were immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia, the Middle East or Africa who migrated to the United States, Canada, and Australia. In only two of the studies (Menard-Warwick, 2004, 2009) the particular experiences of Hispanic immigrants in the United States are studied in relation to English language learning and identity construction. Given the complex historical and political relations between the United States and Mexico and Central America, and the negative xenophobic feelings about immigration held by many people in the United States today, the language learning experiences of Hispanic immigrants in the United States differ from the experiences of Eastern Europeans in the United States or Asians in Australia. Because of this, it is important to study the particular lived experiences of adult Hispanic learners and how they negotiate their identities and exercise agency in English-speaking contexts in the United States. In response to this gap, the key research question that was addressed in the present study is: How do adult Hispanic immigrants learning English in a major central Texas city negotiate identity and exercise agency in English-speaking contexts?

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Many researchers (Heller, 1987, 1988; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 1997, 2000; Pavlenko, 2002; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Rampton, 1995) in SLA have argued that there is a need to understand the complex relationship

between language learners and the contexts in which they use the language they are learning. It is in these contexts, and in inequitable relations of power, that adult language learners construct and negotiate their identities and participate in acts of agency. Despite the recent shift of attention in SLA to the day-to-day contexts in which learners use English, the number of studies which focus on language learners outside of the classroom is minimal when compared to the number of studies which focus on learners in the language classroom.

Previous research studies that investigated the connections between language learning, identity, and agency have worked with participants from various immigrant groups (Asians, Eastern Europeans, Middle Eastern, Africans) in different countries (Canada, the United States, Australia); however, few studies have examined specifically how Hispanic adult language learners negotiate their identities and agencies in the United States. Considering the complex history that connects Mexico and the United States, Hispanic (Mexican or not) language learners may be positioned differently than other immigrants in social interactions. The experiences of Hispanic language learners interacting in English with other English speakers are different from the experiences of other immigrant groups due to prevalent xenophobia and anti-immigration sentiment in U.S. society directed at immigrants from Latin America, and particularly from Mexico and Central America. In turn, Hispanic language learners negotiate their identities and exercise agency differently from other immigrant groups.

In addition, studies about language, identity, agency, and investment have mostly focused on the experiences of language learners who need to communicate in the

language they are learning in order to "survive" in the new environment where they live (e.g., Cambodians who live in the United States, or Eastern Europeans who live in Canada and the United States). This study focuses on the experiences of Hispanic immigrants, who can "survive" in the new environment (a major central Texas city) without using the dominant language due to the high prevalence of Spanish use in the U.S. --currently, the U.S. is the fifth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world.

When people have to use the language they are learning in order to work, find a place to live, or purchase food, their investment in the language is likely to be different from that of people who do not necessarily "have to" use the language in their new environment. In the case of the participants in this study, they mostly interacted in Spanish in their daily life, so their investment in learning the language was different from that of other immigrant groups.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of my study is to investigate how adult Hispanic immigrants in a major central Texas city negotiate their identities as English speakers and exercise agency in different contexts where English is spoken. The study also focuses on the social factors that affect the learners' investment in learning the language. I will draw on Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of self and identity and their understanding of agency[1] as well as on the work of Norton (2000) on identity, investment, and language learning to understand

[1]This theory is described in Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.

the particular lived experiences of adult Hispanic immigrants learning and using English in a central Texas city.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study contributes to the growing body of research on the relationship between language learning, identity, and human agency using a socio-cultural conceptual framework. This research is much needed given the growing importance of issues of identity and agency in SLA and considering that the identity negotiations of adult Hispanic language learners of English in the United States should continue to be explored in the field. In addition, the study has pedagogical implications, especially for community center ESL programs because teachers will be able to serve their students better if they understand the experiences of adult learners when they speak English outside of class and how those experiences shape the learners' identity and agency negotiations as well as their investment in learning the language.

DEFINITION OF IMPORTANT TERMS

This section explains the meaning of some important terms in this study: negotiation, identity, agency, and investment. These terms will be further explained throughout *Chapter 2: Review of the Literature*.

Negotiation

The notion of negotiation is used to understand the process by which language learners construct and reconstruct their understandings of themselves as they participate in different social situations, such as the ESL classroom, the doctor's office, or other environments where English is spoken.

Identity

Identity is defined as socially constructed and refers to how language learners understand/make sense of themselves as individuals and in collectivity as they participate in the different figured worlds (cultural worlds) where English is spoken.

Agency

Following Holland et al. (1998), in this study agency is viewed as the language learners' capacity to improvise and redirect themselves in order to respond to situations. Improvisations allow language learners the possibility to exercise agency using the different cultural artifacts and symbols (like language) that they have at hand. Language learners also have the possibility to respond to situations by redirecting themselves; i.e., by imagining different alternatives to their current situation.

Investment

I use Norton's (2000) notion of *investment* in learning a language to understand the desires that mobilize learners to learn the language. *Investment* takes into account the relationship between the language learner and the language they are learning and takes

into consideration the social aspects that influence the learners' desire to learn and practice the language. Norton explains that "If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase the value of their cultural capital" (p. 10).

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Describing the ways in which language learners negotiate their identities as English speakers and exercise agency in social interactions adds to the growing body of research in this area because there are few studies about the particular experiences of adult Hispanic English learners. Describing these experiences further elucidates this phenomenon for teachers of adult language learners, especially in community ESL programs, as they struggle to meet the particular needs of their students.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will describe the theoretical frameworks that I utilize to understand identity and agency in general and identity and agency as it pertains to language learning. I draw upon the sociocultural theory of self and identity developed by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) to conceptualize identity and agency. I also use the work of Norton (2000) on language learning and identity and her notion of investment in the language to understand how language is inextricably tied to identity construction and negotiation. In addition, throughout the chapter, I provide a review of the research that has investigated the connections between language learning, identity and agency. Also, I provide an overview of Hispanic immigration to the United States to show the particular relationship that Hispanic adult language learners have in the United States. The chapter is divided into nine sections: a) a theory of self and identity, b) language learning and social identity, c) relations of power and the ownership of English, d) the notion of investment, e) understanding agency, f) agency in Second Language Acquisition, g) other research studies about language learning, identity, and investment, and h) connection to proposed study, h) Hispanics in the United States. All these sections help provide the framework for this research study and contextualize it within a larger body or research in the area of language learning and identity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A Theory of Self and Identity

> Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) explain that:
>
> [p]eople tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are. These self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller, are what we refer to as identities. (p.3)

Holland et al. developed a theory of self and identity which provides a comprehensive theoretical background to understand identity formation and production. In their theory, Holland et al. (1998) move beyond two central perspectives –the culturalist and the constructivist- on identity. The culturalist approach views the person as a bearer of cultural events and conditions that have been passed on to them through cultural norms. From this perspective, childhood socialization practices establish the cultural values of a cultural group, and these values inform the behavior of people. On the other hand, the constructivist approach sees the person in relation to the social positioning that occurs in social interactions. According to constructivists, relations of power influence the way people interact with one another in different situations. Holland et al. (1998) argue that either of these views is problematic because neither takes into consideration the person's agency.

In Holland et al.'s practice theory of self and identity, the focus is on how individuals develop identities as they participate in social practice. Holland et al. concentrate on "the development of identities and agency specific to practices and activities situated in historically contingent, socially enacted, culturally constructed

'worlds': recognized fields or frames of social life …" (p. 7). Holland et al.'s theory is strongly influenced by the work of Russian scholars Mikhael Bakhtin and Lev Vygotsky. Bakhtin's concepts of *authoring* and *the dialogic self*, and Vygotsky's notion of *semiotic mediation* serve as the theoretical underpinnings of Holland et al.'s understanding of identity and agency. Both Russian scholars understood human life as mediated and produced in social activity with other people. Bakhtin conceived of the person as in constant dialogue with him/herself and with the world. Vygotsky viewed symbols such as language as socially rather than individually constructed and as ways in which people could manipulate their worlds and themselves. Holland et al. utilize these conceptions and develop their practice theory of self and identity. The four contexts where practiced identities are produced are: the figured worlds, positionality, the space of authoring, and making worlds.

Figured Worlds

Urrieta (2007) explains that identity is "about how people come to understand themselves, how they come to 'figure' who they are, through the 'worlds' that they participate in and how they relate to others within and outside of these worlds" (p. 107). A figured world is "a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation" where particular characters are included and where certain acts and outcomes are valued more than others (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). It is through participation in these worlds that people come to understand themselves in new ways. Figured worlds have four characteristics: 1) they are "historical phenomena, to which people are recruited or to

which people enter" and that develop with the work of the participants, 2) they are social encounters where people's positions matter, 3) they are socially organized and reproduced and people learn how to relate to each other, and 4) they distribute people to different landscapes of action (Urrieta, 2007, p. 108).

Therefore, the day-to-day activities that participants in figured worlds carry out help them form and develop identities. For instance, Holland et al. analyze the figured world of Alcoholics Anonymous and explain that the participants in this figured world learn to see themselves as "alcoholics" rather than "drinkers." Within this world, a valued act is to attend meetings and to share experiences and a valued outcome is to remain "non-drinking alcoholics." According to Holland et al. all individuals enter or are recruited into various figured worlds throughout their lives. In addition, figured worlds are socially organized and the people that participate in them have different social positions. As a consequence, the actions, perceptions, and experiences within figured worlds are different for different individuals. This is because in the social interactions that occur within figured worlds, the social position of participants is really important. Ethnicity, gender, class, age, or educational level all help position people in different ways in relation to other people within and across figured worlds. For instance, in the figured world of a university course, a foreign student who speaks English with an accent and who has trouble expressing her ideas in English may be positioned differently (by the teacher and her classmates) than another English speaker who can share her point of view on the subject matter without having to think much about language use when she is

elaborating her statements. Thus, the notions of figured worlds and positionality are deeply connected.

Positionality

Holland et al. explain that more than a separate context of identity production, positionality is a counterpart of figured worlds. Positionality has "to do with one's position relative to socially identified others, one's sense of social place, and entitlement" (p. 125). The negotiations of power, status, rank, privilege, etc. are an important aspect of figured worlds. When people are positioned in different ways in relation to others, they can accept, reject, or negotiate such positioning. For example, in the figured world of Alcoholics Anonymous, new members are positioned as "alcoholics" and most new members reject this new identity. Positionality has to do with how people position themselves *vis-à-vis* the identities offered to them by others. Given that in figured worlds people are positioned in ways that they have to accept, reject, or negotiate, people have to make decisions about how to act in different situations. Thus, when people respond to the way others position them, they are authoring themselves in new ways.

Authorship

Holland et al. argue that "the world must be answered –authorship is not a choice- but the form of the answer is not predetermined" (p. 272). These ideas stem directly from Bakhtin, who understood people as in dialogue with the world and with themselves. According to Bakhtin, if we are alive, we are engaged in answering what is directed at us. It is within these "spaces of authoring" that agency happens -through improvisations and

self-directed symbolizations which allow people to redirect themselves. Holland et al. provide the example of Gyanumaya, a lower-caste woman from Naudada, Nepal, to illustrate their views on agency. In Naudada, people of lower castes cannot enter the houses of people of higher castes because they are believed to pollute the environment. When Gyanumaya was invited to go up to the balcony of the house of a person of a higher caste than hers, she scaled up the outside wall to get to the balcony rather than going up through the stairs inside the house. Gyanumaya was able to go around obstacles to participate in the interview taking place in the balcony. This example shows how Gyanumara was able to improvise in this particular situation and how this improvisation allowed her to gain access to where she wanted to go without violating culture rules. Holland et al. see improvisations as "potential beginnings of an altered subjectivity, an altered identity" (p. 18). In addition to improvisations, Holland et al. consider that the ability of humans to imagine new worlds and new possibilities can also influence the construction of new self-understandings.

Making Worlds

Holland et al. argue that "through 'serious play' new figured worlds may come about" (p. 272). Following Vygotsky's studies of play, they argue that through social play individuals can envision new alternative worlds and identities. In these imagined figured worlds, people can develop new ways of conceptualizing themselves. For example, in the Nepali Tij festival, the women in Naudada could imagine new worlds through the writing and singing of songs which criticized the figured worlds of family, society, and

government in Nepal. Through these songs, the women imagined figured worlds where women were positioned differently and where there were possibilities for the authoring of new selves. The ability to imagine new figured worlds is the possibility of humans to create spaces for exercising agency.

I find Holland et al.'s theory of self and identity particularly useful to my own research, since it provides a clear framework, which helped me analyze the ways in which adult Hispanic English learners made sense of who they were in the different figured worlds in which they participated. Social positions had a direct impact on the learners' understanding of themselves. In interactions with native speakers, language learners were sometimes positioned as incompetent or not worthy to be listened to because they spoke English with an accent. Given the participants and setting of my study, adult Hispanic immigrants in central Texas, it was important to pay attention to the positionality of the participants in the contexts where they spoke English due to the racism and xenophobia that people from Latin America, especially Mexicans, have historically experienced in Texas. The concepts of positionality, authorship, and making worlds were useful when analyzing how adult Hispanic language learners accepted, rejected, and/or negotiated the positions that were offered to them by other participants in the contexts in which they participated.

Language Learning and Identity

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Norton was one of the first scholars to raise vital questions about identity and its relationship to language learning.

Norton's theoretical contributions to the field of SLA derive from her groundbreaking study of five immigrant women (2 from Poland, 1 from Vietnam, 1 from Czechoslovakia, and 1 from Peru) learning English in Canada. Norton worked with the participants over a period of 12 months and was interested in examining how the participants' language learning experiences changed over time. The focus of her study was on the relationship between language learning and identity. In analyzing the results of her study, Norton examines identity as a social construct and explores the changes in the learners' social identities over time. Norton (1997) explains that:

> Every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction and negotiation (p. 410).

Norton's views on language use as directly connected to a speakers' identity construction are based on her understanding of identity as socially constructed. Building on the work of Weedon, Norton Peirce [2](1995) uses a poststructuralist conception of social identity—a term Weedon referred to as subjectivity- to study language learning and the negotiations that take place when language learners use the language outside of the classroom. Weedon (1987) defines subjectivity as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (p. 32 quoted in Norton Peirce, 1995). Within this theoretical framework, social identity is seen as multiple, a site of struggle, and changing over time. Norton (2000) uses the term identity to indicate "how a person

[2] Norton Peirce (1995) is later only Norton.

understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constituted across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5). In other words, Norton understands identity as the ways people understand themselves in different social situations and across time. Also, since Norton includes the possibilities for the future in her conceptualization of identity, she includes the idea of human agency as directly tied to identity.

Norton also highlights "the role of language as constitutive of and constituted by a language learner's identity" (p. 5). She draws on Weedon (1987), who claims that language is "the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed" (p. 21 in Norton 2000, p. 9). Norton conceives of language as being inextricably tied to identity and maintains that it is through language that people negotiate a sense of who they are and that they gain or are denied access to social networks. For instance, the participants in Norton Peirce's (1995) study frequently found themselves silenced as a result of their marginal positions as language learners and immigrants. The participants' experiences illustrate Bourdieu's (1991) claim that "[s]peakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence" (p. 55). The distinction between a "legitimate" and an "illegitimate" language speaker and the power relations that allow such distinction are described and analyzed in the following section.

Relations of Power and the Ownership of English

To analyze the relationship between language learning and identity, Norton examines the relations of power between language learners and native speakers of the language. She draws on Bourdieu's (1977) notions of "the right to speech" and "the power to impose reception," which question the common assumption among linguists that "those who listen regard those who speak as worthy to speak" (p. 648). For instance, although one of the participants in Norton's study worked with native speakers of English at a restaurant, this did not mean that she could speak with them (and practice her English). In fact, when she started working at the restaurant, she was marginalized for being an immigrant and for not being able to express her ideas in English. Bourdieu (1977) argues that:

> Just as, at the level of relations between groups, a language is worth what those who speak it are worth, so too, at the level of interactions between individuals, speech always owes a major part of its value to the value of the person who utters it. (p. 652)

In other words, "what speaks is not the utterance, the language, but the whole social person" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 653). There are clear connections between being considered a legitimate or illegitimate speaker of the target language and identity because language helps determine how people are positioned in interactions and that positioning has direct consequences on the speaker's identity. As Norton (1997) clearly explains, "if learners of English cannot claim ownership of the language, they might not consider themselves legitimate speakers (Bourdieu, 1977) of that language" (p. 422). If privilege is given to the idealized native speaker, speakers of English as a second language (and of different

varieties of English) will be categorized as speakers of "nonstandard" English, a label that clearly affects people's identities.

The idea that native speakers are the "owners" of a language is not new in second language learning and teaching. However, for the past twenty years the role of the native speaker has become a source of concern and researchers, teachers and students have been challenging the prominence of those designated as native speakers. According to Widdowson (1994), the superiority of the native speaker against the nonnative speaker cannot be validated because the distinction between these two labels is not as clear as it seems. He poses several controversial questions such as "Who owns the English language?," "What is standard English?," and "What are the implications of 'possessing' a language?" Widdowson also critiques the assumption that a language belongs to its native speakers and analyses the importance of seeing English as an international language rather than one that is "possessed" by a specific community of speakers. In a world where English is spoken by more "nonnative" than "native" speakers of English, it is time for people (speakers, researchers, language teachers, language learners, etc.) to move beyond dichotomous distinctions such as native/nonnative or standard/accented English and focus on the ability of people to communicate in English.

The notions of "nativeness" and privilege have also been challenged by Claire Kramsch (1997), who argues that maybe a better way to understand the value of the "native speaker" is if we understand the privilege that comes with being accepted by the group which believes in the distinction native/nonnative speaker, i.e. the dominant group. In other words, it is not enough to be born in a country or to be an educated native

speaker to be considered a legitimate (native) speaker of a language; you have to be accepted as a part of the dominant group as having the same values and beliefs. For instance, Macedo et al. (2003) claim that "the fact that approximately 30 million African-Americans speak English as their mother tongue did not prevent the vast majority of them from being relegated to ghetto existence, economic deprivation and, in some cases, to the status of sub-humans" (p. 16). This example brings us back to Bourdieu's claim that the value of language cannot be separated from the value ascribed to the person who speaks that language and the relations of power that exist in interactions.

Understanding the relations of power present in social interactions is critical when trying to make sense of what happens when English language learners interact with other speakers of English. Issues of privilege and power are always present in interactions and because language learners are considered "non-native" speakers rather than language users, they are offered marginal positions in interactions and may not be granted "the right to speak." Even though for several years the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has been challenging controversial dichotomies such as native/nonnative speaker or standard/nonstandard language, these distinctions are still present in daily interactions. In turn, they influence language learners' identities as well as their desires to use the language and their investment in learning it.

The Notion of Investment

Norton Peirce (1995) argues that the notion of investment, as opposed to motivation to learn the target language, "captures the complex relationship of language

learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it" (p. 9). Norton Peirce criticizes the views about motivation held in the field of SLA and contends that SLA theorists have traditionally placed most of the responsibility of learning the language solely on the language learner. One of the most well known studies on motivation was conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972), who conceptualized motivation using an individualistic framework to explain how language learners' attitudes toward the target language and the target language community affect their language learning experience. Gardner and Lambert described two types of motivation: integrative (desire to integrate in the target language community) and instrumental (using language to achieve instrumental goals, such as reading an academic paper, etc.).

Norton argues that within this model for understanding motivation the complex relationship between the language learner and the language learning context has not been problematized. Gardner and Lambert's views about the role of motivation are focused on an individual's orientation toward their learning without considering how inequitable relations of power between the individual and society can affect the language learning process. There are many cases where social factors, such as discrimination, racism, or prejudice can affect the integrative or instrumental motivation of a learner. Rather than motivation, Norton developed the notion of investment in the language. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Norton (2000) argues that if learners invest in a second language, they do so because they understand that they will obtain different material and symbolic resources that will consequently help them increase the value of their cultural capital (p. 10). Thus, students hope that learning English will give them

access to knowledge, probably a better job and a better life, which will in turn give them more power and status in society.

Also included in the concept of investment is the learners' understanding of their possibilities for the future (Norton, 2000). Directly tied to this idea, is the notion of imagined communities because they allow learners to imagine themselves participating in different communities and investing in learning the language in order to attain their goals. Anderson (1983) coined the term imagined communities and claimed that nations are in fact "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 15). In other words, when we imagine ourselves connected to our fellow citizens even though we have never met, we can feel a sense of community. Similarly, when an immigrant to the United States has the desire to interact with English speakers, she may imagine herself participating in imaginary English-speaking communities, and she may see English as a very important part of realizing what is now in her imagination. Kanno and Norton (2003) described the concept of imagined communities and education and suggested that "imagined communities are no less real than the ones in which learners have daily engagement and might even have a stronger impact on their current actions and investment" (p. 242). For example, if a language learner is driven by the desire of participating in an imagined community, such as a school or a different job, this desire directly affects her investment in the language.

Understanding the notions of investment and imagined communities is central to my research study because these concepts are directly connected to agency and, in turn,

to identity construction and negotiation. Like Norton, I believe that if learners invest in learning the language, they do so because they understand that they might have different future possibilities. Also, if learners can imagine themselves participating in different imagined communities (a different job, the Parent-Teacher Association, etc.), they can invest more in learning the language. As mentioned earlier in the section *making worlds*, the fact that learners can imagine alternative worlds is an act of agency. In the next section, I explain the concept of agency, which I use in my study because one of its purposes was to explore how language learners exercised agency in the different contexts where English was spoken.

Understanding Agency

Holland et al. (1998) state that their objective in developing a theory for understanding and studying identity and agency is:

> to respect humans as social and cultural creatures and therefore bounded, yet to recognize the processes whereby human collectives and individuals often move themselves –led by hope, desperation, or even playfulness, but certainly by no rational plan– from one set of socially and culturally constructed subjectivities to another. (pp. 6-7)

For Holland et al., agency "happens daily and mundanely" (p. 5) and manifests in two ways: a) through improvisation and b) through self-directed symbolization. Improvisation is the ability of a person "to improvise resistance" using the cultural resources at hand (p. 276). Holland et al. state that "[e]ven within grossly asymmetrical power relations, the powerful participants rarely control the weaker so completely that the latter's ability to improvise resistance becomes irrelevant" (p. 277). People create these improvisations

(moments of resourcefulness) spontaneously when they draw together the social and cultural resources available to respond or not to a particular situation. For instance, an English language learner may exercise agency when she is able to participate in a conversation in English, or a worker with limited English proficiency can exercise agency when he pretends to understand the English instructions given by his supervisor and then asks a co-worker to translate such instructions. Holland et al. explain that these moments of improvisation may be "potential beginnings of an altered subjectivity, an altered identity" (p. 18). In other words, the identity of a person can change because the way of exercising agency once may serve as resource for future acts of agency.

The second type of agency, self-directed symbolization, refers to how human actors can redirect themselves to do things in a different way (p. 278). Humans, as agentive beings, use symbols and can redirect themselves toward new action, such as change their minds or imagine through the creation of songs a different social reality. Vygotsky's focus on the human ability to play with symbols helped Holland et al. conceptualize this second type of agency. They explain that human agency is also crafted by "people's collective ability to imagine themselves in worlds that may yet be scarcely realized, and [to attend] to the modest ability of humans to manage their own behavior through signs directed at themselves" (p. 281).

Both types of agency allow the creation of new identities and help us understand how individuals and groups seek to manage one another and their own behavior. These new identities are produced through *self-authoring* and the ability to *make worlds*, which

allow people to respond creatively to particular situations and to imagine themselves in alternative figured worlds.

Agency in Second Language Acquisition

The concept of agency has emerged only recently in SLA and only a few researchers have explored the concept as it relates to language learning. As aforementioned, Norton Peirce (1995) understands investment as "the complex relationship of language learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it" (p. 9). The concept of investment is central to Norton's analysis of agency. An example to illustrate this point is Eva, one of Norton Peirce's participants, who worked at an Italian store in Canada. Eva could not find many opportunities to speak English because she was fluent in Italian and she lived in a neighborhood where she could communicate in Italian. When she completed an ESL course, Eva decided to find a job at a restaurant where she could use English more often. When she started working at the new restaurant, Eva did not feel comfortable speaking English with her co-workers due to her "illegitimate" English (Bourdieu, 1977). As Eva's ability to communicate in English improved, she became more aware of her right to speak. She understood that her accent was part of her identity and that her identity was tied to her accent, and rather than blaming herself for not being socially accepted, she started participating in social networks at her workplace. Thus, Eva became aware of her power to initiate and control interactions in the second language. Eva was able to create spaces for exercising agency

as she improvised resistance in the workplace using the cultural resources that she had at hand.

d and Wong (1996) use Norton Peirce's notion of investment and discussed the relationship between agency and language development of four adolescent Chinese immigrants in a California high school. The researchers, who understand identity as being "multiple, fluid, and often contradictory" (p. 579), studied how the students developed language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as they negotiated their multiple identities. They assumed that multiple identities are constructed through multiple discourses and suggest that the different discourses shaped the investment of their informants in the second language. The authors show that the students' previous histories, family background, and discourses of power surrounding them at school contributed to the creation of different types of agencies and learning experiences for the four participants. For example, one of the students derived agency from being positioned as an athlete and a popular friend (to Chinese and non-Chinese fellow students) and did not feel the need to develop his academic skills. Another participant, however, exercised agency by positioning himself and being positioned by his teachers, parents, and other Chinese students as "model student" in school. This identity allowed him to have acceptance and respect among his Chinese peers at school.

Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) have also theorized human agency in SLA and have studied how language learners exercise agency. They draw on Vygotsky's activity theory to stress the socio-historic nature of agency and claim that agency is "constantly co-constructed and renegotiated with those around the individual and with the society at

large" (148). Additionally, they view human agency as more than performance, because it is linked to significance. The authors consider that people are capable of analyzing the circumstances in their life critically and of claiming or resisting them. To illustrate their views on agency, the authors analyzed the experiences shared by Eva Hoffman in her 1989 account of her language learning experiences *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language.* Hoffman, who moved to Canada from Poland at age 13, narrates her struggle to reconstruct her identity as a North American intellectual. The authors explained that Hoffman realized the differences between the community where she came from and the new community and started to actively seek integration into the new community. Eventually, Hoffman gained access to the new community and "was able to construct new ways of meaning and a new inner voice" (p.153). According to Lantolf and Pavlenko, this --and every other-- story of success in second language learning is co-constructed between the individual and the community where she interacts.

Lantolf and Pavlenko's conceptualization of human agency is very helpful because, like Holland et al., they have a socio-cultural view of agency. This view of agency allows us to analyze how language learners negotiate agency as they participate in social interactions. Lantolf and Pavlenko also understand that "individuals do not simply position themselves in a community; rather, there is a dialectic struggle between the learner and the community out of which emerges the learners' position and identity" (p 149). This is similar to the way Holland et al. (1998) conceptualize positionality and figured worlds.

Like Lantolf and Pavlenko, another SLA researcher, Vitanova (2005), also used a socio-constructivist framework to conceptualize agency within "invisible social structures that lock subjects into social positions" and which allow human beings to "transcend their subject positions" (p. 166). In her narrative study of eight highly educated immigrants from Eastern Europe in the United States, she analyzed the ways in which the participants described "their loss of voice" in the new country and how they re-authored themselves in their new social realities. One of the participants, Vera, was a journalist in Russia, but in the United States she was not able to express herself and was positioned by others as an unintelligent person. Her strategy at the beginning was to focus on learning grammar, but later she realized that the grammar books were not giving her the tools to be able to "re-create her lived world" (p. 162). Vitanova explained that when Vera started her own catering company, she found satisfaction in her new job (even though it was not related to journalism) because she was recognized as an expert by others and because she could have meaningful relationships with others. The findings of this study showed that the informants many times found themselves silent and were assigned positions that were unfamiliar to them (not being able to speak, always being asked where they were from, etc.). However, "the participants' ability to analyze their contexts and to interpret their new sociolinguistic realities establishes a necessary foundation for agency" (p. 160). This is so because with a better understanding of their new realities, the participants were able to challenge and resist the more authoritative voices of others and the ways they were being positioned (p.166). Vitanova concluded that the participants' lack of language resources positioned them in unfamiliar situations, but "through everyday acts of

creativity" the participants "re-established their voices" in discursive practices with others (p. 166).

Like Holland et al. (1998), Vitanova used a Bakhtinian framework to understand her participants' experiences, and she explained that they participated in what Bakhtin conceptualized as "acts of authoring." Because of their limited English skills, the participants were positioned in ways in which they had not been positioned before in their native countries. However, as their language skills developed and they could participate in new social networks, the participants had the tools and the creativity to author themselves in new ways.

As illustrated in these two sections, agency is a very challenging concept and there are no clear definitions of the term. In my study, I draw on Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of self and identity and understand agency as the capacity of individuals and groups to improvise and to redirect themselves. Improvisations allow humans the possibility to exercise agency using the different cultural artifacts and symbols that they have at hand, and self-directed symbolization allows people the possibility to redirect themselves by imagining different alternatives to their current situation.

Other Research Studies about Language Learning, Identity, and Investment

The research studies that I present here have drawn on Norton Peirce's (1995) notions of investment as well as theories of identity to investigate the connections between language learning, identity change, and investment. The studies have focused on

the experiences of different populations of language learners in different contexts and have helped to move the focus of SLA research in new directions.

In her study of four Cambodian immigrant women enrolled in ESL courses in Philadelphia, Skilton-Sylvester (2002) used Norton Peirce's (1995) notion of investment to explore how the multiple identities of the Cambodian women, the social contexts of their life in the U.S., and the classroom context shape their investment in participating in two adult ESL programs. The study explored the moments in which the women's investment in the language shifted in relation to the students' identities as family members (wife, sister) and/or workers. The findings of the study showed that there is a direct connection between identity and participation in the ESL programs. For instance, some of the mothers in the study "invested" in learning English because they wanted a better life for their children. In addition, their identities as worker (or future workers) also had a direct impact on their investment in participating in the ESL classes.

The findings of this study helped extend Norton's perspectives on investment and identity. First, because unlike Norton, who emphasizes the language learners' interaction with English speakers outside of the classroom to conceptualize the notion of investment, Skilton-Sylvester looked at how the language learners interactions in institutions where formal language learning happens shape the learners' investment in the language. Second, unlike Norton who focused on social identity and investment in learning the language, Skilton-Sylvester addresses cultural identity in her study because she found that the cultural experiences of the learners as Cambodian women were an integral part of understanding their investment in participating in adult ESL programs.

My study, similar to Norton's, looked at how the learners negotiated their identities as English speakers in different contexts where they use English (inside and outside the language classroom). In addition, similar to Skilton-Sylvester I also focused on how the cultural identities of Hispanic language learners in the United States and their experiences in the different figured worlds in which they use English influence their investment in learning English. Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of self focuses on how identities and agencies develop in figured worlds, which are "historically contingent, socially enacted, culturally constructed 'worlds'" (p. 7). The identity of the people in these worlds may be (or always is) marked by structural features of society such as gender, ethnicity, race, nationality, etc. In my study, like in Skilton-Sylvester's, the fact that the learners all come from the same cultural background –Cambodian in her study and Hispanic in mine–, influences the way in which participants were positioned and position themselves in the different contexts in which they used English, which in turn, affected their identity and agency negotiations as well as their investment in learning English.

Another important study which focused on language learning, participation, and social identity is the one conducted by Miller. In her longitudinal study of immigrant high school students in Australia, Miller (2000) focused on the connections between second language use, membership, and social contexts. Miller followed recently arrived Chinese immigrants from their ESL program to integration into the mainstream classroom. One of the findings of the study was that the ESL students who moved to a regular high school after receiving intensive ESL instruction elsewhere had less opportunity to use English in

the high school. Although they were surrounded by native English speakers, the ESL and the native-speaking groups had so little in common that the physical proximity to English speakers did not mean that the ESL learners had more opportunities to use English. The fact that the ESL learners remained socially and linguistically separated in the high school undoubtedly had consequences in their social identities.

Even though this is a study about adolescents in an Australian high school and the participants in my study were adult immigrants at a community-based language center in the United States, I find this research useful because of the similarities in the foci of the studies. In other words, the relations of power present in interactions between language learners and native English speakers and how those relations affect the learners' identities. Just like the adolescents in Miller's study, the adult Hispanic immigrants in my study were also physically, socially and linguistically separated from the English-speaking community because they lived in a community of predominantly Spanish speakers and because they did not have many opportunities to interact with English speakers on a daily basis. When study participants did interact with English speakers, however, the relations of power in the interactions, the ways in which they were positioned, and the ways in which they negotiated such positions all influenced their identities as English speakers.

Another study which also draws on Norton's understanding of identity is Kinginger's (2004) four-year-long study of an American student, Alice, learning French as a foreign language. The study explored the participant's identity negotiations as she was learning French and described the processes that the participant went through when

learning French in the United States and later on as a study-abroad student in Quebec and France. At the beginning of her language learning experience, the participant was attracted to the French language because of its prestige in the United States and the capital value that was attached to her "imagined community" of French speakers. She was later motivated to learn French by her desire to be a French teacher. This attraction to the French language and culture, Kinginger argued, can only be understood by examining the sociocultural context from which it emerged (e.g., Alice was from a working class family, she did not have many material resources when she traveled abroad, she did not find many opportunities to speak French in her study-abroad experiences, etc.). In the study, the author described several of the personal, social, and material obstacles that the participant had to overcome in order to learn French.

Even though this is a study about a learner of French in a university setting, one of the reasons why the participant was invested in learning French (the prestige and cultural value the language has in the United States) and her imagined community of French speakers is somewhat similar to the reasons why some of the participants in my own study invested in learning English. Like Alice with regards to French, many immigrants to English-speaking countries associate English with prestige and with cultural value, and hope that if they invest in learning the language, they will have a better future.

Another study about identity and language learning is Menard-Warwick's (2009) ethnographic study of eight adult immigrants (seven women and one man) from Latin America who were learning English in a family literacy program in California. In the

participants' narratives and in the classroom observations, Menard-Warwick examined how gendered practices and ideologies played a central role in the immigration and language learning experiences of the participants. The researcher identified how the gender positioning in the participant's daily lives (mothers, daughters, wives) and their gender responsibilities many times constrained their language learning experience and how the participants exercised agency in confronting those constraints. In the classroom activities, the positioning of students by themselves and their teachers as mothers and homemakers reproduced societal gender ideologies and was rarely challenged because the curriculum did not encourage a critique of the gendered identities that society assigned learners in the program.

Even though my study does not focus on gender identities and language learning, Menard-Warwick's study is relevant to my research because she also investigated Hispanic immigrants and because she analyzed how the way in which the social positionings of the participants influenced their language learning experiences and identity negotiations. In my study, I examine the social positioning of the participants in activities which required English usage (inside and outside of the class) to understand how the participants constructed and reconstructed their identities as English speakers.

In this section, I have reviewed some of the research studies that have investigated the connections between language learning and identity. All the studies investigated the identity negotiations of language learners in different settings and all have contributed to move SLA research into a new direction that understands language learners as having complex identities, which are constantly constructed and negotiated in social situations

through the language they are learning. In my own research on the connections between language learning and identity, I also looked at how learners negotiated their identities in the different contexts in which the language they were learning was spoken. However, similar to the case of Menard-Warwick's study of Latin American immigrants in California, I focused on adult Hispanic language learners in Texas, who because of the complex historical relations between the United States and Mexico, are often marginalized even before they enter the United States. Because of this, it is important to investigate the particular lived experiences of adult Hispanic learners and how they negotiate their identities and exercise agency in English-speaking contexts.

Connection to Study

In their theory of self and identity, Holland et al. (1998) understand identity and agency as produced in figured worlds and influenced by how people position themselves and are positioned in relation to other participants in these figured worlds. People also have the ability to author themselves and to imagine themselves in alternative figured worlds. This way of conceptualizing agency and identity helped me explore and analyze the ways in which adult Hispanic English learners make sense of who they are in the different English-speaking figured worlds in which they participate (the ESL classroom, the workplace, the doctor's office, etc.). Given that in figured worlds social positions matter, the way participants position themselves and are positioned by others will have a direct impact on the learners' understanding of themselves. For instance, if the learners position themselves or are positioned as "less intelligent" or as not worthy of attention

because of their English proficiency, this positioning may have an effect in their understanding of who they are.

In figured worlds, people also exercise agency; thus, the concepts of authorship and making worlds was useful when analyzing how adult Hispanic language learners accept, reject, and/or negotiate the positions that are being offered to them by other participants in the figured worlds in which they participate. In my study, I explored how language learners exercise agency as they improvise different ways to respond to different situations and as they imagine alternative figured worlds where their use and proficiency in English improves and allows them access to resources available to English speakers.

In addition to Holland et al.'s theory of identity and agency, I draw on Norton's understandings of the connections between language and identity. Norton maintains that it is through language that people negotiate a sense of who they are and that they gain access or are denied access to social networks. Norton draws on the work of Bourdieu and explains that unequal relations of power are present in the interactions between language learners and "native" speakers of the language. This may result in marginalization and silence, which directly affect the identity of the language learners. In the case of my participants, working-class immigrants from Mexico and Central America in Texas, understanding the relations of power present in the different figured contexts where the participants use English is very important.

My study has also been informed by several other studies which have been conducted to try to understand the connections between language learning and identity,

and language learning and agency. All these studies have used similar theoretical frameworks --mostly poststructuralist and socio-constructivist-- to attempt to understand how language learners construct and re-construct a sense of who they are in the different contexts where they use the target language. In my study, the social context in which language learners use English is very different from the social context in other studies. Previous studies on language and identity and language and agency have explored the experiences of immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia, or Africa who migrated to the United States, Canada, and Australia. Because the participants in my study were adult immigrants from Mexico and Central America who lived in Texas, their experiences interacting in English with other English speakers were different from the experiences of other immigrant groups due to prevalent xenophobia and anti-immigration sentiment in U.S. society directed at immigrants from Latin America, and particularly from Mexico and Central America. In turn, Hispanic language learners negotiate their identities and exercise agency differently from other immigrant groups using English because of the high prevalence of Spanish use in the U.S. --currently, the U.S. is the fifth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world- and because the limited opportunities to participate in contexts where English is spoken.

In my study, in addition to analyzing the ways in which adult language learners negotiate their identity and agency, I also explored the learners' investment in learning English. Given that the participants in my study were adult Hispanics who lived in a large Hispanic community and who could "survive" in an English-speaking country without learning much English, I was interested in exploring the social factors that affect the

learners' investment. Norton developed the notion of investment and explains that the language learners' multiple desires to learn the language are influenced by the learners' understanding that they will acquire symbolic and material resources which will increase their "cultural capital." In my study, I explored how social factors, such as economic opportunities, career advancement, and/or family relations influenced the learners' investment in learning English.

HISPANIC IMMIGRANTS: AN OVERVIEW

Hispanics in the United States

According to the 2010 US Census, 50.5 million Hispanics live in the United States, accounting for almost 16% of the total US population. Of the total Hispanic population, approximately 50% live in the states of California, Texas, and Florida. In the state of Texas, 37.5% of the population is Hispanic. The great majority of the country's Hispanic population (63%) is of Mexican origin or of Mexican descent. There are historical, political, and economic reasons for the Mexican migration to the United States, the origins of which may be traced back to the Texas war with Mexico of 1836 with continued conflicts for 10 years, which resulted in the Mexican-American war. This war began in 1846 and ended in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the annexation of California, Nevada, Utah, the majority of Arizona, and parts of New Mexico and Colorado by the U.S. After the ceding of territory, nearly 100,000 Mexican citizens had to suddenly decide if they wanted to become U.S. citizens. The majority

decided to stay in the borderlands and had to share the territory with European Americans who were encouraged by the United States government to migrate to the region. Portes and Rumbaut (2006) explain that the Mexican-American war "converted a good part of the country's inhabitants into foreigners in their own land" (p. 354).

Over the next decades, due to different social, political, and economic events that took place both in Mexico and the United States, there were some major immigration waves from Mexico to the United States. Moore and Pachon (1985) explain that several internal changes inside Mexico caused the large migration to the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1876, with the support of the United States, Porfirio Diaz took power in Mexico and the policies that he carried out during the 35 years that he was president dramatically changed the life of *campesinos*, who found themselves without the communal lands they had shared and cultivated for generations. These and other changes were the causes of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), which led more than 1,000,000 people to migrate to the United States (pp. 25-26). Most of these new migrants filled the need for cheap agricultural and industrial workers that the Southwestern United States had at the time due to the rapid economic growth of the region. However, Barrera (1979) explains that the Great Depression "marked the end of a period of economic expansion and large-scale immigration from Mexico" (p. 104). During the early 1930s the United States government carried out a campaign of deportation of Mexican immigrants who could not prove their legal status in the country. This resulted in the deportation or "voluntary departure" of approximately 500,000

people, and it is difficult to determine how many of those deported were actually American citizens (p. 106).

Another important wave of immigrants happened during World War II with the Bracero Program, which started in 1942. This program was an agreement between the governments of Mexico and the United States, under which large numbers of Mexicans were granted work permits to work mostly in the agricultural sector. During the 22 years that the program was in place, over 4.6 million Mexican workers migrated to the United States. At the same time, the number of undocumented workers rose considerably prompting Immigration and Naturalization Services to launch in 1954 the so-called "operation wetback," which deported over 1 million workers.

More recently, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed in 1994 has intensified the migration from Mexico to the United States. As Portes and Rumbaut (2006) noted, NAFTA "was supposed to be the magic wand that took care of immigration. [It] was to make Mexico rich and create enough employment incentives to keep its people at home. It has been anything but." One of the major problems is that the agriculture sector of Mexico was highly debilitated with the influx of low-cost agricultural products coming from highly subsidized American farms. Because of this, a great number of farmers have been displaced, and together with thousands of other Mexican workers, they have migrated to *el norte* as "economic refugees" (Anzaldúa, 1999).

Like people of Mexican origin, Hispanics from other countries have migrated to the United States for different and varied historical, political, and social reasons.

Globalization and political repression in the form of U.S. supported civil wars and military (as documented in recently released CIA reports) dictatorships are just some of the contributing factors that push people to migrate. In the 1980s, the civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala led to a major wave of migration to the United States. In addition to these factors, it is important to remember the role of the United States in the migration process. As Portes and Rumbaut (2006) argue, "immigrant flows are initiated not solely by the desires and dreams of people in other lands but by the designs and interests of well-organized groups in the receiving countries, primarily employers" (p. 345). Hispanic immigrants are needed in the United States because most of them constitute a low-cost labor force that helps maintain the "American way of life." However, they have historically been discriminated against and marginalized.

Portes and Rumbaut (2006) explain that:

> [p]eriods of immigration are invariably marked by a tide of nativist resistance that characterizes the waves of newcomers as a threat to the integrity of national culture and a source of decay of the qualities of the native population… By the beginning of the millennium, one would have surmised that the pseudopatriotism and antiforeign hysterics that filled so many tracks in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would have gone out of fashion. An expanding process of globalization and the patent reality of living in an interdependent world should have put to rest even the most ardent isolationists. Not so. The correlation between periods of high immigration and heightened xenophobia continues to hold. (p. 344)

The feelings of xenophobia are manifested in the ways in which some people reject the Spanish language and the cultures Hispanics bring with them to the United States. This anti immigrant sentiment has materialized in the creation of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency in 2003, which increased the number of arrests and

deportations of immigrants, especially during the Obama administration. In addition, many immigration policies are examples of the xenophobic views on Hispanics, such as California's Proposition 227 in 1998 and Arizona's Proposition 203 in 2000, which replaced bilingual education for intensive English programs in public schools, and Arizona's immigration law SB 1070 in 2010 (with similar attempts in Alabama, Georgia, and other states), which authorizes police officers to demand citizenship or immigration status documentation from people they suspect of being in the country unlawfully.

The participants in the present study migrated, lived, worked, and learned English in this highly complex socio economic and political context. The prevalent xenophobia and anti-immigration climate influenced the lived experiences of the participants, their investment in learning English, and their identity negotiations as English speakers as they learned and used English in Texas.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have described the theoretical framework that I used to analyze how adult Hispanic immigrants negotiate their identities and exercise agency in the different contexts in which English is spoken in Central City. I drew on Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of self and identity and notion of agency as well as on the work of Norton (2000) on social identity, investment, and language learning to make sense of the lived experiences of the participants in my study. Holland et al.'s notions of figured worlds is central to my study because I explored how language learners negotiated their identities as English speakers and how they exercised agency in the different contexts where

English is spoken. In addition, I drew on Norton's notion of investment to investigate what factors influence the learners' desires to learn and use English. I also provided an overview of Hispanic immigration to the United States as a way to contextualize the identity construction of the participants in such a complex immigration context.

Chapter 3: Methodology

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I describe the study, state the research questions, and explain the research methods used to address the questions. In addition, I describe the research setting, the participants, and the procedures for data collection and analysis.

The purpose of this study is to explore how adult Hispanic immigrants negotiate their identities and exercise agency as English speakers in a major central city in Texas. A qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study because interpretive inquiry is based on the belief that social realities are constructed and changed by the participants when they interact with those realities in different social settings (Glesne, 1999). The goal of an interpretive researcher is to understand reality from the point of view of the people that live in it. According to Merriam (1998), "[q]ualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meanings people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world," (p. 6).

RESEARCH DESIGN

From the beginning of February to the end of July in 2008, I conducted a multiple-case study to explore how five adult Hispanic language learners negotiated their English speaker identities as they learned English in a major city in central Texas. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) describe case study research as "the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspectives of the participants

involved in the phenomenon" (p. 436). Another definition is provided by Creswell (2007) who explained that "case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (p. 73). The participants in this research study were studied as five separate cases within the context of their ESL class and the different contexts where they communicated in English.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Overarching Question

How do adult Hispanic immigrants learning English in a major central Texas city negotiate their identities as English speakers and exercise agency in contexts where English is spoken?

Sub Questions

1. How do adult Hispanic English learners negotiate their identities as English speakers and exercise agency in the ESL classroom?
2. How do adult Hispanic immigrants learning English in a major central Texas city negotiate their identities as English speakers and exercise agency in contexts where English is spoken?
3. What social factors affect Hispanic English learners' investment in learning English to construct their identities and exercise agency as English speakers in a major central Texas city?

DEFINITION OF IMPORTANT TERMS

Negotiation

The notion of negotiation is used to understand the process by which language learners construct and reconstruct their understandings of themselves as English speakers as they participate in different social situations, such as the workplace, the doctor's office, or other environments where English is spoken.

Identity

Identity is viewed as socially constructed and refers to how language learners understand/make sense of who they are and convey a sense of who they are as they participate in the different figured worlds (cultural worlds) where English is spoken.

Agency

Following Holland et al. (1998), in this study agency is viewed as language learners' capacity to improvise and redirect themselves in order to respond to situations. Improvisations allow language learners the possibility to exercise agency using the different cultural artifacts and symbols (like language) that they have at hand. Language learners also have the possibility to respond to situations by redirecting themselves; i.e., by imagining different alternatives to their current situation.

Investment

I use Norton Pierce's (1995) notion of *investment* in learning a language to understand the desires that mobilize learners to learn the language. *Investment* takes into account the relationship between the language learner and the language they are learning and takes into consideration the social aspects that influence the learners' desire to learn and practice the language. Norton Pierce explained that "[i]f learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase the value of their cultural capital" (p. 10).

CENTRAL CITY

This study was conducted in Central City[3], a large liberal city in the conservative state of Texas. Due to the long historic relations between Texas and Mexico (which were described in Chapter 2), there was a high presence of Mexican and Latin American culture and of Spanish language in the city. This presence was evident in the number of restaurants and dance clubs where Latin American food, beverages, and music could be enjoyed. There were also cultural centers and museums which offered events that celebrated Mexican-American as well as other Hispanic cultures. In addition, there were Latin American music and film festivals.

Despite Central City's interest in Hispanic culture, there was a marked racial and social divide in the city and Hispanic people did not seem to be as visible or as valued as

[3] All names (cities, setting, and participants) are pseudonyms.

their culture. According to the 2010 U.S. census, Hispanics made up 35 percent of the city's population, African-Americans 8 percent and Asians 6 percent. The largest number of Hispanics and African Americans lived on the East side of the city, whereas most Anglo Americans lived on the West side. The East side was a working-class area with Hispanic and African American businesses, which was undergoing gentrification, a change which was displacing many residents.

SETTING: POSADA DE INMIGRANTES

The research study was conducted with adult ESL learners studying English in the classes offered by Posada de inmigrantes, a center for immigrants (mostly) from Mexico and Central America in a major central city in Texas. Located in a working-class neighborhood on the East side of Central City, Posada de inmigrantes was a nonprofit organization founded in 1986 to provide shelter to refugees that were fleeing the wars in Central America. In the 1990s the center also started to host immigrants from all of Latin America, and in the 2000s they also had residents from different countries in Africa. In addition to housing, Posada de Inmigrantes offered different services such as food, clothing, job information, legal advice, and English classes.

The ESL program was a free service offered to the temporary residents of the house as well as to the members of the community, so the students who attend the ESL classes were both people that lived at Posada de Inmigrantes and people from the local community. When this research was conducted (February-July, 2008), the ESL classes were taught at a nearby elementary school located just some blocks from Posada de

inmigrantes. Classes were ten-weeks long, four times a week (Monday through Thursday), and in the evenings (7:30 to 9:00 p.m.). The focus of the adult ESL program was on developing mostly speaking skills in English, but the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) were taught. The curriculum was organized thematically and covered a different theme every week, such as transportation, employment and looking for work, housing and renting houses, medical problems and emergencies, and community resources. There were two courses in the program, Level 1, a beginning course, and Level 2, an intermediate course. The two courses mostly covered the same themes, but had a different curriculum, a basic one and an intermediate one. The instructors in the program were volunteers and taught only once a week, so students had a different teacher every evening. Some of the instructors came to the program without teaching experience and some others had TESOL training and experience.

I gained entry to the site because of my continued involvement in the ESL program, where I started teaching in October 2004 after watching the documentary Los Trabajadores/The Workers directed by Heather Courtney, which tells the story of day laborers, one of whom was a former resident of Posada de Inmigrantes. After watching the film, I found information about Posada de Inmigrantes and contacted the ESL coordinator to be a volunteer ESL teacher. Since then, I was an ESL teacher in the program, sometimes teaching the Level 1 course and sometimes the Level 2 course. When in December 2007 I asked the ESL coordinator for permission to conduct this research study with the Level 2 students, he accepted without hesitation (See Appendix

A: ESL Coordinator Permission Letter). In addition, because I requested it, during the length of the study, I was assigned to teach Level 1 instead of Level 2.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

The five adult ESL learners who participated in this study were selected using purposeful sampling. Patton (1990; in Glesne, 1999) explains that the purpose of this type of sampling is "to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (p.29). There were two criteria used for selecting the participants of this study: a) that they were ESL learners in the Level 2 course at Posada de Inmigrantes, and b) that they migrated to the United States from a Latin American country.

After this research study was granted Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval in January of 2008 (IRB protocol number 2007-12-0060), I visited the Level 2 course at Posada de inmigrantes and invited students to participate in the study. Even though I was not teaching the Level 2 course during the period of data collection, many of the students in the course had been my students in the past. I gave students a letter in English and Spanish in which I explained my research study in general terms, outlined the activities that the volunteer participants would do, and informed them how long the study would last (see Appendix B: Letter Asking for Study Participants). I asked students to think about my invitation and let me know their decision by phone or in writing. Out of the twelve students that received my invitation, seven agreed to participate in the study and were given consent forms to sign (see Appendix C: Consent Form). Out of those seven students, only five participated during the entire six months that the study lasted. Due to

personal problems and time constraints, the other two participants (a woman from Guatemala, and a man from El Salvador) stopped attending the ESL course and could only participate in the first interview.

The participants

In this section, I introduce the five study participants and provide an overview of their demographic characteristics, reasons for migrating to the United States, living and work situation at the time of data collection, educational background, and participation in the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program. Readers should understand the life histories of the five participants in the broader socio-historical context of migration from Mexico and Central America to the United States that was provided in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Paloma

Paloma was the study participant who had lived in the United States the longest. Originally from Guatemala, Paloma immigrated to the United States with her husband in 1989 due to the political instability in the country and the political persecution of her husband, who was granted political asylum by the United States. When they moved to the United States, Paloma's children stayed in Guatemala. Her younger son, who was seven, joined her some months after they settled in Central City, and her older daughter, who was fourteen, joined her years later after finishing high school in Guatemala. After living in the United States for three years, Paloma and her husband had their first child together. At the time of data collection Paloma was 54 years old her three children were 32, 24, and 15 years old.

In Guatemala, Paloma had studied to be a secretary and was working as a secretary before leaving the country. She was also studying history at the university and had taken two semesters of courses when they had to leave the country. Once her seven-year-old son arrived in Central City, Paloma needed to find a job with a flexible schedule which allowed her to take care of her son, so she started to work as a housekeeper, a job she continued to do when this study was conducted.

In 2002 Paloma was granted permanent residency in the United States, so after twelve years without seeing her family, Paloma travelled to Guatemala. At the time of data collection Paloma was in the process of applying for citizenship status, and in March of 2008 she took the citizenship tests, which she passed.

For many years, Paloma learned English informally by interacting in English in the houses where she worked, but some years before this study, Paloma decided to take English classes. First, she took a course at a local Community College, but given her family responsibilities, it was very difficult for her to go to class. She was also interested in the English courses offered by some other organizations, but their location was not convenient for her. In November of 2007, Paloma started attending the Level 2 course at Posada de Inmigrantes because the school where the classes were held was less than five minutes by car from where she lived and because she liked the flexibility of the program.

Rosa

Rosa moved to Central City from North Carolina five months before this study began. Originally from Mexico City in Mexico, Rosa migrated to North Carolina in 1998

when she was twenty three years old because she wanted to "make a lot of money and come back in one year or two" (Interview 1, 02-20-08). Rosa told her fourteen- year-old brother that she was going to the United States for that reason, but she told her parents that she was going on vacation. With a group of people that also wanted to go to the United States to work, she traveled from Mexico City to Piedras Negras in the northern state of Coahuila, and after two weeks there making arrangements to cross to the United States, the group entered the United States and went to North Carolina. Rosa shared with me that before moving to the United States she did not know about the documentation that she needed in order to work in the country or about the limitations that she would have for not having a valid visa and a social security number.

However, Rosa started working soon after she arrived in North Carolina. She worked as a janitor for a company, she worked in a factory sewing carpets, and she even worked for a fire department processing equipment orders, such as fire alarms and fire extinguishers. Back in Mexico, Rosa had worked for three years in a family services agency for the local government. Before working there, she had studied some semesters of computer engineering at the university, but she had to start working when her brother had an accident with his bike and he was in the hospital for five months and needed a long treatment to recover from the accident.

When Rosa was in the United States, both her parents died. One year after she left her home, her father died and four years after that, her mother also died. Rosa decided to stay in the United States because she wanted to send money to her brother for him to be able to study at the university. Rosa's brother earned a degree in Commercial Psychology

and at the time of data collection was working for an international company in Mexico. Rosa was very proud of the fact that she had been able to help her brother earn a university degree.

Rosa met her husband in North Carolina and after three years together, they had to join his family in Central City due to his father's health problems. Rosa found a job in an art supply factory making wood panels, so after six months living with her husband's family, Rosa and her husband could afford to rent their own apartment, which meant that they had to work long hours from Monday to Saturday to be able to pay rent.

Rosa had been taking English courses ever since she arrived in the United States, so when she moved to Central City, she also wanted to take a course. She learned about the ESL courses offered by Posada de Inmigrantes and started going to the Level 2 course in December 2007.

Lucho

At age 24, Lucho was the youngest study participant. He migrated to Texas from a small town in the rural area of Río Grande in the north central state of Zacatecas, Mexico ten years before this study. Lucho had seven siblings, two younger ones, who lived with him and his parents in Mexico and five older ones, who lived in Texas. During his first year of high school, Lucho dropped out of school and decided to migrate to Central City to be with his older siblings.

When Lucho arrived in Central City in 1998 he was fourteen years old and started working cleaning offices with one of his brothers and his sister-in-law. In 2002, when he

was 18 years old, he started working in the same waterproofing company where he worked when this study was conducted. Lucho worked there from Monday to Friday, and he worked for another construction company on Saturdays.

Lucho lived in a house with one of his brothers and his sister-in-law. He had a girlfriend who lived in a town which was 200 miles from Central City, and whom he visited every two or three months. Lucho had a group of friends with whom he liked to spend time during the weekends and sometimes go dancing on Saturday night.

For nine years Lucho learned English informally at work and two years before this study he began learning English with a book called *Hablando inglés leyendo en español/Speak English reading in Spanish*, which focused on the teaching of English words and phrases through translation and pronunciation. In 2007, Lucho decided to take an English course, so in September of that year he began attending the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL courses. He first took the Level 1 course and then he moved to the Level 2 course, the course that he was taking when this research study began.

Nicolás

Nicolás was the oldest of the participants. At the time of the study, he was 56 years old. Originally from Matehuala in the northern Mexican state of San Luis Potosí, Nicolás had been living in the United States on and off for twelve years. First, he lived in Dallas, where he worked in a construction company and then in 2004 he moved to Central City and started working in a roofing company, where he continued working when this study was conducted. Back in Mexico he worked as an electrician for a

company, but he left that job and moved to the United States because he wanted to earn more money for his sons to be able to have a good education in Mexico. A father of three sons ages 33, 27, and 23, Nicolás - who earned his high school degree as an adult- was very proud of the fact that two of them pursued higher education in Mexico; one was a pre-school teacher and the other an industrial engineer. He shared: "Estoy orgulloso porque yo ando sacrificándome aca/I'm proud because of my sacrifice here" (Interview 1, 02-25-08).

At the time of data collection, Nicolás had been married for 33 years, but for the last six he had lived alone in the United States while his wife lived in Mexico. She visited him a few times a year, but he had not gone back to Mexico in six years. He explained to me that he used to have a tourist visa, which allowed him to go back and forth between Mexico and the United States. However, in 2002 his tourist visa expired and Nicolás did not want to run the risk of applying for a new visa in Mexico because he feared the embassy would deny it to him due to the stricter immigration regulations after 9/11. So, he decided to stay in the United States on an expired visa even though he would not be able to visit his family.

When he moved from Dallas to Central City, Nicolás began participating in the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program. First, he took the Level 1 course and then he moved to the Level 2 course, which at the time of data collection he had taken approximately fifteen times.

Pancho

Pancho was 28 years old and at the time of data collection he had been living in Texas for almost eight years. He migrated to Texas from Monterrey, Mexico, a city in the northern state of Nuevo León, located 120 miles south of the Mexico-US border. Pancho moved to Texas because he wanted to be with his parents and seven siblings, who were already living in Texas. Pancho's mother migrated first in 1995 and his father joined her in 1996. Over time, all his siblings decided to join their parents, so Pancho was the only one who remained in Monterrey. In the year 2000, Pancho also moved to Texas because his family told him that there were more job opportunities in Texas than in Monterrey. Even though his parents and some of his siblings were legal residents of the United States, Pancho was not.

Before deciding to join his family in Texas, Pancho was working as a product promoter at a grocery store in Monterrey. After Pancho finished high school, he needed to start working because his family could not support him any longer. In addition, since he wanted to become a mechanical engineer, he enrolled at a private university (because the course schedule at the public university did not allow him to work) and he had to work in order to pay tuition. Since his salary at the grocery store was not very good, he could only pay tuition for one semester and then he dropped the program.

Since his arrival to the United States Pancho had worked in construction for two different companies, as a plumber's helper, and on a farm. During this study, Pancho had two jobs; one job in construction during the week and another job on a farm on

Saturdays. During the week, Pancho worked in Central City and on Saturdays he worked on a farm located 40 miles from Central City.

When this study began, Pancho lived in Central City, but due to changes in his work situation, in April of 2008 he had to move back to his parents' home in a city located 30 miles East of Central City. Pancho had lived with his parents from 2000 to 2007 and he commuted to work, until in 2007 he moved to Central City and lived in an apartment with some co-workers. When he moved to Central City, Pancho started participating actively in his church and he started attending the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program. However, when he moved out of Central City, Pancho was no longer able to participate in church activities or go to the ESL class as much as before, something which made him feel bad.

Pancho had been learning English in different institutions since he moved to Texas. First, he took an ESL course offered by a church in the town where his family lived, and later on he took other free courses offered in that town as well as in Central City. He learned about the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program in 2005 and he attended some Level 2 classes; however, it was not until September of 2007, when he moved to Central City, that he began participating regularly in the course.

THE RESEARCHER

In qualitative research, the primary instrument of data collection and analyses is the researcher, so Merriam (1998) reminds us that "all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being's worldview, values and perspective" (p. 22).

Therefore, it is important that those who read this dissertation learn about my positionality as a researcher in this study.

My interest in doing research on the connection between second language acquisition (SLA) and identity stems mainly from my own experience learning English as a foreign language, as a user of English foreign language, as a foreigner in an English-speaking country, as a teacher of English and Spanish, and as an international graduate student of Foreign Language Education in a U.S. institution.

Ever since I moved to the United States in 2000 (because I received a scholarship from the MA TESOL program at Eastern Michigan University) my identity as a language user was challenged. I constantly had to negotiate my "nonnativeness" and the fact that I speak English with an accent. As Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) wrote, "I am my language" (p.81). Spanish and English are my languages, and most of the time, I am not the same person when communicating in Spanish or in English. Spanish is my native language and the one I am the most comfortable speaking. I speak Spanish in my daily life, and I do not have to give much thinking to the way I am going to say things (to vocabulary and grammar) before speaking. My other language, English, is also a part of my daily life, but many times I do not feel very comfortable when speaking/writing it. I am very self-conscious of the way I speak—especially my accent and my lack of vocabulary to talk about certain subjects—, I am constantly checking my writing, and I always pay close attention to how native speakers of English say things in order to learn new words, phrases, and expressions. In other words, I still consider myself an ESL learner even though I have been learning English since I was eleven years old and that I teach English.

I came to this research study wondering if a person who immigrated to the United States in pursuit of graduate education in teaching English as a Second Language could really understand the lives of undocumented immigrants who came to the United States to work and without knowing how to speak English. Davies (2002) explains that the question of having an insider's perspective in any situation is very problematic because "it is difficult to imagine any individuals so unreflective that they consistently feel a complete insider in any situation even within their own family" (p. 182). I struggled with my insider/outsider position regarding my participants. Given that I was an immigrant from Argentina, that I spoke Spanish natively, and that I missed my life in Argentina, I may have been considered an insider by the participants. Speaking Spanish and being from Latin America helped me communicate at a different level with the participants and it was key to the rapport we created before, during, and after the study. However, my skin color, my different Spanish accent, and being an ESL teacher and a graduate student collecting data for my dissertation also positioned me as an outsider.

Throughout this study, I constantly reflected on the similarities and differences between my participants' and my own experiences. Even though during the study I did not teach the course the participants were taking, they always identified me as a teacher (la maestra). At the time of data collection I was a 30-year-old, middle-class woman from South America, who enjoyed many privileges for being highly educated and for speaking English very well. While the participants worked full time in low-wage, labor intensive jobs, due to my education I worked part-time as a graduate student instructor and devoted the rest of my time to studying, a privilege that the participants did not enjoy. Another

important difference was my resident status in the United States (I was a "nonresident alien" with a student visa), which was different from that of four of the five participants, who were undocumented immigrants. This meant, among many other things, that once a year I could travel to Argentina, visit my family, and return to Central City. Four of the five participants, on the other hand, did not enjoy that freedom and they had not seen their family in Mexico for many years.

After the data collection period of this study ended, the data analysis and writing periods took longer than anticipated because of personal and work-related reasons. After this study was conducted, I spent a semester teaching in Qatar, and then I returned to the United States for another semester. In June of 2009, I moved back to my home town in Argentina because my partner had found a job as a researcher. That same year I started teaching at the local university and in 2010 my daughter, Julia, was born. These changes in my personal and professional life and my new social identity negotiations not only delayed the analysis and writing processes, but also influenced my analyses and interpretations of the data.

I have provided the above information because my own identity negotiations as an English speaker, my insider/outsider position in relation to the study participants, and the changes in my personal and professional life after the data collection period certainly influenced the way in which I collected and analyzed the data.

DATA COLLECTION

To understand the nature of the participants' realities, Glesne (1999) states that qualitative researchers "must gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants" and "interact and talk with participants about their perceptions" (p. 5). I worked with the participants for six months, which allowed me to collect data at different stages of their life, language learning process, and identity and agency negotiations. Since the study is a multiple-case study, data collection procedures were consistent across cases. I used ethnographic methods of data collection, which included interviews with the participants, focus groups, audio journals about their experiences using English in different contexts, participant observation in the ESL course the students were taking, document analysis of the ESL course curriculum, and field notes from the classroom observations and other environments in which I observed the participants.

Interviews

Through the use of semi-structured interviews I explored each participant's experiences learning and using English in different contexts. I conducted three interviews with each participant; one in February, another one in June, and the last one in July (see Appendices D, E, and F for the interview guides). The interviews allowed participants to share different experiences, such as how they arrived in the United States, why they were studying English, how they felt when they spoke English and interacted with English-speaking people in different contexts, and a variety of other experiences. Seidman (1998) recommends three interviews with each participant: *focused life history, the details of*

experience, and *reflection on the meaning*. The three-interview series is a model of in-depth phenomenological interviewing and emphasizes the importance of becoming deeply familiar with each participant (p. 11). Due to the nature of the questions that guided this study, such familiarization with the participants was extremely important, since it allowed me to explore the lived experiences of the participants from their point of view.

The purpose of the first interview, *focused life history*, was "to put the participant's experience in context" (p.11), so the participants shared their experiences of migration, their work experiences in their home countries and in the United States, their schooling experience, and their experiences learning English in formal contexts. The focus of the second interview, *the details of experience*, was "to concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present experience in the topic area of the study" (p. 12). In this interview, the participants shared their experiences learning English in the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program and their experiences using English in different contexts. The focus of the third interview, *reflection on the meaning*, was on "the participants' understanding of their experience" (p. 12) as learners and users of English in Central City.

Glesne (1998) suggests that qualitative researchers should think of their interview questions tentatively, so that they "are disposed to modify or abandon them, replace them with others, or add new ones" (p. 68). In this study, the three semi-structured interviews were guided by flexible interview protocols with open-ended questions. The interviews

were structured in a way which allowed participants to discuss the focus of each interview and to share other experiences, too.

The interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, or a combination of both languages depending on each participant's choice. They took place at a convenient location for each participant, such as the school, their home, or a coffee shop. Sometimes, we agreed to meet in places where it was convenient for both to meet, but where the participants had never been (like a Starbuck's coffee shop or a café near the University campus). It was interesting and useful for the research process to see the participants interact in these places. I tried to make the interview process as relaxed, informal, and enjoyable as possible, and the participants seemed to have felt comfortable during the different interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes, and they were audio recorded and transcribed.

Focus Groups

I conducted two focus group interviews, one four months into the study and the other at the end of the study. According to Berg (2004), focus groups are group interviews to discuss a topic of interest to the participants or the researcher. These interviews can be guided or unguided and they should have a small number of participants and a moderator. Due to the format of these interviews, the ideas that arise in them are socially constructed. Callahan (as quoted in Berg, 2004, p. 126) explains that there is more flow of ideas and information when participants can listen to each other's experiences and they can build on each other's ideas.

The discussion questions for the two group interviews were based on information collected during the individual interviews and the journal entries (described in the next section). The questions were about common themes that arose from the data collected (see Appendices G and H for guiding questions). The group discussions served both as a way for participants to elaborate on the common themes and for the researcher to clarify doubts that came up with the preliminary analysis of the data. The interviews were audio and video recorded because I was interested in looking at the body language of the participants in these group interactions.

Like with the individual interviews, I tried to make sure that the group interviews were informal and that the participants were relaxed and open to discussing with their peers their experiences with English in the different cultural contexts where they used the language. Both group interviews took place in my home and were scheduled during the weekend because it was easier for everyone to come together. The first interview was on Sunday, June 1 and the second on Saturday, July 26. Since Rosa, Paloma, Lucho and Pancho had cars, they got organized to pick up Nicolás to go to my apartment. The meetings were held in the living room, which provided an intimate setting. One reason why I decided to have the group interviews in my apartment was that I wanted the participants to be in an environment that would make them feel comfortable to discuss different aspects of their life learning and using English. Also, because a very good relationship developed between the participants and me, I wanted to open up my home to them as a way to show them a bit of who I was outside of school. Both meetings were

very informal and in addition to discussing themes pertaining to the research study, we shared food, drinks, music, and casual conversation mostly in Spanish.

The second group interview was also a good-bye celebration because it was the last meeting we had all together before the end of the study and before I left the city for four months due to personal reasons. At the end of the meeting, I thanked the participants for participating in the study, and I gave each of them a group photograph with a thank you note as well as an English/Spanish dictionary as a small token of appreciation for the time and effort they put into the research study. The participants also thanked me for inviting them to participate in the study and for teaching them English (when I was their teacher the year before). Something really nice and moving that Lucho said in that meeting was that "un día le diré a sus hijos que por Fabiana hablo inglés/One day I will tell Fabiana's children that I speak English because of her" (Focus group interview 2, 02, 07-26-08)

Journal

The participants were asked to keep an oral journal in which they reflected on their experiences using English. The main purpose of keeping a journal was for the participants to express what they did, what they thought, and how they felt in different situations where they communicated in English.

Once I knew the number of participants in the study, and after doing some research on a device that would be the most appropriate for this research study, I purchased MP3 players and I gave one to each participant for her/him to take home. Each

participant received a small bag with the MP3 player, earphones, AAA batteries, and instructions of use written by me. I explained the different functions of the device putting the emphasis on how to operate the voice recorder. I purposefully bought MP3 players that had three functions: MP3 player, radio, and voice recorder. I needed the participants to be able to record their journal entries for this study, but I was also interesting in giving them a device that they could use for entertainment (to listen to music and the radio) and for educational purposes (to practice their listening skills). Therefore, the MP3 player which participants received had some music in English and some saved radio stations that I thought they might find entertaining and that they could use to practice listening. I selected songs from different artists that I had in my music library (The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Tina Turner, Cher, Eric Clapton, U2, Madonna, Bob Marley, Alanis Morissette, etc.), and I saved some radio stations for participants to listen to the news and to music in English. In addition, I included some podcasts with ESL lessons as well as episodes from NPR's Latino USA, which dealt with news about the Latino community in the country.

The participants used the MP3 players in different ways according to their interests and needs. Paloma and Lucho only used the device to record their journal entries. Rosa used it to record her journal entries and lent it to her husband for him to listen to the radio at work. Miguel recorded his entries, listened to the podcasts, and used the radio (stations that he liked in Spanish). Nicolás was the one who seemed to have used the device the most. Several times during the study, Nicolás gave me some of his music CDs (both in English and Spanish) for me to convert to MP3 files and save them in

his MP3 player. He also mentioned to me that he listened to one of the radio stations that I saved in his MP3 player as well as to some other stations that he saved himself.

As stated above, the main reason why the students received MP3 players was for them to record their audio journals. I gave the participants some guidance as to what they could share in their journals. I told them that I wanted to understand how, when, where and with whom they used English, and what happened and how they felt in those interactions. I gave participants the choice to record their entries in English or in Spanish, so recordings were sometimes in English, sometimes in Spanish and sometimes they had a mix of both languages. Rosa always recorded in English and Paloma always in Spanish. Nicolás recorded four entries in English and ten in Spanish, but code-switching to English when quoting something said literally. Lucho and Pancho recorded in Spanish and also code-switched to English when quoting literally something said in the interactions they were reflecting on.

Even though at the beginning of the study I told participants that I would collect their journals every two weeks, the participants ended up giving me their entries whenever they had recorded experiences using English. For this reason, the number of entries that I collected from participants varied. Pancho recorded 15 experiences, Nicolás 14, Rosa 9, Lucho 8, and Paloma 6.

Document Analysis

I analyzed the Posada de Inmigrantes Level 2 ESL course curriculum as well as the lesson plans (when available) and handouts used in the lessons that I observed. The

analysis of these documents was important to understand some of the principles of language learning and teaching underlying the course that the participants were taking.

Observations

Classroom Observations

I conducted forty five classroom observations in the ESL course that the participants attended during the six months of the study. Before I started the observations I contacted the different ESL teachers to tell them about my research study and ask them for permission to observe their classes. I explained to them that the ESL program coordinator had given me permission to conduct the classroom observations, and they accepted and welcomed me in their classes. Glesne (1998) explains that "participant observation ranges across a continuum from mostly observation to mostly participation" (p. 44). My role during the observations was that of an "observer as participant" (Glesne, p. 44) because I primarily remained an observer in the class. There were instances, however, in which the instructors or the students consulted some things with me, such as the material that was covered in the previous lesson (since the teachers taught only once a week, they did not know exactly what had happened in the previous lesson), the definition of a word/expression in Spanish or English, some information from the Internet (because I was using my laptop computer and had wireless access to the school's internet server).

My observations were audio recorded and I wrote field notes to record detailed descriptions of what I observed. While doing the observations, I paid attention to a

variety of aspects, such as how the study participants interacted with their teachers and classmates in the language classroom, their conversations with others, their behavior in the classroom, their comments to the whole class, etc. I carefully took notes on a Word document on my laptop computer during the observations, paying attention to everything that happened in the classroom. The notes included the events being observed, a complete description of what was happening, and a comment with my preliminary interpretations of what happened (see *field notes* section).

Conducting 45 classroom observations for the study allowed me to see the participants interact in class and provided many opportunities to talk with the participants after class about daily aspects of our lives. These conversations, which some nights lasted ten minutes and some others thirty minutes, contributed to the development of rapport and trust, which were key for participants to feel comfortable sharing their experiences with me. In addition, going to school and seeing the participants regularly played a very important role in the organization of data collection (I saved participants' journal entry recordings onto my computer, we scheduled times for individual and group interviews, and we set up places to meet for observations outside of school).

Observations Outside of Class

During the course of this study, I observed participants interact in different contexts in which they had to use English for communication. The main objective of these observations was to see how participants engaged in different social activities that required the use of English. It was not easy to coordinate with the participants to go with

them to places where they had to speak English. Apart from the interactions they had in English at work, which varied a lot across cases, they did not speak much English in their daily activities. Given that I could not go with them to work, it was difficult for the participants to think of places where they would speak English that they could go with me. Also, there could have been some trust issues that influenced the participants not "inviting" me to go with them to certain places. For instance, Nicolás did not have many opportunities to speak English in his daily life, so he told me that he could not come up with a place for us to go to. However, when he needed to go to the doctor's office, he did not let me know about it. Later, I found out that he did not want me to go with him because he was afraid that the doctor could say something bad was happening to him (because he had been feeling dizzy at work lately) and he did not want me to be there.

Even though it was not easy to schedule observations, I could observe the participants in two different social interactions. I went with Paloma to a hospital when she needed an x-ray because she had a swollen clavicle. I also went with her to a clothing store and a grocery store. I accompanied Rosa to the Municipal Court when she needed to pay a traffic ticket for driving without a license. On another occasion I had dinner with her at a restaurant where we needed to order in English. With Pancho, we went to a garage where he took his truck for an oil change and had to ask for the type of service offered and the price. Also, we went to a coffee shop where he needed to place an order in English. I went with Nicolás to a shopping mall when he needed to let his wife in Mexico know the price of some tennis shoes. We also went to a coffee place, where he ordered in English. Similarly, with Lucho we went to another coffee shop, where he

ordered something to drink for both of us. I also went with Lucho to a Home Depot store, where he bought construction gloves and earplugs, and asked about the price of portable air conditioning units for his bedroom.

In all these settings, I observed how the participants interacted with other English speakers, how they positioned themselves and how they were positioned by others in the interactions. My role in the observations was that of a "participant observer" (Merriam, 1998) because I was an active participant in the different social interactions, but I was also the researcher gathering information about different aspects of the interactions and writing them in my field notes after each observation.

Field Notes

I wrote field notes to document what I saw in the different observations I conducted. Glesne (1999) explains that field notes should be descriptive and analytic and that the researcher should make every effort to be accurate without being judgmental. She also explains that the observer should write notes that in the future will allow her/him to remember as clearly as possible the events described. Coffey (1999) also describes field notes as personal because they are a "textual space for the recording of our emotions and personal experiences" (p. 119). As much as possible, I kept three types of notes: 1) descriptive, 2) analytic, and 3) self- reflective. The *descriptive notes* included as many details as possible about the observation. Berg (2004) explains that "[t]hey should include as much texture, sensation, color, and minutia as your memory permits" (p. 174). The *analytic notes* (or observer comments) had my comments about the data collected with

ideas that occurred to me about what I observed and preliminary interpretations of the data. The *self-reflective* notes include my personal reflections as well as my feelings and emotions about the observed events. Berg (2004) explains that these notes can include "how angry something made you or how surprised you were when you learned some piece of information" (p. 174). As a participant observer, I recorded field notes while I was doing the classroom observations as well as after the classroom and outside of class observations.

Data Collection Methods Table

Table 1: Data Collection Methods

WHICH SOURCE?	WHAT?	WHEN?	HOW MANY?	WHY?
Interviews	Interview 1	February 2008	5	Life history interview
	Interview 2	June 2008	5	Current experience learning and using English
	Interview 3	July 2008	5	Reflections on the meaning of experience (learning and using English)
Focus Groups	Focus group 1	Sunday, June 1st, 2008	1	Participants elaborate on common themes from the interviews
	Focus group 2	Saturday, July 26th, 2008	1	Participants elaborate on common themes and clarify researcher doubts

Table 1 (continued)

Observations	In class	February-July 2008	45	Observe classroom interaction of the participants and how they construct their identities in the ESL class
	Outside of class	June and July 2008	12	Observe interaction of the participants with English speakers in different contexts
	Field notes	During and after observations	60 entries	To describe, analyze, and reflect on the researchers' observations
Document Analysis	Level 2 course curriculum	Before and during observations	1	To analyze the course design and the activities and materials proposed
	Level 2 course lesson plans	During class observations	40	To analyze the lesson goals, activities, and materials
Audio Journal	Journal entries	March- July	6 to 15 entries per participant	To learn about the participants' experiences using English

DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the data, I used interpretational analysis. Gall et al. (2003) describe this type of analysis as the process of examining case-study data closely in order to find themes and patterns that can be used to describe and explain what is being studied. The data were analyzed during and after data collection. Glesne (1999) argues for an analysis of the data simultaneous to data collection because what the researcher learns while collecting and analyzing data will determine how s/he continues collecting data (p.130).

During data collection, data transcription and observation field notes were first instances of analysis which led to the identification of recurrent themes, which were later on explored during the interviews. For example, after a preliminary analysis of the audio

journal data, some of the experiences shared by each participant were included in her/his second and third interviews for them to expand on their ideas. Also, the recurrent themes that emerged from the preliminary analysis of the data collected from February to June were discussed during the second focus group interview (See Appendix H for guiding questions).

After the data collection period, I transcribed the interview data (individual and focus group) as well as the audio journal data. I analyzed all the data looking for recurring themes based on my understandings of identity, agency, and investment. Merriam (1998) points out that "[c]oding is nothing more than assigning some sort of short-hand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data" (p. 164). I repeatedly read the data and when I identified important issues, I wrote comments using the Track Changes function of Microsoft Word. I color coded the themes that were recurrent in each case and across cases. Some of the emerging themes were "Use of Spanish," "Limited use of English," "Contexts of English usage," "Positionality in English interactions," "English usage and agency," and "echarle ganas al inglés/making an effort to learn English", among many other themes. Using Microsoft Word, I organized the data under each theme. When I began the process of writing the findings, I continued analyzing the data and reorganizing the themes as I wrote chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

For this research study to be as valid and reliable as possible I used the following strategies to ensure trustworthiness: a) data triangulation, b) member checks, and c) statement of investigator's position. Merriam (1998) explains these different strategies and how they enhance the validity and reliability of case studies.

Merriam describes *triangulation* as the process of using multiple sources of data to confirm emerging themes in the data. In this study, data were collected using individual and focus group interviews, observations, field notes, audio journal entries, and documents in order to ensure data triangulation of findings within each case and across cases.

Member checking is another strategy that was used to enhance internal validity. Throughout the period of data collection, I checked my understanding of the participants' experiences with them in the individual interviews, in the focus group interviews, or in the interactions we had after the class observations or during the outside of class observations. For example, in the second focus group interview we discussed some of the preliminary findings of the study.

Specifying the *investigator's position* is another strategy which enhances reliability. Merriam (1998) explains that the researcher "should explain the assumptions and theory behind the study, his or her position *vis-à-vis* the group being studied, the basis for selecting participants and a description of them, and the social context from which data were collected" (pp. 206-207). In this dissertation, I have provided an

explanation of all these aspects of the study in an attempt to strengthen the reliability of this study.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have included the research questions that guided this multiple case study, have described the research design, and have given a detailed account of the methodology that used to address the research questions. I used a variety of methods of data collection, such as interviews, focus groups, oral journal, and observation inside and outside of the classroom. I have also described the setting, the study participants and myself, the primary investigator. I have also explained how I analyzed the data and the steps that I took to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4: The Figured World of the ESL Class

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this study, I examined how five adult Hispanic immigrants learning English in a Central Texas city negotiated identity and exercised agency in contexts where English was spoken as well as their investment in learning English. One of the contexts where the study participants used English was the ESL class, a figured world (Holland, et al., 1998) where they participated before, during, and after this study. The purpose of this chapter is to offer a description of the figured world of the ESL class and to present findings and analyses that highlight each participant's identity negotiations and investment in learning English as well as some of the similarities across participants. The chapter is organized in the following fashion: 1) the ESL program, 2) the curriculum, 3) the Level 2 curriculum, 4) the ESL teachers, 4) the pedagogy, 5) the students, 6) the Level 2 classroom, and 7) each participant as a case study highlighting themes that are unique to her/his participation in the figured world of the ESL class.

The ESL class at Posada de Inmigrantes was studied as a figured world because it was a bound system populated by recognizable others, where positions mattered, and where identities were formed (Urrieta, 2007). All the study participants were Hispanic immigrants who migrated to the United States for similar reasons and who participated in the same ESL class before, during, and (some of them) after this research study.

THE ESL PROGRAM

As explained in Chapter 3, the ESL classes offered by Posada de Inmigrantes took place from Monday to Thursday from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. at an elementary school four blocks from Posada de Inmigrantes. In one of the school windows there was a flyer in Spanish and English about the ESL classes that read:

Table 2: Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program flyer

Posada de Inmigrantes le ofrece CLASES DE INGLÉS	Posada de Inmigrantes offers ENGLISH CLASSES
¿Cuándo? Lunes a Jueves 7:30 a 9:00 p.m. ¿Dónde? *Elementary School*	When: Monday- Thursday 7:30- 9:00 Where: *Elementary school*
¡Las clases son completamente GRATIS!	The classes are FREE!
- No es necesario registrarse- ¡solo hay que llegar!	- You don't have to register- Just show up!
- No tiene que traer nada- ¡proveemos papel, lápices, todo!	- You don't have to bring materials- Materials will be provided!
- ¡Se puede tomar el autobús #4 y caminar 1 solo bloque para llegar!	- If you ride bus #4, then walk one block to get to the school!
- No importa si viene por primera vez o por décima vez- ¡cada clase trata un tema nuevo!	- Even if this is your first time to attend class- every class offers a new topic!
- ¡Tenemos clases de nivel 1 y de nivel 2!	- We start with level 1 class and move to level 2!
- ¡Todos los maestros son voluntarios que enseñan porque quieren ayudarles a personas como usted!	- All the teachers are volunteer teachers. They are here because they want to help you!
Venga a probar una clase de inglés… no hay nada que perder	*Come and try it! You have nothing to lose!*

As stated in the flyer, the ESL classes were free and open to anyone interested in learning English (people living at Posada de Inmigrantes and people from the local community). The classes were open entry and open exit as there was no need to register for the courses and teachers only kept a record of the students present in class by having them sign an attendance sheet at the end of each lesson. There were four attendance sheets per week, which the ESL coordinator collected at the end of every week to keep a record of the number of students attending the program. The structure of the courses was very flexible and since there was no pre-registration, teachers welcomed new students every class –even if the courses and/or lessons had already started. There were two ESL courses, Level 1 and Level 2, but there was no formal placement exam to determine what course new students should take. On several occasions during this study, I observed that when a new student arrived, teachers would informally "test" her/him by paying attention to how much s/he could understand of the oral information teachers gave her/him about the two English courses in the program. If the new student could follow the conversation, s/he would go to the Level 2 course and if the student seemed confused or said that s/he could not understand what the teacher said, s/he would go to Level 1.

THE CURRICULUM

The flexibility of the ESL program required a curriculum that was also flexible and that could adapt to the new students and the different levels of English proficiency. The curriculum of the adult ESL program could be described as a Survival English curriculum due to its organization around daily life situations in which people might need

to use English. The focus of the adult ESL program was to help learners develop mostly speaking skills in English, but the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) were taught.

The basic ESL course (Level 1) and the intermediate ESL course (Level 2) were structured around a ten-week schedule which covered ten units organized by themes: 1) Personal Information and Transportation; 2) Emotions, Likes, and Dislikes; 3) Food and Buying Food; 4) Clothing and Buying Clothes; 5) Time, Calendars, and Holidays; 6) Employment, Looking for Work, and Work Tools; 7) Health, Body, Medical Problems & Emergencies; 8) Housing and Renting; 9) Community Resources, the Telephone & Emergencies; 10) Transportation, Trips, and Verb Tense Review. Each course had a different curriculum that was designed by two ESL teachers in 2003.

At Posada de Inmigrantes, there were ten binders with the lesson plans and activities for each of the ten-week teaching cycle. The binders were organized in a way that made it relatively easy for teachers to read the day's lesson plan and make photocopies (at Posada de Inmigrantes) for the students of the worksheets listed in the lesson plan. In addition to the binders, there were ten boxes that contained materials that might be useful in the week's lessons. For example, in the box for week 4 (about *Clothing and Buying Clothes*) there were clothes flash cards, magazine ads about clothes, clothing advertisement from local stores, and other things related to the topic. Teachers could take the boxes to class and use the materials if they needed them. In addition to the materials located at Posada, teachers had electronic access to the lesson plans and class materials. In 2006 and 2007 the ESL coordinator at Posada created a Yahoo Group for

teachers and the Level 1 and Level 2 materials were digitalized and uploaded to the Yahoo Group files for teachers to have electronic access to them before the day they had to teach.

THE LEVEL 2 CURRICULUM

As stated in Chapter 3, the participants in this study were taking the Intermediate (Level 2) ESL course. This course's curriculum focused mostly on developing speaking, listening, reading, and -to a lesser extent- writing skills, and there was a great deal of emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation teaching. The forty lesson plans in the curriculum included activities such as discussing a picture story, writing a story, reading a story, role playing a conversation, using a picture dictionary to learn new vocabulary, practicing pronunciation of new vocabulary, practicing verb tenses, etc. Most of the lesson plans had a note that stated "This is just a guide for teachers. Feel free to add, change, or deviate from it", but in my observations I could see that most teachers used the lesson plans provided rather than creating their own.

THE TEACHERS

The teachers in the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program were volunteers and taught once a week, which meant that the students had a different teacher each day of the week. Many of the teachers were college students (undergraduate and graduate), but just a few of them were in the field of second language acquisition. Even though it was not a requirement to teach in the program, the six teachers that I observed during my study knew Spanish, and used their knowledge to translate words for students or to clarify

ideas. The teachers were required by the program to commit to teaching an entire teaching cycle (ten weeks) and to try to find a substitute teacher when they could not teach. Since class started at 7:30 p.m., teachers generally arrived at Posada de Inmigrantes at around 7:00 p.m., read the lesson plan for the day, made copies of handouts/worksheets for students, got the key to open the school, and went to school. Even though the lesson plans and handouts were available to teachers online, the teachers I observed in this study generally prepared their lesson at Posada de Inmigrantes right before class. During my study, I observed the five participants in this study being taught by six teachers (three women and three men) and sometimes by substitute teachers. All the teachers were white, American, and could speak Spanish. Some of them had more teaching experience than others, and only one was trained as an ESL teacher. Of the six teachers, two always prepared their own lesson plans and the remaining four mostly used the lesson plans available at Posada de Inmigrantes.

The ESL program had an ESL coordinator who was a permanent staff member of Posada de Inmigrantes, but was not an ESL specialist. He was in charge of recruiting volunteers to teach ESL, organizing them to teach either the basic or the intermediate course, organizing the teaching schedules, preparing the class schedule for students, contacting the school district if there were any problems with the rooms at school, and preparing the end of the cycle celebration. In addition, during this study the ESL coordinator organized a social meeting with teachers before the end of the teaching cycle to thank them for their participation in the program. During that meeting the coordinator thanked teachers for their hard work and apologized for not doing more things for the

ESL program. He explained to them that in addition to being the ESL coordinator, he was working in other projects at Posada de Inmigrantes and could not devote much time to the ESL program (Field Notes 07/08/08).

THE PEDAGOGY

The six different teachers that I observed had different teaching methodologies, so students were exposed to different ways of teaching throughout the course. Some of the classes that I observed were more teacher-fronted than others, some were more grammar-oriented than others, and some focused on reading and having students decode information while others had students talk about a certain experience in their life. Salient in the analysis of the class observations was the high prevalence of form-focused activities to learn vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, activities which did not have a clear context and which did not prompt much interaction. Considering that, as aforementioned, most teachers were not trained in the field of foreign language education, the differences in teaching approaches was not based on theoretical foundations about teaching foreign languages, but probably on teachers' experiences teaching ESL and/or learning a foreign language.

Given that there was a different volunteer teacher teaching the course every evening, the students had four teachers per week. As stated above, teachers had access to the course curriculum and could see before class what the previous lesson had been. However, in the classes that I observed it was clear that most teachers taught their lessons

as a separate/independent unit without making connections to the course curriculum or even the previous lesson they themselves had taught the week before.

The students did not have to purchase a book or course pack for the course. The teaching materials mostly used in class were worksheets photocopied from the course curriculum, newspaper articles printed from the Internet, or chapters of ESL textbooks. Technology was used in only one of the classes that I observed (on June 17) when the teacher brought her own MP3 player to play a song for one of the class activities.

Another important aspect to consider is the role of Spanish in the class. Since all teachers had some knowledge of Spanish, it was common for them to orally translate words, expressions, sentences from English to Spanish or vice-versa. One teacher even asked students to translate whole sections in a passage from English to Spanish to make sure they understood the meaning of what they were reading (Class observation, March 18). Switching from English to Spanish was more common in some classes than others, but I noticed it in all my class observations. In addition, many of the handouts in the Level 2 curriculum had a glossary of terms in English and Spanish, so students and teachers were used to using both languages in class.

An activity that was frequently used by teachers was asking students to repeat after them the pronunciation of words. This technique was used by most teachers to teach pronunciation, but only focused on the pronunciation needs that came up in class readings, activities, or interactions. In my class observations I observed only one of the teachers (with training and experiences in TESOL) teach English pronunciation through

pre-planned activities that focused on the pronunciation of different vowel sounds (Class observations, May 1, June 17).

Before starting the lesson, a common warm-up activity was to ask students to introduce themselves. Teachers asked students to say their name, nationality, time living in town, and any other question that they considered was related to the focus of the day's lesson. For example, how are you feeling today?, what kind of movies do you like?, or what places have you visited in the United States?. Almost all the lessons that I observed started the same way and even if students were not new in the course, teachers asked them to introduce themselves. On May 22, one of the participants in this study, Rosa, answered the teacher's question in an unexpected way, which made the class laugh. After seeing the teacher in class once a week for three months, she said jokingly "My name is Rosa. I am from Russia." The teacher just smiled. Rosa's playful comment highlights that, although suggested in the lesson plan, the warm up activity of asking for the name and nationality of the students every class was a bit repetitive for some students.

In most classes, teachers and students frequently interacted through questions. Teachers asked students questions to make them use specific vocabulary, practice certain grammar rules, or check comprehension of a reading text. Mostly, the interactions stayed at a superficial level and were not connected to students' lives, feelings, or needs. For example, in a lesson about feelings and emotions that I observed on May 28, words such as lonely, nervous, scared, and excited were discussed because they were part of the lesson plan in the course curriculum. The following interaction took place in that class:

Teacher: Share a story of a time when you were excited or happy. Write down three or four sentences about a happy moment, an embarrassing moment or when you felt nervous.

Nicolás: I'm excited because the wife of my son had a baby in Mexico. I am a grandfather. I am happy, very very happy.

Teacher: What is his name?

Nicolás: I don't know the name yet.

Teacher: O.K. Well then write about the story and then we'll check the grammar.

(Class observation, 05-28-08)

This excerpt is an example of the many missed opportunities for making connections to the students' lives that I observed during my class observations. Even though the teacher asked students to share some aspects about their lives by asking them about their own experiences and feelings, the way in which the teacher responded to Nicolás' comment shows that the teacher focused mostly on the linguistic aspect of the activity and not on Nicolás' feelings.

THE STUDENTS

The English proficiency level of the students taking the Level 2 course varied considerably, with some students having serious problems understanding the material, their teachers and their classmates, and some other students mostly focusing on improving their fluency and pronunciation in the language. Some students were in the Level 2 course because they had already taken the Level 1 course two or three times and their teachers told them they could move to Level 2 if they wanted to do so. Some other students took the Level 2 course without taking the Level 1 course because they at least had an intermediate level of proficiency in English due to having learned English in other

ESL classes or informally by regularly communicating with English speakers. As mentioned earlier, course placement was informally done and only "assessed" oral proficiency.

During this study, I observed the number of students in the Level 2 course fluctuate a lot from one lesson to the other. Sometimes, there were ten students in class, and some other times there were only two. The students seemed comfortable going back to class after being absent for some time because they knew that they did not need to provide any explanation, and that a simple "I was working" was enough (classroom observation, 03-03-08). For their teachers and classmates it just seemed natural to welcome them back without asking questions.

All the students in the Level 2 course that I observed during this study were people from the community, who learned about the program through other students or previous students. At the time of the study, some of the residents of Posada de Inmigrantes were taking the Level 1 course. The age of the students taking the Level 2 course ranged from sixty to twenty, with an eight-year-old boy attending class sometimes while his father was in the Level 1 class. The students in the Level 2 course were mostly men with one female student attending classes consistently and two other female students attending sometimes. Since classes were in the evening, students arrived to class after a long day of work. It was rare to see students wearing their work clothes in class because most students arrived home around 5:30 p.m., took a shower, had dinner, and went to class at 7:30 p.m. Most students had cars, so they drove to school, but some others took the bus or rode their bikes to school.

Students were friendly with each other and in my classroom observations I saw them chatting in Spanish before and after class. There was laughter and talk about different issues, such as food, music, places visited, the weather, or the job market. During class, all students paid careful attention to the teacher explanations, the activities, and their classmates' comments and questions. When doing pair or group work, students stayed on task and even though sometimes they switched to speaking Spanish, they always did the activity proposed by the teachers. When asked to contribute answers, read a passage or repeat the pronunciation of a new word, students participated and most of them did not seem to be anxious about doing so. In the classes I observed, I formed the impression that the students and teachers had created a relaxed classroom atmosphere and that they were comfortable in class. Very noticeable was that students were very respectful and after each class they thanked their teachers for the lesson (fieldnotes, 07/10/08).

The last day of each teaching cycle, there was a celebration in which students received a certificate of attendance if they had attended the course regularly during the ten weeks. I attended two celebrations during this study, one on May 8, 2008 and one on July 24, 2008, and I had the opportunity to observe the Level 1 and Level 2 students and teachers who attended the celebration enjoy food, drinks, games, music, and dancing at the school. Also, the students signed thank you cards for their teachers. Some students brought their family to the celebration and had pictures taken when receiving their certificates. Many took pictures with their teachers and classmates (Field Notes, 07/24/08).

THE LEVEL 2 CLASSROOM

Posada de Inmigrantes had an agreement with the city school district to be able to use the neighborhood elementary school for the ESL program. Since classes were in the evening after school activities had ended, Posada de Inmigrantes had a school key that opened the two rooms that were used for the ESL classes. Each evening before going to class, the ESL teachers had to get the key from Posada de Inmigrantes and then go to school. After class, they had to lock the doors and take the key back to Posada de Inmigrantes for other ESL teachers to use it the next day.

The room at the elementary school which was used to teach the Level 2 course was a big room with twelve double desks in the center. Because of the organization of the desks, the lack of decoration on the walls, and the objects there, it is possible that the room was not used as a classroom during the day, but as a meeting room for teachers. Among other things, the room had a kitchen sink, a cupboard with some cups, a stove, a refrigerator, an overhead projector and screen, a bookcase with children's books and magazines, and two bathrooms.

There was a heating and air conditioning system in the room, but during the summer months the room was very hot. Since there was no school activity during the day because of summer recess, the air conditioner was turned on at 7:30 p.m. when the ESL class started and it took a while for the room to cool down. Also, the air conditioner was very noisy, and sometimes teachers and students preferred to have the air conditioner off and open the doors and windows instead. In the summer, the heat in the room was a common conversation topic among students and teachers.

Eight of the double desks in the room were arranged in the form of a square or a rectangle. This number of desks was enough for the teacher and the students in the course (sometimes ten and sometimes three). Outside of the square, there was a standing white board with markers and an eraser. Sometimes, there were no markers and/or eraser in the room and the teacher or a student went to get them from the Level 1 classroom (next door), where the materials for the ESL program were kept in a cabinet. In it, teachers could find sheets of white paper, a bucket with pens, pencils, erasers and markers, scissors, glue, a dictionary, and extra folders with the class calendar and schedule. At the beginning of each ESL cycle and throughout the ten weeks, the ESL coordinator and teachers made sure that the cabinet always had these school items.

The Level 1 and the Level 2 classrooms were next to each other and communicated by a door. In my observations I could see that most teachers arrived to school right before class started at 7:30 p.m. When they arrived, there were already students at school chatting outside the classrooms or listening to the radio in their cars. When teachers arrived, students greeted them politely and helped them carry their bags as the teachers opened the doors to the classrooms for the day's ESL lessons to begin (Field Notes, 03/03/08).

THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIGURED WORLD OF THE ESL CLASS

Participants who Attended Class Regularly

Rosa

As stated in Chapter 3, Rosa migrated from Mexico to North Carolina ten years before this study. Rosa moved to Texas from North Carolina in September of 2007 and started attending the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL classes in December of that year. Rosa explained to me that she took English classes because she thought that "English [was] a necessity to live in this country and to do easier many things" in the contexts where she needed to communicate in English such as when going to the post office or when paying rent in her apartment complex (Interview 2, 06-20-08). She also told me that in the near future (two or three years) she wanted to move back to Mexico and she wanted to keep learning English to "find a better job because I speak English" (Interview 1, 02-20-08). Due to her investment in learning English for current and future needs, both in North Carolina and in Texas Rosa, was determined to find a place to learn English as soon as she settled in town. She shared:

> Yo desde que llegué a este país siempre busqué la iglesia y la escuela. A través de la iglesia supe donde ir a estudiar./Ever since I came to this country I always looked for a church and a school. Through church I knew where to study.
>
> (Focus group interview 1, 06-01-08)

During this focus group interview she also mentioned that she thought that immigrants should take advantage of the community resources available to learn English. Similarly, during another interview she reflected on her idea that in Central City "there [were]

hundred of people that [didn't] know English and in the class there [were] only five students. That is incredible!" (Interview 1, 02-20-08). For Rosa it was difficult to understand people who were not invested in learning English. On many occasions she pointed out that she would like her husband to take English classes. She invited him to go with her to school many times, but he did not want to go. She talked about her husband's lack of interest in taking English classes on several occasions:

> Sometimes I motivate him [husband] about learning English, but he tells me "I'm tired" and I tell him "if you want to learn, you know where is the school". I tell him that it is very very important. I don't know why he don't like it.
>
> (Interview 2, 06-20-08)

> I feel frustration because I think he doesn't really understand why it is important to learn English. Sometimes I'm angry with him because I tell him every time "Please come to school with me. Please you can learn some words." He doesn't speak English, but he can. I don't know why he doesn't want to learn.
>
> (Interview 3, 07-24-08)

As Rosa stated in these two excerpts, she wanted to motivate her husband to go to the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL classes with her, but he was too tired to go. For Rosa, this explanation was very difficult to understand because being tired never stopped her from attending class. During this study, Rosa was one of the two participants who attended the most classes. She was present in 40 of the 45 classes that I observed. She seemed to be very organized with school material, and she was the only student who always went to class carrying a book bag which had a notebook, a dictionary and a pencil case in it. Every class she took notes, and when she was absent, the next class she asked a classmate about the lesson she had missed. She was the only student that I observed doing this.

Rosa attended class even when sometimes it was very noticeable that she was tired because she yawned, closed her eyes, or could not concentrate on the lesson. Nonetheless, she went to class. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Rosa worked in an art supply company making wood panels. She worked nine, ten and sometimes eleven hours a day from 6:00 a.m. to 3:00, 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. from Monday to Saturday. For her, as for many other students, it took much effort to go to class. At the beginning of most lessons when teachers asked students how they were feeling that day, many times Rosa commented on the fact that she was tired. The following excerpts are from short conversations after class when she talked with the teachers about being tired.

Rosa: I'm sorry teacher. Today I'm very tired!

Teacher: That's O.K. You can be tired. I am tired a lot.

(Class observation, 04-29-08)

Rosa: I'm sorry for sleeping in class.

Teacher: No problem! The first half of the class you were very sleepy, but in the end you woke up.

(Class observation, 07-15-08)

Fabiana: How are you, Rosa?

Rosa: I'm really tired.

Fabiana: Did you oversleep? You took a nap and overslept (because she mentioned it in class).

Rosa: Yes! When I opened my eyes I said "Oh, my gosh! I have to go!" I thought for one moment "No, it is late! I'm not going to go." But then I said "No, I have to go!

Teacher: Well, I am glad you still came.

Fabiana: So you wanted to stay home.

Rosa: Yes. I think for two seconds I wanted to stay.

Teacher: I am glad you came.

(Class observation, 06-23-08)

The last excerpt is from a day when Rosa arrived to class at 8:10 p.m. rather than at 7:30 p.m. Rosa could have stayed at home to rest instead of attending fifty minutes of class, but she pushed herself to get up and go to class. Rosa's words show how determined she was to attend class and how the idea of staying home was in her mind only "for two seconds."

Rosa's determination to go to the English class was also made clear in the following excerpt about her mostly being the only female student in class. I noticed this in my class observations and when I asked her how she felt about it, she said that she did not mind being the only woman in class.

> *Fabiana:* Do you think other women may not take the class because there are more men than women in class?
>
> *Rosa:* My husband's cousin that is the reason for not go to the English class. I asked her "why don't you tell me where is the school?" and she told me "I think you don't like it because there are a lot of men and sometimes they just look at you and sometimes they speak about women". Her husband told her that there are too many men and he does not like it.
>
> *Fabiana:* Has that happened to you? Do you think men look at you when you go to class because you are a woman?
>
> *Rosa:* I don't pay attention to that. I told her "I want to learn English. I will go to the place, I will talk to them, and then bye bye". And she told me where is the school. And I like the classes. There are different teachers, different ideas, different knowledge about English, different advice. I don't care if there are fifty men and just me. It's not my problem.

(Interview 2, 06-20-08)

This excerpt highlights Rosa's investment in learning English and her determination to attend class despite many times being the only female student, something that other

women, like her husband's cousin, considered a disadvantage of the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program.

Even though Rosa was many times the only female student, she seemed to be very comfortable in class. She always greeted her classmates enthusiastically and made supportive comments when a student who had not been attending for a while came back to class. When she arrived late to class, she did not seem to be embarrassed, and she simply apologized to the teacher and took a seat. She frequently participated in class by volunteering answers, being ready to do the activities, and asking questions. Rosa was always very eager to learn about the different topics presented in class. Given that she attended most classes, when teachers asked questions about a previous class, it was mostly Rosa who informed her/him about the content covered.

Rosa spoke English most of the time in class, but she also used Spanish when she could not explain something in English, when she wanted to say something not related to class to her classmates, or when she made reference to something in Mexico (a place, a song, food, etc.). For example, during class on May 6 the word chef came up and the teacher started talking about its pronunciation and students were talking about its meaning ("the chef is not just a cook, s/he is more important") and then students started talking about food in Mexico. When talking about *tacos al pastor* Rosa shared in Spanish a desire to have some tacos al pastor in a certain neighborhood in Mexico City. The same happened another class when talking about music and she remembered the song *Si nos dejan* and said to a classmate sitting beside her "Ahhh, añares hace que no escucho esa canción/I haven't listened to that song in years" (Class observation, 06-17-08). Rosa

seemed to switch to Spanish when she talked about issues that were dear to her and probably to her classmates as well.

During pair or group work Rosa was a leader. She made sure that her classmate/s knew what the task was about, she organized the activities, and she positioned herself and was positioned by her classmates as having a good level of English proficiency, and thus being able to help. For example, she translated for another student in class, Juan, when he did not understand what the teacher had asked the class while reviewing vocabulary related to emotions. The teacher asked "does someone want to tell me an embarrassing story?" and students did not give an answer. Juan was looking confused, so Rosa told him "una historia donde te haya dado vergüenza, algo que te haya pasado" and after this translation/explanation Juan could give an answer (Class observation, 05-28-11).

Another class, on June 25, the teacher asked students to role-play a conversation between a waiter and a customer. Rosa worked with a classmate called José. Rosa understood the assignment very quickly, but José asked her the meaning of waiter, so Rosa explained to him in Spanish that the waiter was "el que atiende y sirve al cliente cuando llega". When they were rehearsing their dialogue, Rosa (the customer) asked José (the waiter) the difference between a hamburger and a hamburger deluxe. The teacher overheard the conversation and saw that José could not give an answer, so she told him to "Just make it up. The hamburger deluxe has French fries with it and lettuce, tomatoes, and pickles on it" and then went to talk with another student. José did not understand what the teacher told him and could not continue with the role-play activity, so Rosa explained to him "que dijo la maestra que tú inventaras. Que si la hamburguesa

normalmente tiene queso, pues acá le puedes poner que tiene papas fritas y alguna otra cosa". These examples illustrate how Rosa was intuitively scaffolding José's learning process by supporting and guiding him to understand the teacher's explanation. She was able to do this because of her language proficiency and because she positioned herself and was positioned by her peers as an expert who could help them in their learning process.

Case Analysis

Rosa entered the figured world of the ESL class because she wanted to keep improving her English proficiency for current and future needs. Although many times tired after a long day at work, Rosa's daily investment (Norton Peirce, 1995) in going to class had to do with her understanding of English as a valuable resource that would allow her the possibility to participate with ease in English speaking contexts such the management office in her apartment complex as well as the possibility to find a good job when she returned to Mexico. Even though the figured world of the ESL class was mostly populated by male students, unlike her husband's cousin, Rosa had the agency to participate in the figured world and did not consider it a problem or felt uncomfortable being one of the few female students in the program. Due to her language proficiency, Rosa was positioned by her classmates and positioned herself as knowledgeable of the English language, hence able to translate to Spanish, and explain grammar rules and assignments. Given that the figured world of the ESL class was the only English-speaking figured world in which Rosa participated daily, her participation in it and the

position she occupied in it allowed her the chance to develop an identity as a proficient English speaker.

Nicolás

Nicolás was the oldest of the five study participants (56 years old) and the one who had attended the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL classes the longest. At the time of data collection, he had been a student in the program for five years and because the program only had two courses (Level 1 and Level 2), he had taken the Level 2 course several times. Given that the program was ten weeks long, Nicolás had taken the Level 2 course approximately fifteen times, so he was very familiar with the majority of the course material. He explained to me some of the reasons for continuing to take the course:

> Me gustan mucho las clases. Como hace mucho que voy, hay clases que a veces las repiten, pero a mí eso no me molesta porque hay palabras que no se la pronunciación. Una sobrina me dijo que ella va a unas clases en [Community College] y la otra vez me dijo que por qué no iba ahí, pero está muy lejos y yo no tengo en que moverme.
>
> I like classes a lot. Since I have been attending classes for a long time, sometimes there are lessons that are repeated, but I don't mind that because I still don't know the pronunciation of some words. A niece told me that she takes classes at Community College] and she asked me why I did not go there, but it is far away and I don't have transportation to get there.
>
> (Interview 2, 06-13-08)

Nicolás liked participating in the figured world of the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL class and did not mind repeating the course content each cycle as he could focus on different aspects of the language (like pronunciation) each time the material was repeated. Another reason for Nicolás to keep going to the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program rather than

to another program in town was the school's proximity to his apartment, something important to him because he did not own a car.

> Está cerca de donde vivo y no puedo desaprovechar la oportunidad de ir. Para ir ahí no tengo que caminar mucho. No hay Nivel 3, pero bueno. ¿Para qué ir a otro lado más lejos si yo sé que lo que aprendo ahí está bien para mí?
>
> It [the school] is close to where I live and I have to take advantage of the opportunity to go to class. I don't have to walk a lot to go to this school. There isn't a Level 3 course, but well, why should I go to a place further away if I know that what I am learning there (in the Posada ESL program) is good for me?
>
> (Interview 3, 07-19-08)

For Nicolás, an asset of the ESL program was its proximity to where he lived as he could use his bike or walk to school. If he wanted to go to another program, he would have to take a bus or ride his bike. In addition, due to his legal status in the country he might not have been able to attend an ESL course at the Community College where his niece suggested he could go.

Despite the program not having a more advanced level course, Nicolás believed that the Level 2 course was good for him. At the time of data collection, the oral proficiency level of Nicolás could be assessed as low intermediate. He considered that learning English was a difficult and slow process, but he seemed satisfied with the progress he had made since he started learning English.

> Cuando yo llegué no sabía hablar inglés y pues lo estoy aprendiendo pasito a pasito. Y ya voy un poco más avanzado. Tengo que ir pasito a pasito para ir aprendiendo. No tan rápido como quisiera yo, pero pues me es imposible. Yo quisiera aprenderlo de ahora a mañana, pero sé que no. Es muy difícil.
>
> When I arrived [to the United States] I couldn't speak English and I am learning to do so step by step. I have made progress. I have to go step by step to keep learning. It's not as fast as I would like it to be, but it is impossible for me [to learn faster]. I would like to learn English from one day to the next, but I know it isn't that way. It is very difficult.

(Interview 3, 07-19-08)

Nicolás stated above both his satisfaction with the improvement in his English proficiency and his concern with the time it was taking him to learn the language. Some other times, he also shared ambivalent feelings about his language learning process:

> Yo me siento bien cuando puedo hablar inglés. A veces cuando encuentro a personas que no saben nada y yo sé un poquito más como que me da más ánimo de seguir estudiando. Pero a veces es como que me desanimo cuando veo que otras personas hablan más que yo por ejemplo en la clase. A veces he querido dejar de ir a clase, pero no, ahí me tiene.
>
> I feel good when I can speak English. Sometimes when I come across people who don't know any English and I know a little bit more, it's like I am encouraged to keep learning. But sometimes I get discouraged when I see that other people speak more than I do, in class for example. Sometimes, I've felt like dropping the course, but no, there I am.
>
> (Interview 1, 02-25-08)

> Hay ratos que me desanimo, pero siempre quiero seguir adelante hasta que lo entienda y lo hable un poco mejor. Ese es mi sueño que tengo yo.
>
> There are times when I get discouraged, but I always want to keep on going until I understand it [English] and I can speak it better. That is the dream that I have.
>
> (Audio Journal, 04-14-08)

> A veces no quiero ir a clase porque se me hace que no estoy aprendiendo nada, pero después me digo que tengo que ir porque si no va uno, menos todavía va a aprender.
>
> Sometimes I don't want to go to class because I feel like I am not learning anything, but then I say that I have to go because if I don't go, I will learn even less.
>
> (Focus group interview 1, 06-01-08)

Despite sometimes doubting the usefulness of him taking the ESL course, Nicolás recognized the importance of attending class. That is probably why it was rare for him to miss class. He was present in 43 of the 45 classes that I observed. Once he was absent because he had to work in another town and the other time because he went to the doctor,

and he did not get home until 9:30 p.m. Nicolás' perseverance in learning English went beyond attending the ESL class. Several times during the study, Nicolás mentioned that at home he read books, mostly watched TV shows in English, listened to music in English, reviewed the ESL course handouts, and practiced writing in English.

> I like to read books. The book you gave me with biographies, I really liked it. [… talks about some of the stories]. I also have a book about animals that I want to read.
>
> Me gusta leer en inglés. Algunas historias las entendí todas casi sin usar el diccionario. Yo pienso que si he ido progresando. Al leer entiendo casi el 90%.
>
> I like to read in English./I understood some of the stories without using the dictionary. I think that I have made progress [learning English]. When I read I understand almost 90%.
>
> (Interview 2, 6-13-08)

In this excerpt Nicolás referred to a book of biographies that he borrowed from me the first time he went to my house for a focus group interview. After the interview, he was looking at the books in one of my bookcases, so I told him to pick some to take home. He chose two books and read both. Nicolás knew that in addition to practicing English in class and at home, he needed to practice speaking English with other English speakers in order to improve his speaking proficiency. At the same time, he was also aware of the fact that he did not have many opportunities to practice English outside of the class:

> Pero a veces me desanimo porque hay veces que no les entiendo a las personas y me siento muy mal, pero voy a seguir estudiando para poder hablarlo mejor. Porque lo platico casi cuando voy a la escuela o practico aquí en la casa hay veces que estoy estudiando, viendo televisión o escuchando música.
>
> But sometimes I feel discouraged because there are times when I don't understand people and I feel very bad, but I am going to keep studying to be able to speak better. Because I only speak when I go to school or I practice here at home when I study, watch T.V. or listen to music.
>
> (Audio Journal, 03-31-08)

> Lo que me falta a mí es practicarlo hablando con gente. Yo solo practico en la clase y en la casa cuando veo la tele, escucho música o leo nada más.
>
> What I lack is the practice speaking with people. I practice in class or at home only when I watch T.V., listen to music, or read.
>
> (Interview 3, 07-19-08)

Nicolás's interest in speaking English with people outside of the class and his effort to learn English had to do with his desire to interact with people. On several occasions he told me and the other study participants that he did not need English at work, but he wanted to be able to communicate with people.

> Yo quiero aprender inglés porque me gusta y no quisiera dejar esta oportunidad de poder aprender el inglés para poderme expresar con la gente de este país. No necesito mucho yo el inglés porque donde yo trabajo, en la compañía, casi hablamos puro español, casi nadie habla inglés, nada más el que nos dirige. Pero yo quisiera aprenderlo para poderme expresar con la demás gente que habla inglés.
>
> I want to learn English because I like it, and I don't want to miss the opportunity to learn English to be able to express myself with the people of this country. I don't need English a lot because in the company where I work we mostly speak Spanish and almost nobody speaks English –only the supervisor. But I would like to learn it [English] to be able to express myself with other people who speak English.
>
> (Audio Journal, 03-31-08)

> A mí también me gusta aprender inglés para platicar con las personas./I also like to learn English to talk with people
>
> (Focus group interview 1, 06-01-08)

Nicolás viewed the ESL classes as an opportunity to learn English which he did not want to miss. His investment in learning English had to do with his desire to communicate with English speakers. Another reason why Nicolás viewed the ESL class as an "opportunity" to learn English had to do with his future plans to go back to Mexico. During interview one he shared:

> (…) me sentiría orgulloso de llegar a mi país con un idioma diferente. Donde quiera podría conseguir yo trabajo allá. Hablar otra lengua me hace sentir orgulloso.
>
> (…) I would feel proud to arrive to my country with a different language. I could find a job anywhere there. Speaking another language makes me feel proud.
>
> (Interview 1, 02-25-08)

His goal of communicating with English speakers and his desire to return to Mexico "with a different language," which would probably gain him better job opportunities, moved Nicolás to keep going to the ESL course every evening, even if he knew what the lesson would be about.

Even though Nicolás had taken the Level 2 course several times and was familiar with most of the class material, he was never distracted in class. He always paid attention and interacted with the material as if it were new to him. One of activities that most teachers did at the beginning of each class was asking students to introduce themselves, so Nicolás had to introduce himself in class more than 20 times during this study. However, he did not seem to mind having to do so, and he generally introduced himself in the same way:

> My name is Nicolás. I am from Mexico. I was born in Matehuala, San Luis Potosí. I live in [Central City] for 6 years. I work in roofing. I like to listen to music. My favorite group is The Beatles.
>
> (Class observations: 03-03-08, 03-18-08, 05-27-08, 05-28-08)

In the 43 classes in which I observed Nicolás' class participation, he seemed to feel comfortable in class, and he interacted with his classmates in a friendly way. Most students and teachers knew him, and he was always the one to help teachers if they needed something for class (markers, eraser, whiteboard). Many times, Nicolás was the

last student to leave school because he stayed chatting with the teachers as they arranged the classroom and locked the door. As stated in Chapter 3, Nicolás lived alone, so this might be the reason why he was not in a hurry to go back home, like most other students.

In addition to helping his teachers, Nicolás also helped one of his classmates a lot during the second half of this study. With the beginning of a new teaching cycle on May 19, some new students started the course. One of them, Benjamín, did not have a very good level of English proficiency, but since he had already taken the Level 1 course, he wanted to take the Level 2 course. From the day Benjamín started Level 2 onwards, Nicolás helped him with class activities. In several of my classroom observations notes (May 19, May 22, May 28, June 12, June 16, July 2, July 7, July 10, and July 17), I recorded information about Nicolás helping Benjamín. For example, on May 19, the first lesson of the new cycle, Nicolás and Benjamín worked together on an activity in which they needed to talk about personal information (name, nationality, interests, etc.), and when Benjamín did not understand the meaning of "spell", Nicolás explained to him in Spanish that he needed to say his name letter by letter. Nicolás also helped Benjamín with the intonation of questions, the pronunciation of words, and the meaning of the phrase "anything else?" Similar interactions took place in many other lessons with Nicolás translating questions into Spanish for Benjamín to be able to answer the teachers's questions or explaining the meaning of instructions. Nicolás took the position of a more knowledgeable peer mostly with Benjamín and seemed comfortable in that position. Likewise, Benjamín seemed to feel comfortable working with Nicolás and expressed his doubts to him rather than to other classmates.

Case Analysis

Like Rosa, for Nicolás the figured world of the ESL class was the only English-speaking figured world in which he participated. Also similar to Rosa, Nicolás' investment in learning English had to do with his desire to be able to interact with English speakers and to be able to return to Mexico with the "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1977) of knowing another language. Going to class every evening was important for Nicolás because even though he was familiar with the course material (having taken the course approximately fifteen times), the ESL class was the only place where he knew he would interact in English. Taking a new ESL course at another institution was not an easy option for Nicolás mostly because he did not own a car, so he continued taking the same course. Even though his language proficiency could be described as low intermediate, Nicolás was positioned by his classmate Benjamín and positioned himself as a more knowledgeable peer who could understand the teachers' explanations, the material, and the assignments and could help Benjamín in his learning process. This new positioning validated Nicolás as an English speaker and helped him negotiate his English speaker identity in the context of the ESL class.

Participants who Attended Class Sporadically

Lucho

Lucho started to attend the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program in 2007. He was the youngest participant (24 years old) and the one with the least experience with formal

English learning. Lucho had not studied English back in Mexico because even though English was part of the high school curriculum at his school, he only attended high school for some months. Since migrating to the United Stated ten years before this study, he had not taken ESL courses at any institution. Before attending the ESL program at Posada de Inmigrantes, he had been trying to learn English with a book called *Hablando inglés leyendo en español/Speak English reading in Spanish*, a book which focused on teaching English words and phrases through translation and pronunciation (e.g., *negocio* means business and it is pronounced bísnes). Lucho used the book to learn English on and off for two years and he mentioned that it helped him learn some vocabulary.

On several occasions during this study (Interview 1, Interview 3, Focus group interview 2), Lucho expressed his regret for not studying English earlier.

> No me siento muy contento porque tengo bastantes años aquí y no hablo inglés. Yo debería haber llegado y aprendido inglés, pero necesitaba trabajar y no entré a la escuela. En ese tiempo lo pude haber hecho [estudiar inglés] y yo quería trabajar porque a eso vine, a trabajar.
>
> I don't feel very happy because I have lived here [USA] many years and I don't speak English. I should have learned English when I arrived, but I needed to work and didn't go to school. At the time, I could have done it [study English], but I wanted to work because that's why I came, to work.
>
> (Interview 1, 02-18-08)

Similar to many other Mexican immigrants, Lucho's goals when migrating to the United States at age 14 did not include learning English. He decided to move to Central City because he wanted to be with his five siblings who had moved three years earlier and he wanted to work. With fake identification, he started to help his brother and sister-in-law to clean offices, a job for which he did not need to know English because his sister-in-law

was the one communicating with their boss. Given that his job did not start until 5 p.m., and seeing the time constraints that he faced to attend classes during this study, Lucho regretted not taking morning ESL courses when he had the time.

In 2002, he started to work in construction at the same waterproofing company where he worked during this study, but it was not until around 2005 that the need to know English at work became apparent to him. Lucho explained:

> A veces el patron nos dice "necesitan aprender inglés 'pa que sepan escribir y 'pa que hablen inglés con los *supervisors* de los trabajos cuando les hacen preguntas." Y uno pues no sabe y se siente uno a veces mal porque uno quisiera hablar todo. Y por eso es que yo estoy yendo a las clases.
>
> Sometimes the boss tells us "you need to learn English to know how to write and to speak English with the supervisors when they ask you questions". And since you don't know English, sometimes you feel bad because you would like to speak. That's why I am going to class.
>
> (Journal entry 1, 03-31-08)

Several years after migrating to the United States for work-related reasons, Lucho's decision to learn English was also work related. He was the only participant who specifically stated that he needed English to do better at work. At the beginning of the data collection period (Interview 1, 02-18-08), Lucho explained that he wanted to learn English to be able to understand his supervisor at work, follow directions without hesitation, not feel anxious when a "*bolillo*" (a white English-speaking person) spoke to him about his job, and in turn, do better at work. In this excerpt, Lucho also shared that he was attending the ESL course because he felt bad for not being able to communicate in English at work, and to some extent, he felt pressured by his boss to learn English.

Lucho generally (interviews, in class, journal entries, focus group interviews) positioned himself as having low English proficiency, and on many occasions he said "I can speak a little bit" when describing his English knowledge. In class, he was easily disappointed in himself when he could not understand what a teacher was saying or a reading passage. Lucho attended 11 of the 45 Level 2 classes that I observed and two classes of the Level 1 course. When this study began, Lucho's experience learning English at Posada de Inmigrantes included six weeks in the Level 1 course and 10 weeks (1 cycle) in the Level 2 course. This study began when he started a second cycle of the Level 2 course in February 2008. Even though he had been attending the Level 2 course for some months, in April Lucho started feeling insecure about his level of English proficiency to be in the Level 2 course, and he attended two Level 1 classes (04-23-08 and 04-28-08). When I asked him about his decision, he explained that in the Level 2 course he could not understand some of the activities when the teacher did not speak Spanish and did not translate new vocabulary or answer questions in Spanish. Unlike in the Level 1 course, where teachers constantly resorted to Spanish as a pedagogical tool, in the Level 2 course teachers resorted less to Spanish and used alternative strategies in their explanations (like providing examples for students to guess the meaning of new words). Even though on several occasions I explained to Lucho that translation was not the only way he could learn the meaning of new words, he was still hesitant about staying in the Level 2 course. On May 1, while the teacher was waiting for more students to arrive to class, I was talking with Lucho about this issue and the teacher overheard the conversation and asked Lucho about it:

Teacher: Why do you want to go back to Level 1?

Lucho: I don't know.

Teacher: Last time you were in level 1 you said it was too easy.

Lucho: Yes, it was easy.

Teacher: I think it's too easy for you.

Lucho: But here it's hard for me too.

Teacher: It's hard?

Lucho: A little bit.

Teacher: But maybe hard is good.

Lucho: Maybe.

Jose Luis (classmate): Te vas a acostumbrar a lo más fácil/You will get used to the easy stuff.

Rosa: Aviéntate [Luchito]! Tú eres de los aventados!/Come on Luchito! You are brave!

Lucho: Era. Ya no./I was. Not anymore. Bueno./O.K. Ready for a start?

Teacher: Ready?

Lucho: Yeah, ready.

(Class observation, 05-01-08)

When asked about it, Lucho shared his idea that the Level 2 course was too difficult for him and that Level 1 was easier. However, the teacher and the classmates gave him reasons to stay in Level 2 ("maybe hard is good", "you'll get used to the easy stuff", "you are brave") until he was in a way convinced to do so as he said "ready for a start?" Lucho positioned himself as a weak learner that lacked the English ability to be in the intermediate course, but other participants of the Figured World positioned him as a capable learner. This short interaction was very significant because it seemed to have helped Lucho see himself as a legitimate participant of the Figured World of the Level 2 course.

Lucho was not only critical of himself and his language ability, he was also critical of some of the teaching methods used by his teachers. Like the rest of the participants, Lucho was grateful to the teachers at the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program (Focus group interview 1, 06-01-08), but at the same time, he was the only study participant who criticized a teacher for the way he taught the class and who expressed his preference for a different teacher's teaching style.

One day that I could not observe the Level 2 class because I was teaching the Level 1 class, Lucho and Nicolás stayed talking with me after class, and they shared with me what had happened in the class that I could not observe.

> *Fabiana:* ¿Qué hicieron en clase hoy?/What did you in class?
>
> *Nicolás:* Volvimos a leer la carta que leímos el lunes./We read the letter that we read on Monday again.
>
> *Fabiana:* ¿La misma carta?/The same letter? No le dijeron al profesor?/Didn't you tell the teacher?
>
> *Lucho:* Yo no vine el lunes. Hoy la clase fue casi toda en español./I didn't come on Monday. Today the class was mostly in Spanish. (…)
>
> *Nicolás:* No, pero estuvo bien porque palabras que no pronunciábamos bien hacía que las pronunciáramos bien. (…) Sí me gustó a mí la clase./No, but it was good because he [the teacher] made us pronounce again the words that we did not know how to pronounce. I liked the lesson.
>
> *Lucho:* ¿Sí? A mí me gusta más cuando Simone da clase porque es diferente./Really? I like Simone´s classes better because they're different.
>
> *Fabiana:* Why?
>
> *Lucho:* I don't know why. (To Nicolás) ¿Cuál clase le gusta más?/(To Nicolás) Which class do you like the most?
>
> *Nicolás:* Pues todas./All of them.
>
> *Lucho:* ¿Seguro? ¿Cuál clase le gusta más de verdad? No todas son iguales. A mí afuera otros compañeros me dieron la misma opinión. Igual que yo piensan./ Sure? Which class do you really like the most? Not all classes are the same. Outside of class other classmates agreed with me. They think like me.

Nicolás: Son diferentes formas de enseñar. Como Simone ya tiene más tiempo, tiene más experiencia en la forma de enseñar. Él estaba diciendo que es la primera vez que enseña inglés aquí./They are different ways of teaching. Since Simone has been teaching here for a while, she has more experience teaching. He (the new teacher) was saying that it is the first time that he teaches English here.

Lucho: No, pero dijo que ya había enseñado antes en otro lado. A su modo./ No, but he said that he had already taught somewhere else before. In his own way.

(…)

(Conversation alter class, 05-21-08)

In this conversation, Nicolás and Lucho had different ideas about what had happened in class. On the one hand, Nicolás considered that it had been a good class because even if the teacher had used the same handout another teacher had used two days earlier, he liked the focus of the class on pronunciation. On the other hand, even if this was a new lesson for Lucho because he had been absent the day the handout had been used, he considered that it had not been a good lesson because of the amount of Spanish used by the teacher. Interestingly, while the lack of translation to Spanish in the Level 2 course was one of the reasons why he had started attending the Level 1 course a month earlier, Lucho was being critical of the teacher due to his high use of Spanish in class.

In the excerpt, Lucho seemed not to understand why Nicolás was saying that he had liked the class and resisted this idea by asking "really?". Both learners also held different opinions about their preferred teaching styles. Lucho enjoyed the lessons taught by one of his teachers while Nicolás did not have a preference, something that Lucho seem not to understand either. The teacher that Lucho was referring to, Simone, was the only Level 2 teacher (during the data collection period) with a degree in teaching ESL and who was specializing in ESL at the graduate level. Even though Lucho could not

explain what he liked about Simone's lessons, he knew that they were different and he also knew that other classmates also liked her lessons better. Unlike the other participants, Lucho was openly critical of the teaching methodologies used by the teachers in the figured world of the ESL class and felt comfortable discussing his ideas with his classmates outside of class.

In class, Lucho did not discuss his ideas about teaching styles, but in one of the classes that I observed his use of humor could be interpreted as a way to express his feelings about the lesson. On Monday, March 3, the class was about "feelings and emotions." Since it was the first day of that week's topic, the main focus of the class was to review vocabulary on "feelings and emotions". After 50 minutes of working on vocabulary, the teacher told the students that they were going to talk about "actions" and she first discussed the use and form of "commands" and then the use and form of the "present progressive". Even though the students participated in the lesson activities, they did not seem to be very engaged with the activities as evidenced by some of them being a bit distracted and not contributing many answers to the teachers' questions. After the teacher explained the use and form of the present progressive, she asked students to use the verb tense in a sentence without providing any specific context, a practice which I regularly observed.

> *Teacher:* We'll go around the table and do some examples. José can you give us an example?
>
> *José:* I'm painting.
>
> *Teacher:* O.K. Good. Are you a painter?
>
> *José:* No.

Student: I am writing.
Teacher: Good. (Turning to another student) Can you give us an example?
Student: (Standing up) I am standing.
Teacher: There you go!
Student: I am studying.
Teacher: Good.
Student: I am reading.
Teacher: What are you reading?
Student: A book.
Teacher: (Turns to Lucho)
Lucho: I am waiting.
Teacher: You are waiting? What are you waiting for?
Lucho: The time for go home.
Class: Laughter.
Lucho: It's for example! (Laughter)
(…)

(Class observation, 03-03-08)

Like the rest of the students in the class, Lucho followed the teacher's instruction and provided a sentence using the present progressive. However, Lucho's sentence was different because in a playful wa,y he told his teacher that he was waiting for the time to go home, a comment which was received with a smile by the teacher and laughter by his classmates. The class probably laughed at Lucho's comment because in this context, it was unexpected for a student to say that he was waiting for the time to go home to a teacher, a participant in a position of power in the figured world of the class. Lucho made sure to clarify quickly that it was just an example, but the sentence was relevant and meaningful because he had the agency to break the structure of the activity. Lucho's

comment in this interaction was an agentic moment because it was a spontaneous and creative way of responding to a question and to a lesson that seemed not to be very meaningful for him.

Lucho participated actively in class, and in most of the classes which I observed he was talkative and made funny remarks which contributed to creating a nice classroom atmosphere. He laughed in class and made his classmates and teachers laugh as well. During pair work, group work or with the whole class he positioned himself and was positioned by his regular classmates as a funny person. For example, in a class about making comparisons, students were using the word handsome to compare famous people and this interaction took place:

> *Rosa:* Rick Perry is more handsome than Elvis Presley.
> *Lucho:* (To class) Who is more handsome? Me or Elvis Presley?
> *Class:* Laughter
> *Rosa:* Come on!
> *Teacher:* Let's take a vote at the end of the class.
>
> (Class observation, 03- 27- 08)

Lucho's questions were said in a tone which reflected his intention to make his classmates laugh. The comment was not disruptive and the class continued working on the activity with a smile on their faces. The teacher's response is important because she did not disregard Lucho's comment, but participated in the joke, which contributed to Lucho feeling comfortable in the Figured World of the ESL class.

Another example of the type of comments that Lucho made which changed the classroom atmosphere is the following, which took place at the beginning of a new Level 2 cycle.

Teacher: So you older students, do you have any advice for the new students?
Lucho: Pay attention.
Teacher: Any advice for learning in the class?
Students: (Silence)
Teacher: Maybe come every day.
Lucho: Don't drink beer before class.
Class: (Laughter)
Teacher: Maybe beer is better after class.
Teacher: What can you do if you don't understand something in class?
Lucho: Ask your partner or the teacher. Raise your hand.

(Class observation, 05-20-08)

In this interaction, in addition to contributing "appropriate" answers to the teachers' questions ("pay attention", "ask your partner or the teacher"), Lucho also made a comment that positioned him as a funny person even in front of classmates that he did not know. Once again, Lucho's comment was received with laughter and was validated by the teacher who contributed another funny comment. In the Figured World of the ESL class, Lucho knew that, despite his insecurities about his English proficiency, he could use English to make funny remarks which the rest of the participants would understand and appreciate. In those moments, Lucho occupied a central position in the Figured World of the ESL class.

In the middle of this study Lucho's work situation changed as he was appointed as a crew foreman. This new position was very challenging for Lucho not because of lack of

knowledge about the job considering he had six years of experience in the company, but because of his perceived lack of ability to communicate in English during meetings and to fill out daily report forms (as described in Chapter 5). Given his new position, Lucho stopped attending the ESL course at the end of May. In an interview we had in June he explained:

> *Fabiana:* And why aren't you going to class?
>
> *Lucho:* Porque tengo sueño, ando como cansado y como caliente. Se siente la cara bien caliente porque estoy todo el día trabajando en el sol. A veces tengo ampollas en los pies por caminar todo el día. Llego y me quedo dormido. Me siento sin ganas de hacer nada. Igual ya ni al trabajo me dan ganas de ir. Ya no me gusta mi trabajo.
> Because I'm sleepy, and I feel tired and hot. My face feels hot because I work all day under the sun. Sometimes I have blisters on my feet for walking around all day. I arrive [home] and I fall asleep. I don't feel like doing anything. I don't even feel like going to work. I don't like my job any more.
>
> *Fabiana:* ¿Por qué?/Why?
>
> *Lucho:* Estos nuevos patrones exigen el inglés a fuerza casi. Pretenden que aprendamos inglés de golpe y a veces se enojan. Ellos no entienden que a veces no se puede aprender de la noche a la mañana. A ellos les molesta y a veces no te tratan bien.
> My new bosses made it almost mandatory for us to know English. They want us to learn English fast and sometimes they get mad. They don't understand that sometimes you cannot learn from one day to the next. They don't like it [that we don't speak English] and sometimes they don't treat you well.
>
> […]
>
> *Fabiana:* ¿Y por qué ahora que necesitas más el inglés no estás yendo a las clases?/And why aren't you going to class if now you need to learn English more than before?
>
> *Lucho:* No sé. Yo antes iba siempre, pero como ahora en el trabajo tengo más responsabilidad y me la paso pensando más, me canso más.
> I don't know. Before I always went to class, but now that I have more responsibilities at work and I have to think a lot more than before, I feel more tired.
>
> (Interview 2, 06-22-08)

Despite the fact that Lucho's new position at work required him to know English, it was ironically because of the new position that he stopped attending the ESL course. Lucho felt pressured to learn English, but June and July are very hot months in Central City and working in construction was more tiring and difficult, so Lucho did not have the energy to go to class at night after a long day at work. In addition, his new position as a foreman added responsibilities to Lucho's job and he was more stressed out than before, which also contributed to his course withdrawal. Like in the past, due to the socioeconomic circumstances around him, Lucho was faced with a difficult decision and he chose work over learning English once again.

Even though he stopped going to the Level 2 course, Lucho wanted to learn English and imagined himself having a higher level of English proficiency in the near future. Before and after he stopped going to the ESL course Lucho constantly expressed his desire to learn English and be able to speak the language better. In a journal entry that he recorded in Spanish he said that he would like to be able to say all the things that he was saying in the entry in English, so he needed to "echarle ganas/make the effort" to learn the language (Audio Journal, 04-02-08). In another entry, he mentioned that he wished he could go to class 4 hours a day, but he knew he could not do so (Audio Journal, 04-23-08). During the second focus group interview, Lucho shared his hopes for the future with the group:

> Yo lo único que quiero es que si en 1 año ó 2 me los encuentro a cualquiera de uds, los salude en inglés 100%. Me gustaría eso. Ojalá se cumpliera. Se los digo de corazón. Ese es mi sueño.

> The only thing I want is that if I meet any of you in a year or two, I could speak with you in English 100%. I would like that. I wish I could. I am saying this from the bottom of my heart. This is my dream.
>
> (Focus group interview 2, 07- 26- 08)

Lucho was invested in learning English because even though he had stopped going to the Level 2 course, which could be understood as lack of investment, he had a strong desire to learn English and imagined himself speaking the language "100%" in the near future.

Case Analysis

Lucho's participation in the figured world of the Level 2 ESL course was marked by his regular use of humor in his interactions with teachers and classmates, something which was appreciated and which contributed to the relaxed atmosphere of the class. It was also through humor that he had the agency to playfully tell a teacher that he "was waiting for the time to go home" in a lesson that did not seem to be meaningful for him. Even though Lucho was able to interact in English in class, he generally positioned himself as having low English proficiency, an identity positioning that even moved him to go back to the Level 1 course two times.

Lucho was the only study participant who mentioned that he needed to learn English for work-related reasons. However, while work moved him to start taking classes at the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program, it was also the main reason for him to stop going to class, as he was more stressed out and tired since appointed as crew foreman at work. Lucho's withdrawal from the course cannot be interpreted as lack of investment in

learning English because he had a strong desire to learn the language and planned to *echarle ganas al inglés*/make an effort to learn English and be fluent in the near future.

Paloma

Paloma was the study participant who had lived in the United States the longest. She had arrived in Central City from Guatemala in 1989, when she was 36 years old, and at the time of data collection she had been living in Central City for 18 years. When she first arrived in town with her husband, they were mostly in contact with people who could speak Spanish, so they did not seem to have a need to learn English at the time. Soon after they arrived, Paloma started to work cleaning houses, a job that did not require her to know English and that allowed her to take care of her family. She explained that:

> My first problem was that I can't speak English. When I came I needed to work. For me, it was easy to clean houses. The thing is that there is not schedule in my work, so it's easy. I schedule my own times. I got that job because for me it's convenient.
>
> (…)
>
> Yo necesitaba ganar dinero, necesitaba darle de comer a mis hijos, entonces bueno... por eso empecé a limpiar casas. Porque era donde más se ganaba y donde yo podía hacer mi horario./I needed to make money, I needed to feed my children, so well… that's why I started to clean houses. Because it was a job where I could make good money and where I could organize my own schedule.
>
> (Interview 1, 02-12-08)

In 1990, after Paloma and her husband had settled in town, Paloma's 7 year-old son joined them from Guatemala, so she needed to find a job that allowed her to make a living and take care of her son. Paloma also needed to send money to her mother in Guatemala, who was taking care of her 14-year-old daughter until she finished high

school and moved to the U.S. Paloma had never worked cleaning houses, but as she explained in the above excerpt, she needed to provide for her children and she found that cleaning houses was a good option for her giving the flexibility it allowed her and the fact that she did not speak English, which she identified as "the first problem" she had.

In another interview, Paloma reflected on how her life could have been different if she had known English when she moved to the U.S.

> Si yo hubiera sabido inglés, hubiera estudiado para sacar un degree en la universidad. Si hubiera tenido la oportunidad de aprender inglés desde el principio, hubiera seguido estudiando en la universidad. Lo que pasa es que cuando tú llegas a un país y tienes familia, primero tienes que pensar por la familia y que es lo que vas a hacer por los problemas económicos que tienes.
>
> If I had known English, I would have studied to get a university degree. If I had had the chance to learn English from the beginning, I would have continued studying at the university. The thing is that when you arrive to a country and have a family, you first need to think about your family and what you are going to do about the economic problems that you have.
>
> (Interview 3, 07-21-08)

In her life history interview (Interview 1, 02-12-08), Paloma told me that in Guatemala she had studied to be a secretary and was working as a secretary before leaving the country due to her husband's political persecution (as mentioned in Chapter 3). She was also studying history at the university and had taken two semesters of courses when they had to leave the country. In this excerpt, Paloma reflected on the opportunities she could have had if she had known English when she arrived back in 1989. As she explained, she had to put her wish to go to the university aside and focus on the needs of her family.

So Paloma started to clean houses, and at the same time, she started to learn English in the houses where she worked. We talked about this topic during Interview 1:

> *Fabiana*- When did you start learning English in [Central City]?
>
> *Paloma*- At work. When people told me what to do because I speak only English at work. Sometimes, when the people are in the house, I talk. But many people are not there when I go, so I'm mute.
>
> (Interview 1, 02-12-08)

Paloma viewed the houses where she worked as language learning environments, where she had learned and was still learning English when given the opportunity. Paloma seemed to have had the agency to transform work-related conversations into learning opportunities, something she continued to do 18 years later, as discussed in Chapter 5.

In addition to learning English at work, Paloma also explained that she learned to read different documents in English by using a dictionary because she did not want to depend on her children to translate for her. However, she also told me that her daughter, who moved to Central City in 2001 after finishing high school in Guatemala, had taken various English courses, and had helped Paloma a lot with English since she arrived. During the course of this study, Paloma's daughter graduated from the local community college, found a job, and moved to her own apartment, so Paloma did not have as much help with English as she did during the past seven years.

Even though when this study was conducted Paloma was able to communicate in English in the various contexts where she needed to do so (work, doctor's office), she constantly expressed her desire to study and practice English in order to improve her proficiency in the language. Paloma was interested in studying English because she "need[ed] to talk to people at work, in the school, everywhere [she] need[ed] to talk to the people" (Interview 2, 6- 24- 08). On several occasions, Paloma shared that her children

now insisted that she go to school, so after many years in the U.S., she started to learn English in formal contexts. During the first focus group interview she shared that:

> A todos siempre les he dicho que hay que ir a la escuela. Ahora mis hijos quieren que yo vaya a la escuela, que yo vaya a aprender inglés./I have always told my kids to go to school. Now, they want me to go to school, to learn English.
>
> (Focus group interview 1, 06-01-08)

In this excerpt, as in many other occasions, Paloma talked about the important role education always had in her family, so much so, that now her children (32, 24, and 15 years old) wanted her to also have the opportunity to study, and she did. Before attending the Posada de inmigrantes ESL program, she enrolled in two ESL courses at the local community college. She explained to me that:

> Sólo un curso que saqué en el [Community College] lo acabé. Una clase de un semestre. Pero me costaba porque era en la noche y yo siempre llegaba tarde porque no podía llegar puntual porque tengo que andar con las actividades del niño. Pero ese semestre yo lo tenía que terminar porque ya estaba inscripta en [Community College] y entonces no puedes perder un curso. Entonces fue el único semestre que logré terminar una clase. Aunque me sentía muy presionada en mi casa porque estaba moviendo al niño, lo estaba recogiendo, lo estaba llevando, lo estaba manejando y tenía la clase. Y yo tenía dos cursos, pero uno lo tuve que dejar porque estaba muy estresada. Yo no voy a estar en un curso si no puedo cumplir. Entonces me quedé sólo con uno y lo terminé.
>
> I only finished a course that I took at the Community College. It was a semester-long course. But it was hard for me because it was at night, and I was always late because I could never be on time because I have to take my son to the different after-school activities that he has. But I had to finish that semester because I registered for the course and I couldn't just drop the course. So it was the only semester I could finish a course. But I felt the pressure at home because I was taking my son somewhere, I was picking him up, I was taking him home, and I had to go to class. I had two courses, but I had to drop one because I was too stressed out. I'm not going to be in a course and not work. So I stayed in one course and finished it.
>
> (Interview 1, 02-12-08)

Paloma explained in the interview how her family responsibilities influenced her experience in the ESL course. Even though her children wanted her to learn English, once again she prioritized her children's educational experiences over hers. At the same time, she realized that she needed a more flexible ESL program, and that is one of the reasons why she started attending the Level 2 course at Posada de Inmigrantes. Paloma continued explaining that:

> Entonces yo a [Community College] no fui más porque no quería pagar por gusto. Ahora tengo que llevar a mi hijo a rowing y Posada de inmigrantes me queda cerca. Con la gasolina tan cara y con el tráfico que se pone horrible, entonces como me queda más cerca, voy a Posada de inmigrantes. Allí me dan la oportunidad de que yo puedo ir cuando yo quiero. Entonces los días que yo puedo voy.
>
> So I did not go to the Community College anymore because I did not want to pay tuition just because. Now I have to take my son to rowing and Posada de inmigrantes is close by. With gasoline being so expensive and traffic being horrible, I go to Posada de inmigrantes, which is close by. There, they give me the opportunity to go whenever I want to, so I go when I can.
>
> (Interview 1, 02-12-08)

Paloma started attending the ESL program at Posada de inmigrantes in November 2007. The new ESL course was flexible and Paloma liked the fact that she had the chance to go to class whenever she could, which gave her the time to continue focusing on her family's needs while studying English. However, once again Paloma's responsibilities at work and at home were many, and she attended only seven of the 45 classes that I observed from February to July 2008. During an interview at the end of June, we talked about her absences.

> *Paloma*: I like studying English because I can understand many things. It's hard for me because I can't come every day to study. But maybe little by little I can come.

Fabiana: Why haven't you come to class lately?

Paloma: I need to help my husband, help my children. I need to do many things. I hope maybe in the future it will be better and I can come to class.

Fabiana: Do you like the class?

Paloma: Yes, I do. I like the people, I like the teachers, I like the place. I want to come more. I like to talk and listen to my classmates and the teacher. That's what I like. The problem is that I am busy, so when it is time for school I am tired. I work all day.

(Interview 2, 6- 24- 08)

This excerpt reflects how Paloma's identity as an ESL student and as a mother were in constant struggle given her desire to attend class and her impossibility to do so because of different family-related issues. Despite the fact that Paloma was not able to attend class regularly during this study, she had the desire to do so in the future, and in spite of her absences, she was invested in studying English and had the agency to go to class whenever she could. Even though she was not a regular student in the class -and she arrived at 8 p.m. instead of 7:30 p.m. to 4 of the 7 classes she attended-, when she was in class she felt comfortable and actively participated in the different assignments proposed by the teachers. As she stated in the above excerpt, she enjoyed the class atmosphere, the teachers and her classmates. Despite her absences, Paloma never positioned herself or was positioned by her teachers or classmates as a peripheral participant in the figured world of the ESL class. She saw herself as an ESL student in the class and considered that she was learning English.

Fabiana: ¿Y pensás que estás progresando con el inglés?/Do you think you're making progress in English?

Paloma: Yo creo que ahora un poquito. A veces voy a la escuela y digo aunque sea una palabra, pero ahí ya aprendí. Aunque sea una palabra que aprenda todos los días, pero al menos ya aprendí algo./ I believe that [I am making progress] a

> little bit. Sometimes I go to school and say at least a word, and I am learning. Even if I learn one word every day, at least I am learning something.
>
> (Interview 1, 02-12-08)

This excerpt reflects Paloma's understanding that being able to participate in the figured world of the ESL class gave her the chance to learn English even if the pace of learning was slow.

During the first focus group, Paloma shared her feelings about the ESL class at Posada de Inmigrantes:

> *Paloma:* Uno tiene confianza en la clase de platicar. Cuando uno no entiende, puede preguntar. Platicas, preguntas a la maestra. Me siento en confianza. Si leo mal, hablo mal, hay confianza. Se siente uno en confianza en la clase. Lo que me gusta es que no hay una presion. Se siente uno bien porque no sientes que sea una obligación. Hay flexibilidad.
>
> You feel comfortable to speak in class. When you don't understand, you can ask. You speak, you ask the teacher. I feel confortable. If I don't read or speak well, we know each other. What I like is that there is no pressure. You feel good because you don't feel it's mandatory to be there. There is flexibility.
>
> (…)
>
> Le da a uno la confianza de hablar entonces va perdiendo uno la vergüenza. Es que la escuela ahí es como que es una familia. Llega [Rosa], llega [Nicolás], llegan los maestros. Cualquiera que llegue lo recibimos como en nuestra casa.
>
> [The class environment] gives you confidence to speak and you don't feel embarrassed. The thing is that school is like a family. Rosa arrives, Nicolás arrives, the teachers arrive. We welcome everyone like at home.
>
> (Focus group interview, 06-01-08)

Once again, like during interview 1, Paloma highlighted the flexibility of the ESL program, something really valuable to her given her family responsibilities. In the figured world of the ESL class, Paloma felt comfortable to speak, make mistakes, and ask questions when necessary. Paloma also compared the ESL class to a home with the

teachers and the students being part of a family, which shows how comfortable and safe she felt in the figured world of the ESL class.

Case Analysis

Even though during the data collection period Paloma did not attend many classes, she considered herself part of the figured world of the ESL class. Due to her family responsibilities, the flexibility of the ESL program with its open entry, open exit policy was important for Paloma because she knew that she was welcome in the course when she could attend. The days that she went to class, she positioned herself and was positioned by teachers and students as a regular student, something important for Paloma as she felt confident to interact in English, make mistakes, and ask questions. Paloma understood that her pace of language learning was slower because of her low class attendance, but she was invested in learning at least a word each class.

Pancho

Pancho (28 years old) started learning English as soon as he arrived to the United States eight years before this study. Back in Mexico, he had learned English in High School, but what he had learned was not enough to be able to communicate in the United States, so he started taking an ESL course offered at a church in the town where he lived with his family, thirty miles from Central City. Since he worked at night, he could take morning classes. He explained to me that he wanted to learn English in order to communicate with English speakers because in the town where he lived not many people

spoke Spanish (Interview 1, 02-19-08). After taking different ESL courses offered both in the town where he lived and in Central City, in 2005 Pancho started taking the Level 2 course at Posada de Inmigrantes, but he could not go to class for a long time until in September 2007 he began taking the course again. Before this study began, Pancho rarely missed classes; however, since January 2008 Pancho was absent regularly. He started going to class only on Tuesdays and Wednesdays because he was taking a course at his church on Monday and Thursday evenings. He decided to take the church course even though it interfered with his English classes because he had been feeling sad lately and he needed the support provided by his church group (Interview 1, 02-19-08). He said that his priority at the moment was to feel better, so he focused more on his church activities.

In addition to the new course he was taking, another reason that influenced Pancho's class attendance was the price of gasoline. At the beginning of 2008, when this study began, there was an increase in the price of gasoline, and Pancho decided to start using his truck less in order to save money. But what had the biggest impact on Pancho's class attendance was his work situation. Pancho worked for a company that built roads, and at the beginning of April there were job cuts in Central City, so in order to keep his job in the company, Pancho agreed to work in another town. When he knew he was going to be working in another town, Pancho decided to leave his rented apartment in Central City and move back to his family's home, thirty miles from Central City. A month after Pancho had reorganized his life, the company decided to move him back to Central City, so Pancho started working in Central City again, but given his unstable work situation he decided not to move back to Central City but stay at his parents' home and commute to

work. Since he did not have an apartment in town and the price of gasoline was expensive, Pancho stopped going to both his church course and his ESL course.

Because of the aforementioned reasons, Pancho only attended five of the 45 ESL classes that I observed during this study. When I asked him about it, he explained:

> *Fabiana*: Why is it that you haven't been attending classes?
>
> *Pancho*: I can't because gas is too expensive and I live in [Pilot]. I finish work in Central City at 5:30 p.m., but if I stay here, I don't know where I go. Maybe I can go to a store, but I'm hungry and I need a shower. After class I am tired and finish at 9 o' clock and have to drive to [Pilot]. I want a little room in Central City. I can shower, eat, and go to class.
>
> (…)
>
> *Fabiana*: ¿Y cómo te sentis con el hecho de que no estás yendo a la clase de inglés?/And how do you feel about the fact that you are not going to class?
>
> *Pancho*: Pues mal porque como quiera yo convivía con personas, hablaba con los compañeros y los maestros. Ahora voy a mi casa y nomás ceno y me duermo./Bad because I spent time with people, I talked with my classmates and teachers. Now I go home and I only have dinner and go to bed.
>
> (Interview 2, 06-23-08)

Pancho felt bad about not being able to participate in the figured world of the ESL class anymore. In his answer to my question he did not mention missing the opportunity to learn English, but rather missing spending time and talking with his classmates and teachers. From September 2007 to April 2008, Pancho participated in the figured world of the ESL class, but his economic circumstances forced him to move out of town and he was now deprived not only of the opportunity to learn English but also of spending time with people whose company he enjoyed.

For Pancho, the figured world of the ESL class provided him with the opportunity to use English since it was one of the few places where he was directly in contact with the language. He explained:

> En el trabajo no uso nada el inglés. En las tiendas no uso nada el inglés. Es muy raramente cuando uso el inglés. Entonces si no sigo yendo a la escuela, haz de cuenta que ya murió el inglés. (…) Pero si sigo yendo a la escuela a aprender, pues voy a seguir aprendiendo poco a poco. Y a seguirle echando ganas. Pero ahorita no sé ni qué va a pasar con el trabajo nada. Ahorita la situación está muy difícil porque no hay trabajo en [Central City].
>
> At work I don't use English at all. In the stores I don't use English at all. I rarely use English. So if I don't go to school, it's like English is dead for me. (…) But if I keep going to school to learn, well I will keep learning little by little. So I need to make an effort. But now I don't know what will happen at work. Right now the situation is very difficult because there's no work in [Central City].
>
> (Interview 3, 07-18-08)

Since the ESL class was one of the few contexts where Pancho used English, he considered that his English would "die" of he could not go to class anymore.

Pancho tried to continue going to class and went to 2 classes after moving out of town; however, as he stated in the excerpt from the interview on 06-23-08, it was difficult for him to stay in Central City after a long day at work and without being able to take a shower or have dinner before going to class. In one of the classes that I observed (05-27-08), Pancho looked very tired and seemed not to be focused on the class activities. Later that week, in the focus group interview that we had four days after that class, he mentioned that he did not feel good in class and that he was hungry (Focus group interview 1, 06-01-08). It was the last class Pancho attended.

Even if during this study Pancho could not go to class, he was invested in learning English and he expressed his strong desire to go to class during interview 2, when he said

that "[s]i yo no tuviera la necesidad de trabajar, me iría todo el día a la escuela./If I didn't have to work, I would go to school all day long" (06-23-08). In addition to his need to work, Pancho also stated other factors that interfered with his English learning.

> A veces tenemos muchos factores y estamos pensando a lo mejor en otras cosas. Tiene uno la cabeza llena de cosas: vas a trabajar, estás pensando en las redadas, estás pensando en si trabajas, todo eso pesa en la mente. Por eso es que aunque tengamos muchos recursos como las clases, la televisión en inglés, el periódico, no quiere decir que estés aprendiendo inglés porque tienes otros factores que te están absorbiendo.
>
> Sometimes we have many factors and we think about other things. There are many things in your mind: you go to work, you think about the immigration raids, you think if you will have a job, all that weights heavy in your mind. That's why even though we have many resources like the classes, TV in English, the newspaper, it doesn't mean that you are learning English because there are other factors that absorb you.
>
> (Focus group interview 2, 07-26-08)

Due to his immigration status, Pancho was worried about raids and due to his unstable job situation, he was worried about job cuts. Even though Pancho understood that he had resources available to him to learn English, he also understood the social factors which strongly influenced his English learning.

Case Analysis

There were many social factors which influenced Pancho's participation in the figured world of the ESL class. Despite his desire to attend class, Pancho's difficult economic situation, his unstable work condition, and his move to another town caused him to stop going to class. During the data collection period, Pancho attended five of the forty five classes that I observed. In two of those classes his participation was minimal as

he was very tired after a long day at work and without the chance to shower and eat something before going to class. Since the figured world of the ESL class was one of the few contexts where Pancho used English, he feared that his English would "die" for not going to class any more, and he also missed interacting with his classmates and teachers. Though Pancho was invested in learning English, strong social factors, including physical exhaustion, prevented him from participating in the figured world of the English class and from having a chance at constructing an identity as an English speaker in that context.

SALIENT THEMES ACROSS PARTICIPANTS

Despite the unique characteristics of each participant's experiences in the figured world of the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL class, there are some recurrent themes across cases that should be highlighted. The themes are: 1) A chance to develop identities as English speakers, 2) Agentive moments, 3) Investment in learning English or "hay que echarle ganas al inglés", and 4) "At least you learn a word."

Opportunities to Develop English Speaker Identities

For all the participants, the figured world of the ESL class was one of the few contexts where they knew they would interact in English; hence it was one of the few contexts where they had an opportunity to develop identities as English speakers. Even though some participants participated in the figured world of the ESL class almost every class while others participated only sporadically, everyone's participation in the figured world of the ESL class was important to their understanding of themselves as English

speakers. The participants who attended class regularly, Rosa and Nicolás, positioned themselves and were positioned by others in the figured world as competent English speakers who were able to carry out the activities proposed by the teachers and help classmates who had a less advanced level of English proficiency by translating instructions as well as phrases and words to Spanish. In the case of Rosa, due to having a more advanced English proficiency, she was viewed as a competent English speaker by the whole class. In the case of Nicolás, despite having a rather low level of proficiency in English, one classmate, Benjamín, also positioned him as proficient in the language. Being positioned as more proficient English speakers by some of their classmates was important because Rosa and Nicolás found in the figured world of the ESL class a context that not only allowed them to learn and use English but also validated them as competent English speakers.

The participants who participated less often in the figured world of the ESL class, Paloma, Lucho, and Pancho, had less opportunities to develop identities as English speakers. However, their participation in the figured world of the ESL class was always welcomed and when they could participate in class, Paloma and Lucho occupied central positions in the figured world. The days she was in class, Paloma felt comfortable in class and participated actively in the lesson activities volunteering answers and asking questions and without feeling afraid to make mistakes. In the case of Lucho, despite positioning himself as someone with low English proficiency that should go to the Level 1 course, his participation in the figured world of the Level 2 class was marked by his use of funny remarks in English. These interactions made his classmates and teachers laugh

and contributed to developing his identity as an English speaker. The case of Pancho was different because in the five classes that he attended during this study, he only participated actively in three of them, talking with classmates, asking questions, and volunteering answers. In those classes, he felt confident and his participation in the activities gave him a chance to use English and develop his identity as an English learner and user. However, in the two classes that he attended after moving back to his parents' home in Pilot, 30 miles from Central City, Pancho's participation in class was different as he did not seem to be focused on the activities after a long day at work and without the opportunity to shower and eat before going to class.

Agentive Moments

By participating in the figured world of the ESL class, the participants exercised their agency to learn English. Holland et al. argue that "[e]ven within grossly asymmetrical power relations, the powerful participants rarely control the weaker so completely that the latter's ability to improvise resistance becomes irrelevant" (p. 277). In a society which only needed the participants as labor force and which did not need them to speak English, the fact that the participants wanted to learn English and participated in the figured world of the ESL class was an act of agency. In addition, despite the many social factors that negatively influenced their investment in learning English (no need to use English at work, long hours at work, etc.) the participants had the agency to go to class in order to improve their English proficiency.

Another salient theme was the flexibility of the ESL program. It was in part due to this flexibility, that the participants had the agency to take the same course more than ten times, like Nicolás, or to go to class only when her family responsibilities allowed her to go, like Paloma. The flexibility of the program made the participants feel welcome after a long time of not attending class because they felt that they were legitimate participants of the figured world of the ESL class. Paloma used the words "familia/family" and "casa/home" (Focus group interview 1, 06-01-08) to describe the figured world of the ESL class, a powerful analogy which was echoed by the rest of the participants. The participants felt that they belonged to the figured world of the ESL class even after some of them had stopped attending class.

Holland et al. (1998) suggest that agency "happens daily and mundanely" (p. 5). The figured world of the ESL class was a context where the participants constantly exercised agency. They had the agency to participate actively in activities, to sometimes remain silent, to sometimes fall asleep --like Rosa-- when they were tired, to ask classmates and teachers for Spanish translation when there were concepts that they did not understand, to playfully respond --like Lucho-- to classroom practices that seemed not to be meaningful, to ask questions, and to make mistakes. The fact that the participants were able to exercise these acts of agency in the ESL class was in part what made them continue taking the course or at least know that they could go back to the course whenever their life circumstances allowed them to do so.

Investment in Learning English or "Hay que echarle ganas al inglés"

Another salient theme across cases is that all participants, those who attended class almost every evening and those who attended class sporadically, considered that learningg English was important and that they needed to "echarle ganas al inglés." Urrieta (2009) explains that:

> The Spanish term con ganas does not have a literal translation that will do it justice. It is a colloquial saying that implies not doing things for doing things' sake, but doing things with a purpose, doing things with passion, doing things with everything you've got. A similar term in English, although not quite with the same sense of purpose, nor conveying the same emotion of struggle embedded in language (Gonzalez, 2005), would be "giving it your all (p. 187).

All the study participants had a purpose for learning English. Some of them, like Nicolás, wanted to communicate with English speakers and be able to say more than just "Happy Easter," and others, like Lucho, needed to be able to learn English to communicate better in his daily meetings at work. In addition, all the participants tried as hard as they could to participate in the figured world of the ESL class; however, there were many social factors that affected their class attendance.

Since all the participants had jobs which required a lot of physical effort, some of them did not have the energy to go to class from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. In addition, family responsibilities, like in the case of Paloma, and economic reasons, like in the case of Pancho, negatively affected class attendance. However, being absent to class did not mean that participants were not invested in learning English.

DISCUSSION

The participants invested in learning English at the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL class mostly because they desired to be able to communicate in English-speaking contexts. The ESL course was one of the few contexts where the participants could hear and be heard in English and, in turn, have a chance to view themselves as English speakers.

The participants valued their ESL class and they appreciated its flexibility and relaxed atmosphere. The figured world of the ESL class was a context where the participants felt welcome, safe, and comfortable.

Despite the fact that they enjoyed participating in the figured world of the ESL class, some participants could only go to class sporadically due to a variety of social factors which negatively impacted their ability to participate in class.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I presented a description and analysis of the figured world of the ESL class with an analysis of each participant's identity negotiation and agency in that context. The unique experiences of each participant show the complex interplay of investment, social factors, and participation in the figured world of the ESL class. In addition, I analyzed some of the similarities across participants in relation to their participation in the figured world of the ESL class. In the next chapter, I will analyze the participants' identity negotiations as English speakers in other contexts where they used English.

Chapter 5: Identity and Agency outside the ESL Class

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate how five adult Hispanic immigrants learning English in a Central Texas city negotiated their English speaker identity and exercised agency in contexts where English was spoken. In the previous chapter, the participant's identity negotiations and agency were described and analyzed in the context of the ESL classroom. The focus of this chapter is to describe and analyze the participants' identity negotiations and agency in some of the other contexts where they used English. The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I present the five individual cases and analyze each participant's unique experiences of identity negotiation in English speaking contexts. In the second part, I present four themes that were salient across the five cases.

PART ONE: INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

English Usage outside the ESL Class

The figured worlds where the five study participants participated in were for the most part Spanish-speaking figured worlds. At home, at work, in church, and in their neighborhoods the participants communicated mostly in Spanish. Many people in Central City spoke Spanish, so for the participants communicating in English was sometimes a choice. The participants had few opportunities to speak English in their daily life. At

home, four participants lived with family members who spoke Spanish and one participant lived alone. At work, Paloma, Lucho, and Pancho sometimes communicated in English while Rosa and Nicolás did not need to do so. Even though the participants mostly lacked access to contexts where communication in English was necessary, there were instances when they did communicate in English.

Rosa: "I asked the police if they will arrest me"

At approximately 5:50 a.m. on Tuesday, May 27 2008 when Rosa was driving to work she had a traffic accident. When she was turning right after stopping at a red light, she hit a pedestrian who was crossing the street. Rosa explained that there was a large van in front of her car that did not allow her to see the woman crossing the street. When she saw the woman falling in front of her car, Rosa stopped the car, got out, and went to help her. The woman stood up and called 911. A few minutes later, an ambulance and the police arrived. The paramedics checked the lady and determined that she was fine, so Rosa was relieved that she had not been injured. When talking with Nicolás and me after class that night, Rosa was sad, upset, and worried about what had happened in the morning. Paloma, Nicolás, and I stayed talking for approximately 30 minutes and she shared with us her experience and her feelings about the accident.

> Entonces llegó la policía y llegó uno muy agresivo. Me preguntó si hablaba inglés y le dije que sí. Entonces él dijo "fantastic", pero como en una manera irónica. Pidió que le explicara qué había pasado. Que si tenía aseguranza, que si tenía licencia. Le digo licencia no tengo. Aseguranza si tiene el carro. No está a mi nombre, porque mi licencia está vencida, pero sí tiene. (…) Luego llegó un policía hispano y de volada este le dijo "a ver ahora que te explique en español a ver qué dice". Otro policía me preguntó "¿dónde vas? ¿dónde trabajas?" Y el policía hispano dijo "no, ella no trabaja". Entonces el otro no preguntó y yo no dije nada.

> (…) El policía me dijo por qué manejas sin licencia y no le conteste. "¿Cuánto tiempo hace que vives aquí?" y yo le dije que 3 meses. No tenía la aseguranza en el carro, así que llamé a mi esposo y él llevó el papel del seguro. Tomaron todos los datos y me dieron un ticket para presentarme en corte. (…) Mi esposo agarró el carro y salimos de ahí.
>
> Then the police arrived and one of them was very aggressive. He asked me if I spoke English and I said "yes". So he said "fantastic", but in a sarcastic way. He asked me to explain to him what had happened. [He asked] if the car had insurance, if I had a driver's license. I told him I don't have a license. The car has insurance. It's not under my name because my license is expired, but it has insurance. (…) Then a Hispanic police officer arrived and he (the one asking the questions) said "now she should explain what happened to you in Spanish to see what she says". Another police officer asked me "where are you going?, where do you work?" and the Hispanic police office said "no, she doesn´t work". So the other officer didn't ask and I didn't say anything. (…) The officer asked me why I was driving without a license, and I didn't answer. [He asked] "how long have you been living here" and I said 3 months. I didn´t have the insurance card in the car, so I called my husband and he took the proof of insurance. They got the information and they gave me a ticket. (…). My husband took the car and we drove away.
>
> (Conversation after class, 05-27-08)

Despite being under a lot of stress, Rosa was able to use English to handle the situation after the traffic accident. Even though she described the police officer as "aggressive" and considered that his comment about her being able to speak English ("fantastic") was sarcastic, she communicated in English with him. She was able to explain how the accident happened, and she was also able to answer the questions regarding the driver's license and insurance. She even had the agency not to say anything in relation to her work situation when asked where she worked. Even though one of the police officers spoke Spanish, Rosa only used Spanish when asked to explain again (in Spanish) how the accident had happened. Rosa considered that the police officer was being racist because

he did not think her English was good enough and made her explain the events twice, first in English and then in Spanish. During our second interview she shared:

> *Fabiana:* Have you ever felt discriminated against in the United States? Do you think that some people have been racist?
>
> *Rosa:* Some people. El policía del otro día fue racista. Él me preguntó si yo hablaba inglés, pero la respuesta que esperaba era "no", pero cuando le dije "yes", me dijo "fantastic" de una manera irónica. Ahí hay racismo. Aunque hables el inglés y todo, ellos siguen pensando que eres menos. Yo soy una persona inmigrante y no soy ni más ni menos que los americanos./The police officer the other day was racist. He asked me if I spoke English, but the answer he expected was "no". When I said "yes", he said "fantastic" in a sarcastic way. That's racism. Even when you speak English, they still think you're less. I am an immigrant and I'm no more or less than Americans.
>
> (Interview 2, 06-20-08)

Bourdieu (1977) argues that "speech always owes a major part of its value to the value of the person who utters it" (p. 652). For the police officer the fact that Rosa said she could speak English was not enough. Even after Rosa interacted in English and could explain the events, she was not positioned by the police officer as a legitimate English user, and when the Spanish-speaking officer arrived at the scene Rosa was asked to explain the situation again in Spanish, in a way to check her Spanish narration of events against her English one.

After the traffic accident, Rosa was scared and she even thought that she could be arrested:

> *Rosa:* I asked the police if they will arrest me, but they gave me a ticket. I have 2 violations. Fail to yield to pedestrian. The other is driving without a driver's license. I don't want to go alone. I want a lawyer. I never want to hurt somebody. (she cries)
>
> *Fabiana:* Of course you didn´t want to hurt her. It was an accident.

> *Rosa:* Después del trabajo fui a la iglesia a agradecerle a Dios que no pasó nada grave/After work I went to church to thank God because nothing really bad happened.
>
> (…)
>
> *Rosa:* Y luego la incertidumbre de cómo estamos aquí y todo ese rollo. Ya cuando la vi que estaba bien, pensé y ahora qué va a pasar con lo que no traigo licencia, me van a empezar a investigar y de por sí nos tienen en la mira. Ay, no no, se me vinieron muchas cosas a la mente. Y bueno, que sea lo que Dios quiera. De todas maneras aquí estoy./And then the uncertainty about our legal status and all that. As soon as I saw that she was fine, I thought about what would happen to me because I don't have a driver's license, they will start an investigation, they generally watch us. Oh, no, many things came to my mind. Oh, well, may it be the will of God. I am here anyways.
>
> (Conversation after class, 05-27-08)

Once she knew that the lady she hit with her car was not injured, Rosa started to think about the legal consequences of the traffic accident, especially due to her legal status in the United States. She thought that her best option was to get a lawyer to represent her in court. One of the ESL teachers gave her the contact information of an organization that provided legal help for workers and that could put her in contact with a lawyer that could work *pro bono*. I also asked at Posada de Inmigrantes if they could recommend a lawyer that could help Rosa and they also gave me some contacts. Rosa contacted a lawyer, who explained to her that she needed to go to the city's Municipal Court within one month of the accident to find out the cost of the fines for the two traffic violations and to pay the fines. That is what Rosa decided to do and I went with her to the Municipal Court as part of my observations.

Three weeks after the traffic accident, Rosa and I went to the Municipal Court to see how much the traffic violations were and to pay part of the fine. When we entered the Court, we took a number and we anxiously waited for approximately 30 minutes until

Rosa's number was called. Numbers were called in English and Spanish. When the number was called, Rosa and I approached the window and Rosa explained why she was there:

> *Clerk:* Yes, madam?
>
> *Rosa:* Hello
>
> *Clerk:* Hello
>
> *Rosa:* I have this ticket traffic. I come in for pay the violation, but I don't know how much can I pay.
>
> *Clerk:* Do you want to do a payment plan?
>
> *Rosa:* For today I pay $100.
>
> *Clerk:* So you don't have a driver's license.
>
> *Rosa:* No.
>
> *Clerk:* O.K. To do a payment plan we need you to complete one of these forms (…)
>
> (Municipal court observation, 06-18-08)

Rosa filled out the form, returned to the window and the clerk told her that the two fines added up to a total of $415 (no driver's license= $138 + failure to yield to pedestrian= $277), that the payment plan they could offer was to pay a minimum of $75 per month, and that there was a $25 charge for each traffic ticket for paying in installments. Rosa asked questions about the payment and the clerk answered all the questions and explained more than once the payment options. Rosa decided to pay $100 that day and said that she wanted to pay the $38 balance at the end of the week to be able to pay the fine for driving without a license soon. The clerk said "You can pay of course, but don't strain yourself. (…) Let us know if you can't make the payment for $75 per month, come back and we can ask the judge if your payment can be a minimum of $25 per month." When Rosa

asked “do I have to go to court?” the clerk said that she did not and asked her if she wanted the explanation about it “in English or in Spanish”. Rosa chose English. The clerk explained that by agreeing to pay the fines, Rosa was waiving her right to trial by jury and had to sign a plea of no contest. Rosa did not ask anything about the explanation, signed all the necessary paperwork, and we left the Municipal Court. Once outside the building Rosa shared her feelings of relief “O.K. So I don’t have to go to court. Thank God! That first day I was really really scared!”

To celebrate, we went to a bar some blocks away from the Municipal Court and we talked about the experience at the Municipal Court:

> Fabiana: How do you feel?
>
> Rosa: I’m happy now. I’m really happy now because I thought it’s bad situation. The first moment when happened the situation I thought arrest immediately.
>
> (…)
>
> Fabiana: What do you think about the woman [clerk] today?
>
> Rosa: She was really nice because she explained a lot. (…) Some just answer if you ask, but she explained more.
>
> (Municipal court observation, 06-18-08)

The clerk was indeed very helpful, pleasant, and polite. She did not ask any questions about the accident or Rosa’s legal status in the country, and she explained to Rosa more than once the various payment options that she had. She even advised Rosa to “not strain” to make the payments. Unlike the day of the accident with the police officer, at the Municipal court Rosa was positioned as a competent English speaker, who could give and receive information about the traffic violations. Even though speaking Spanish was an option for Rosa, she chose to speak English, and the interaction went very well.

Observing that interaction made me feel happy for Rosa because I knew how important it was for her to feel respected. During a focus group interview Rosa shared:

> A mí lo que me motiva a seguir aprendiendo es que no me discriminen, es que no me quieran intimidar. Eso es lo que me ha motivado a mí. Defenderme de gente racista. El motor para aprender inglés es que no quieran intimidarme y que no sean racistas. El beneficio que he recibido de las clases es obviamente que ahora puedo defenderme. (…) El beneficio más grande es que la gente me respete a través del idioma. Aprender inglés es algo que uno tiene que hacer por defenderse. Como una supervivencia.
>
> What motivates me to keep learning [English] is that I don't want people to discriminate against me, that I want to defend myself from people who want to intimidate me. That's what has motivated me [to learn English], to defend myself against racist people. The motor that moves me to learn English is that people don't want to intimidate me and that they are not racist. The benefit that I have received [by learning English] is that now I can defend myself. The biggest benefit is to be respected by people because I can use the language. Learning English is something one has to do to defend ourselves, like for survival.
>
> (Focus group interview 1, 06-01-08)

Rosa understood that English was a valuable resource that could allow her to "defend herself" and be respected by people. The interaction with the police officer and the interaction with the clerk at the Municipal Court were very different. They were instances in which Rosa could experience feeling both disrespected and respected for speaking English. The differences in the way Rosa was positioned (illegitimate vs. legitimate English speaker) in these two situations are examples of the power relations and the identity negotiations that are at constant play when people interact.

Lucho: "Ellos no saben que yo no sé inglés"

Every day at 3 p.m. Lucho had to participate in a meeting at work. The meetings did not last very long -between five and fifteen minutes-, but they caused Lucho to

rethink his use of English at work. As stated earlier, Lucho worked in construction. At the time of this study, he had been working for the same waterproofing company for 6 years, and during this study (on May 19, 2008) his work situation changed as he was appointed crew foreman. Lucho had new responsibilities at work, and the daily meetings with the engineers were what caused the more problems for Lucho because he did not feel confident about his English proficiency level. All crew foremen had to participate in a meeting with the construction engineers, where they would discuss different aspects of the construction site, such as security issues (Audio Journal, 05-21-08). One of the reasons why Lucho was appointed foreman is that he was the only one in his crew who had completed a 10-hour safety training course (Focus group interview 1, 06-01-08). At first, due to his lack of confidence in his English proficiency, Lucho asked one of the crew members to fill out the paperwork and attend the meetings in his place. But Lucho did not feel good about it:

> A mí me gustaría haber ido yo en vez de él y yo hacer mi propio trabajo. (…) Yo me siento mal porque yo quisiera participar de esas juntas, pero no puedo por el inglés./I would have liked to go myself and do my own job instead of sending him. I feel bad because I would like to participate in the meetings, but I can't because of my English.
>
> (Conversation before class, 05-20-08)

Lucho positioned himself as a very limited English speaker and did not allow himself to go to the meetings, which in turn made him feel that he was not doing his job. This situation changed after one week, when Lucho decided to start attending the meetings because he feared being reprimanded at work. He pushed himself to go to the meetings, which brought about new fears:

Lucho: Tengo miedo porque allí hablan cosas de seguridad del trabajo y uno no entiende todo. ¿Qué tal si me dicen "no trabajes en tal parte porque va a pasar esto y esto" y yo no entiendo? Yo entiendo algunas cositas y otras cosas no. Es un riesgo. (…) Además te preguntan. Ellos preguntan "cuántas personas traes trabajando?" y yo les respondo. (…) A mí lo que me pasa es que creo que ellos van a saber que no hablo inglés y yo no sé qué va a pasar ese día./I'm scared because there (in the meetings) they talk about safety issues and I don't understand everything. What if they tell me "don't work in a certain area because something is going to happen" and I don't understand? I understand some things, but not other things. It's a risk. (…) And they also ask you things. They ask you "how many people are working with you?" and I answer. (…) The thing is that I think that they will know that I don't speak English, and I don't know what will happen that day.

Fabiana: ¿Y cómo reaccionan cuando les respondes?/ And how do they react when you answer their questions?

Lucho: Normal. Piensan que uno sabe inglés. Ellos no saben que yo no sé inglés. Pero es que es difícil. Siento yo muchos nervios porque tengo miedo que me corran cuando sepan que no hablo inglés./Normally. They think that I know English. They don't know that I don't know English. But it's difficult for me. I'm nervous because I fear they might fire me when they learn that I don't speak English.

(Focus group interview 1, 06-01-08)

This focus group interview took place two days after Lucho started participating in the meetings. In the interview he talked about his fears and the risks of not understanding what was discussed in the meetings. Lucho believed that he did not know English and even though his interlocutors positioned him as an English speaker, he did not view himself as such. This way of positioning himself did not allow him to construct his English speaker identity at work.

Lucho's participation in these meetings was the focus of Interview 2 as well (06-22-08). The interview took place one month after he was appointed foreman and he told me that he did not like his job anymore because he had to go to the meetings. He reiterated his fear of getting in trouble for not being able to understand important

information and not giving the right instructions to his crew. He described what he had been doing during the meetings:

> *Lucho:* En los meetings yo me siento alrededor de la mesa como si estuviera relajado y entrendiéndolos bien./At the meetings I sit at the table as if I were relaxed and understanding.
>
> *Fabiana:* Si las reuniones fueran en español, ¿que sería distinto?/What would be different if the meetings were in Spanish?
>
> *Lucho:* Yo creo que hablaría yo también. Es que todos hablan y opinan y yo no puedo opinar en inglés. Hay personas con la misma posición que yo que hablan con los ingenieros, pero yo no me animo./I think I would speak. Everyone speaks and gives their opinion and I can't give my opinion in English. Other foremen talk with the engineers, but I don't dare.
>
> *Fabiana:* ¿Y qué pensás que piensan de vos porque no hablás?/And what do you think they think about you because you don't talk?
>
> *Lucho:* A mí casi nadie me habla ni yo les hablo. Ellos hablan puro inglés. Ellos hablan unos con otros y se ríen, pero yo no porque no sé de qué se están riendo. Si hablara inglés me reiría con ellos. Yo solamente hablo si me preguntan. En español hablaría con más gente. Yo estoy siempre nervioso./Almost no one speaks with me and I don't speak with anyone. They speak English all the time. They talk with each other and they laugh, but I don't laugh because I don't know why they are laughing. If I spoke English, I would laugh with them. [If the meetings were] in Spanish, I would speak with more people. I feel nervous all the time.
>
> (Interview 2, 06-22-08)

According to Holland, et al. (1998), agency is found in the improvisations that happen in cultural worlds. In these meetings Lucho exercised agency by pretending to be comfortable even though he was very nervous. Lucho did not want to be there, but he had to be, so he quietly participated in the meetings and hid his perceived lack of proficiency in English. Lucho's silent participation in these meetings could be understood as a strategy for "passing for English fluent" (Monzó, 2009). Lucho purposefully decided not to speak in the meetings and pretended to understand the information shared even though

he did not. By "passing as English fluent" in these daily meetings, Lucho could keep his job; however, not talking to anyone –fellow foremen, supervisors, or engineers- prevented him from constructing an identity as an English speaker.

Lucho continued going to the meetings and over time, he began feeling less nervous about them. During interview 3, on July 25, two months after he started attending the meetings, he shared:

> *Lucho:* It's better now. I arrive at the table, I sit, and I wait for they ask me something. The engineer always asks "how many people do you have working with you?" He don't ask something else. I have to give to him a paper with the daily report. But I don't do it. My co-worker fills out the paper and I turn it. Every day my co-worker writes down all the things that we do at work. (…) Wednesday I went to the meeting. After we done with the meeting, the engineer told me something about the job. "Hey, tomorrow you and your supervisor come with somebody else to see the maps because you need to take off some stones." Así mucha plática y yo le entendí algunas palabras. Y yo me salí de la meeting pensando qué me diría. Yo puedo responder, pero preparándome, pero lo que me dicen así no lo entiendo. (…) Fui con el supervisor y le dije sabes que vengo con una duda. Me dijo de unas piedras y no le entendí, así que mi supervisor fue y averiguó./He said many things and I understood some words. I left the meeting thinking about what he had said. I can answer questions when I prepare ahead of time, but what they say like that I don't understand. (…). I told my supervisor that I had a doubt. [The engineer] said something about some stones that I didn't understand. So my supervisor went to find out.
>
> *Fabiana:* ¿Y el ingeniero se dio cuenta que no habías entendido bien?/And did the engineer notice you hadn't understood?
>
> *Lucho:* No, yo nomás le dije "Está bien. Yo hablo con mi supervisor." Ellos me preguntan cualquier cosita y yo les respondo. Ellos piensan que yo hablo inglés. Ya no me preocupo mucho./No, I said "All right. I'll talk to my supervisor". I don't worry too much now.
>
> (Interview 3, 07-25-08)

Over time, Lucho gained confidence and learned his way around the meetings. He now knew the questions that the engineers might ask and he had a report to show what his crew had worked on each day. He was able to anticipate questions and be prepared to

answer them. Because Lucho's English writing skills were not very good and it took him a long time to write the reports, he asked a co-worker to prepare them. When he did not understand something that he considered important, he was not afraid to ask his supervisor for help. With the engineers, however, Lucho continued using the strategy of "passing as English fluent"(Monzó, 2009) and pretended to understand everything that was discussed in the meetings because he preferred to hide his difficulties with the language and "maintain a sense of dignity while silently waiting for [his] English skills to strengthen (p. 37). In the figured world of these daily meetings, Lucho was positioned as an English speaker and he used the resources he had at hand to author himself as a relatively competent English speaking foreman as well.

Nicolás: "I can say a my boss 'happy Easter'"

As discussed in the previous chapter, Nicolás' main reason for learning English was to interact with people. Even though he wanted to communicate in English with people, he did not have many opportunities to so. When he did, he felt very well about it. In one of his audio journal entries, he recorded:

> Today I feel happy because I can say a [to] my boss "happy Easter". Me siento muy contento por haberle podido decir a mi patrón los deseos de una buena Easter. Quisiera aprender a hablar más inglés para poder expresarme mejor./ I feel happy because I could say to my boss my wishes for a good Easter. I would like to learn to speak more English to be able to express myself better.
>
> (Audio Journal, 03-31-08)

Similarly, in another audio journal entry he shared:

> El 4 de julio me tocó ir a trabajar con mi hermano a la casa de una señora y cuando llegamos le dije "happy 4th of July". Después salió y estaba yo lonchando

> en una mesita y me dijo que si estaba en el picnic y le dije que sí, que estaba haciendo un picnic./On the 4th of July I had to go to work with my brother to a house and when we arrived I said to the lady "happy 4th of July". Afterwards, she went out when I was having lunch on a table and she asked me if I was on a picnic and I said yes, that I was having a picnic.
>
> (Audio Journal, 07-07-08)

Nicolás was a polite person. As described in the previous chapter, he always helped the ESL teachers when they needed something from another classroom and asked if they needed help carrying things after class. In the interactions with me and the rest of the study participants he was always nice and respectful. For Nicolás, it was important to be able to say "happy Easter" to his boss and "happy 4th of July" to someone for whom he was working. Even though they were short and formulaic, these interactions were very important to Nicolás as they were instances in which he could position himself as an English speaker. Sometimes, in addition to saying a greeting, he also had a chance for small talk. The picnic comment that the owner of the house where Nicolás was working on the 4th of July made was valuable for Nicolás both because he enjoyed interacting with people and because he could speak English.

During interview 2, we discussed the significance of being able to say "happy Easter" to his boss:

> *Fabiana:* Ud. me dijo que se sintió muy bien cuando pudo decirle a su jefe "happy Easter"/You told me that you felt very good when you could say"happy Easter" to your boss.
>
> *Nicolás:* Sí, y ya le había podido decir "Happy New Year with your family". Antes no podía yo decirle porque no sabía nada y quería expresar esas palabras, pero no sabía. (…) Antes quedaba mal porque no podía decir las palabras o con mala pronunciación./Yes, and I had already been able to tell him "Happy New Year with your family". Before I couldn't say it because I didn't know anything

> and I wanted to say those words but I didn't know how. (…). Before I looked bad because I couldn't say those words or my pronunciation was wrong.
>
> (Interview 2, 06-13-08)

These interactions were meaningful to Nicolás because being able to say these greetings gave Nicolás a sense of accomplishment as he compared his current ability to use English to his inability to do so in the past. Nicolás considered that in the past he looked bad in front of his boss when he could not greet him on special days such as New Year's Eve or Easter. Now he could and these interactions, though simple, gave Nicolás a new sense of self.

Other than these sporadic interactions and the ESL class, Nicolás did not have many occasions to speak English. One of the places where he used English was at the shopping mall. Several times in the interviews and the audio journals he mentioned that sometimes during the weekends he went to the shopping mall and he had a chance to use English. During interview one he shared:

> *Fabiana:* ¿Y puede pensar en algún momento en que se sintió bien porque pudo decir algo en inglés?/Can you think of a moment when you felt good because you could say something in English?
>
> *Nicolás:* Sí, cuando voy a hacer compras y me entienden. Ya batallo yo solo. No pregunto tanto "do you speak Spanish?"/Yes, when I go shopping and they understand what I say. I can handle it [going shopping] on my own. I don't ask "do you speak Spanish?" as much as before.
>
> *Fabiana:* ¿Y cómo es la gente que lo atiende cuando Ud. va de compras?/And what are the sales people like when you go shopping?
>
> *Nicolás:* Es atenta. A mí siempre me han escuchado./Kind. They have always listened to me.
>
> (Interview 1, 02-25-08)

Nicolás valued being understood while shopping when he spoke English and not having to ask "do you speak Spanish?" when he needed to know something. Being able to ask questions in English was a sign of progress in his English proficiency and gave him a sense of independence. Because his visits to the mall were frequent, for my observation of English usage outside of the class we decided to go to the mall together. In July, Nicolás needed to go to a shoe store to find out the price of some tennis shoes that his wife needed to sell in Mexico. Back in San Luis Potosí, Nicolás' wife sold clothes, shoes, and other items at a *pulga* (market), and sometimes clients ordered specific items, such as perfumes or tennis shoes that his wife asked Nicolás to buy and send by bus for her to sell. Before buying the items, Nicolás visited stores looking for prices, and when he had the information, he called his wife and shared it with her. If she considered that the prices were acceptable, Nicolás would buy the items. The day of my observation, Nicolás needed to find out the price of tennis shoes, so at the mall we went to four different shoe stores, all of which had the shoes displayed on the walls, so Nicolás could check the different models and the prices without interacting with anyone. In one of the stores, however, he did ask a question to a sales lady:

> *Nicolás:* Do you have this shoe white color number five?
>
> *Sales lady:* No tenemos./We don't have them. If it's not over there, then we don't have them.
>
> *Nicolás:* O.K. Thank you.
>
> *Sales lady:* You're welcome.
>
> (Shopping mall observation, 07-12-08)

As Nicolás had said during interview one, when going shopping he could ask questions about the items he was looking for and he could get the information he was looking for. However, during this interaction the sales lady answered Nicolás' question first in Spanish and then in English. She responded "no tenemos" before saying "we don't have them". Since I was there and I recorded the interaction, I know that the phrase "no tenemos" was said with an U.S. English accent, which may mean that the sales lady was not a native speaker of Spanish. However, she chose to respond in Spanish with a foreign accent to Nicolás's question in English with a foreign accent. When we were leaving the store I asked Nicolás about what had happened:

> *Fabiana:* ¿Por qué habrá dicho "no tenemos"?/Why would she have said "no tenemos"?
>
> *Nicolás:* Porque adentro no tienen./ Because they don't have them inside.
>
> *Fabiana:* ¿Pero por qué dijo "no tenemos" en español?/But why did she say in Spanish "no tenemos"?
>
> *Nicolás:* Ah, sí sí. (smiling)/ Oh, yeah.
>
> *Fabiana:* ¿Por qué piensa que dijo "no tenemos" en español?/Why do you think she said "no tenemos" in Spanish?
>
> *Nicolás:* Porque vió que yo no hablo inglés./Because she saw that I don't speak English.
>
> *Fabiana:* ¿Y qué le parece a Ud. eso?/And what do you think about that [that she used Spanish]?
>
> *Nicolás:* (smiling) Pues es una buena opción para mí que hable español para no batallar./Well it's a good option for me that she speaks Spanish, so I don't have to struggle [in English].
>
> *Fabiana:* Pero ella le comprendió cuando Ud. preguntó en inglés./But she could understand you when you asked your question in English
>
> *Nicolás:* Sí, ella me comprendió bien./Yes, she could understand me just fine.
>
> *Fabiana:* Pero igual le respondió "no tenemos"./But she responded "no tenemos" anyways.

Nicolás: Sí, pero está bien./Yes, but it's O.K.

(Shopping mall observation, 07-12-08)

Nicolás did not give as much relevance as I did to the fact that the sales lady answered his question first in Spanish and then in English. When I asked Nicolás why he thought the sales lady had said "no tenemos," he did not reflect on her use of Spanish and took my question literally and explained that they did not have the shoes he was looking for. When I prompted him to reflect on the sales lady's use of Spanish, he considered it a positive thing and "an option" for him. The interaction was in English but Nicolás knew he had the option of using Spanish if he needed so. In the excerpt from interview one, Nicolás shared that when he went to stores people were kind and listened to him, which was true this time as well. However, even though the sales lady was kind, her use of Spanish may be interpreted as a way of positioning Nicolás as someone who might not understand an answer given in English instead of positioning him as a competent English speaker. Another way of analyzing the sales lady's use of Spanish could be that she was learning Spanish, like so many other people in Central City, and considered that her short interaction with Nicolás was as a chance to practice the language she was learning. Nicolás did not seem to mind the Spanish answer to his question and considered it an option that he once again had, like so many times before, to communicate in Spanish.

Paloma: "Ahora tú tienes que valerte por ti misma"

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Paloma's daughter, Carina, who at the time of data collection was 32 years old, generally helped Paloma when she needed to communicate

in English, so much so that Paloma jokingly called her "mi traductora" (my interpreter) (oral journal entry 05-29-08). Carina helped Paloma communicate in her youngest brother's school meetings, in the houses where Paloma worked, at the doctor's office, and in many other contexts where communication in English was necessary. During interview one, Paloma shared an experience that illustrates one of the ways in which her daughter helped her:

> Sometimes when you don't understand, some people don't treat me right. So my daughter started going to work with me.
>
> Tú no sabes con la gente que he tenido que tratar. (…) Hay cada gente que tú te encuentras que piensa que porque tú limpias casas quiere decir que tú no vales como persona, como ser humano. Entonces a veces con [Carina] hemos tenido que dejar una casa y [Carina] le dice, porque como yo casi no hablo inglés, [Carina] le dice "sabes que, búscate otra".
>
> You have no idea the people I've had to deal with. Some people think that because you clean houses it means that you don't have value as a person, as a human being. So sometimes with [Carina] we've had to leave a house, and she tells the owner, since I don't speak much English, "you know what, find someone else".
>
> (Interview 1, 02-12-08).

Paloma's daughter worked with Paloma while studying at a local community college. Cleaning houses helped Carina pay tuition and helped Paloma both alleviate her work load and communicate with her employers. In this excerpt, Paloma shared how Carina helped her tell employers to "find someone else" to work for them when they did not feel valued "as human beings" at work. Since Paloma positioned herself and was positioned by some employers as someone who "[did]n't understand" and "[did]n't speak much English", her daughter was in charge of communicating in English with the employers

and speak on behalf of herself and her mother when they felt that they were not being treated well.

During the course of this study, in May, Paloma's daughter graduated from the local community college, found a job, and moved to her own apartment. These events constituted a turning point in Paloma's English usage, and in turn, in her understanding of herself as an English speaker. In a conversation after class on May 19, Paloma told me:

> Tú sabes, mi hija andaba conmigo por todos lados ayudándome, pero me dijo "bueno, se terminó, ahora tú tienes que valerte por ti misma. Yo ya no te puedo ayudar" (…) Ahora tengo que hacerlo [comunicarse en inglés].
>
> You know, my daughter went with me everywhere to help me, but she told me "well, it's over, now you need to do it on your own. I can't help you anymore". (…). Now, I have to do it [communicate in English].
>
> (Conversation after class, 05-19-08)

She continued:

> He ido a los hospitales, a las clínicas, con los especialistas, a la fisioterapista y todo bien. Y yo hablo en inglés (…)/I've been to hospitals, to clinics, to specialists, to the physical therapist and everything is fine. And I speak English.
>
> (Conversation after class, 05-19-08)

The last class that Paloma had attended was on March 31, so when she went to class on May 19 the big news that she had to share with me was that she had been speaking English in several contexts. Paloma had been visiting different doctors because she had had several health problems. She had seen a gastroenterologist, a gynecologist, and a physical therapist. She had injured one of her arms and a finger. She explained to me that they were work-related injuries and that moving heavy things around the houses, vacuuming, and lifting heavy things for so many years was taking a toll on her. Even

though she was not happy about having to visit doctors, she was happy about being able to communicate in English in all these contexts.

> Últimamente he estado yendo mucho a la clínica y también tuve que ir al hospital. Había personas que hablaban un poco español, pero la mayoría fue en inglés y sí entendí todo lo que la gente me decía que tenía que hacer. Yo también preguntaba cosas que yo necesitaba saber en inglés.
>
> I have been going to the clinic and I also had to go to the hospital. There were people that spoke some Spanish, but most of it [the communication] was in English, and I did understand everything people said I had to do. I also asked about the things that I needed to know in English.
>
> (Audio Journal entry, 05-29-08)

Given that her daughter could not go with Paloma to her doctor visits like in the past, Paloma was discovering that she could indeed communicate (mostly) in English and understand and ask what she needed to know about her health and the treatment for her illnesses and injuries. For the past two months she had often been exercising her "right to speak" and her "power to impose reception" (Bourdieu, 1977) in English and she was positioning herself as an English speaker. Paloma was to a certain extent surprised (given her intonation) at how well the interactions with people in these health care institutions had gone and at how nice the people she had interacted with had been with her:

> La gente me ha tratado bien en la clínica, en los hospitales, en todos lados. El gastroenterólogo buena gente, las enfermeras buena gente. (…) Espero que a toda la gente la traten así. Yo espero porque a veces había personas abusivas.
>
> People have treated me well at the clinic, at the hospital, everywhere. The gastroenterologist was a good person, the nurses were good people. (…). I hope they treat everyone like this. I hope so because sometimes there were abusive people.
>
> (Conversation after class, 05-19-08)

Paloma highlighted that her recent experiences in health care institutions had been positive not only because she could communicate in English, but also because she had encountered "good people". She contrasted these people to other people who "were abusive". She also mentioned in the conversation that there were other instances in the past when hospital personnel had not been very polite with her and she attributed it to her inability to speak English. She said that "since [she] didn't know how to ask for things, people did not even notice [her] (como no sabía cómo pedir las cosas, la gente ni siquiera me tomaba importancia.)". With these memories of past experiences in healthcare places and without her daughter to help her communicate, Paloma may have feared that she could be treated disrespectfully. However, she was happily surprised to find out that people were nice to her. At the same time, the statement "I hope they treat everyone like this" shows that Paloma, though hopeful, was not certain that everyone would be treated the same way. It is also a sign of solidarity with other fellow English language learners who might not be positioned, like she was, as competent English speakers and might struggle to communicate and be noticed in these contexts.

Given that Paloma's visits to health care places were so regular, for one of my observations outside of the class, she invited me to go to the hospital with her. In July, Paloma hurt her right shoulder because one day she was in a hurry and vacuumed faster than usual in one of the houses where she worked. The doctor at the community health center where she always went ordered a clavicle x-ray because her shoulder was swollen. Since there was no x-ray machine at the clinic, she had to go to a hospital, so we went together on July 11. Paloma was very familiar with the different places she needed to go

to in the hospital because, as mentioned earlier, she had been there several times in the past two months. Before going to the imaging department, Paloma had to take her doctor's x-ray order to an administrative area, where they checked her insurance information and authorized her x-ray. Paloma could understand all the questions that she was asked, and she could provide all the information requested without problems. Afterwards, we went to the imaging department and waited to be called. While we were waiting in the imaging waiting room, an administrative assistant from that department came to Paloma because she had a question:

> *Assistant:* Madam, do they say here "surgery"? I am trying to read here. Did you have surgery? What's the problem with your clavicle? Surgery?
>
> *Paloma:* No, no, no, swelling. Only X-Ray.
>
> *Assistant:* Do you speak Spanish? ¿Habla español? No sé qué dice aquí. ¿Por qué están ordenando el examen? Estoy tratando de entender qué dice. Tienes dolor o nomás swelling?/Do you speak Spanish? I don't know what it says here. Why are they ordering the test? I'm trying to understand what it says. Does it hurt or do you only have swelling?
>
> *Paloma:* Nomás swelling./Only swelling.
>
> (Hospital observation, 07-11-08)

Even though she could understand the question she was being asked and responded to it in English, it was clear that Paloma was not a native speaker of the language. When the administrative assistant heard Paloma's way of speaking English, she switched to Spanish. Even though she asked the question "Do you speak Spanish?" in English, she did not wait for Paloma's answer and started speaking Spanish. The administrative assistant was very fluent in Spanish, and since she decided to continue asking in Spanish what she needed to know, the interaction with Paloma continued in Spanish (except for

the word swelling). Like in the case of Nicolás at the shoe store, a way of interpreting the language switching could be that Paloma was positioned as a deficient speaker of English, who might not understand everything in English and with whom it was easier to speak Spanish, especially in a context where miscommunication could have grave concequences, like in a hospital. To a certain extent, Paloma agreed with this interpretation:

> *Fabiana:* ¿Qué pasa cuando te cambian al español? ¿Te molesta? ¿No te molesta?/What happens to you when they switch to Spanish? Does it bother you or not?
>
> *Paloma:* ¿Ahorita? ¿Con la muchacha? Para mí es más cómodo que me hablen en español. (…) Si yo hablo en inglés y me cambian al español, por supuesto yo voy a sentir rico que me hablen en español. Yo me siento más cómoda, pero lo que pasa es que cuando me cambian, yo pienso que yo necesito estudiar más./Right now? With the lady? I feel more comfortable when they speak Spanish. (…) If I speak English and they switch to Spanish, of course it feels good that they speak Spanish. I feel more comfortable, but what happens is that when they switch [to Spanish], I think that I need to study more [English].
>
> *Fabiana:* ¿Por qué pensás eso?/Why do you think that?
>
> *Sandra:* Porque yo pienso que no nos estamos entendiendo./Because I think that we are not understanding each other.
>
> (Hospital observation, 07-11-08)

Even though Paloma stated feeling good and more comfortable when people spoke Spanish with her, she also stated that when people switched to Spanish, she felt that she needed to study more. The interlocutor's use of Spanish caused Paloma to position herself as a deficient user of English. This seemingly inconsequential switching of languages indeed had direct consequences on Paloma's identity construction as an English speaker.

Pancho: "Casi no platico con gente en inglés"

As described in Chapter 4, Pancho did not have many opportunities to speak English in his daily life, and the use of Spanish in Central City was something that he discussed on several occasions, such as during interview two:

> Si tuviera una necesidad más grande, pues yo pienso que aprendería más fácil. Porque ¿qué necesidad tengo ahorita? Por ejemplo, me levanto, voy a trabajar, platico con mis patrones en español, voy a comer y hablo español con mis compañeros, en las tiendas hablan español, voy a comprar una soda y hablo español, voy a echar gasolina y hablo español. Si voy a comprar algo para la troca, no necesito inglés.
>
> If I had a bigger need [to communicate in English], I think I would learn more. Because what's my need now? For example, I wake up, I go to work, I talk with my bosses in Spanish, I go to lunch and I speak Spanish with my co-workers, in the stores they speak Spanish, I go to buy a soda and I speak Spanish, I go to the gas station and I speak Spanish. If I go to buy something for my truck, I don't need English.
>
> (Interview 2, 06-23-08)

By listing all the contexts where he used Spanish daily, Pancho was being critical of his lack of access to contexts where he could speak English. At the same time, he hypothesized about how much more he would learn if he needed to use English more often. Pancho believed that if he had more opportunities to practice English, his speaking proficiency in the language would improve, or at least he would have a chance at doing so. Pancho's understanding of the connection between interaction and language improvement is in line with second language acquisition theories which emphasize the role of target language interaction in language acquisition (such as Long's Interaction Hypothesis, 1996).

While during the week Pancho rarely needed to interact in English, Saturdays were different because he worked on a farm for a man who did not speak Spanish. Pancho had a good relationship with his boss, and they talked during their drive to and from the farm and during their breaks. In some of his journal entries Pancho shared his experiences speaking English with his boss:

> Normalmente hablamos de lo que se va a hacer en el trabajo hoy o lo que se va a hacer la próxima semana. (…) A veces pues nomás se trata de estar platicando sobre las cosas de la vida de cada uno. (…) Como ejemplo casi siempre me pregunta qué voy a hacer el fin de semana, que si voy a ir al baile, que si voy a ir con mis amigos. No se me hace difícil en ese rato pues me siento relajado. Es una buena persona y por eso también es que uno se siente bien. Es una experiencia buena.
>
> Generally, we speak about the things to do at work today or next week. (…) Sometimes, we just speak about things in our lives. (…) For example, he almost always asks me what I'm going to do during the weekend, if I'll go dancing, if I'll go out with friends. It isn't difficult because I feel relaxed. He is a good person and that's why one feels fine. It's a good experience.
>
> (Audio Journal, 03-29-08)

In addition to talking about work-related issues, Pancho and his boss talked about life issues (cosas de la vida de cada uno), which he rarely had a chance to discuss with other English-speaking people. Pancho considered that these interactions with his boss were "good experiences" because communicating in English about a variety of topics made him feel confident as an English speaker who could carry out conversations and feel at ease. In addition, these conversations validated Pancho as a human being and not just a worker.

Pancho valued these interactions because once a week he was given the opportunity to practice and learn English. In another audio journal entry he described:

> Siento que es una conversación que me ayuda bastante porque él trata de que yo le entienda muy bien y siempre me habla y me pregunta que si le he entendido y cuando no le entiendo yo le pido que me lo diga otra vez y él me lo repite y no se enoja, no hace alguna exclamación negativa. Siempre trata de explicarme todo, me ayuda mucho para comunicarme.
>
> I feel that these conversations help me a lot because he tries to make sure I understand and he always talks with me and asks me if I understood. And when I don't understand what he says I ask him to say it again and he repeats and doesn't get angry, he doesn't make a negative exclamation. He always tries to explain everything, he helps me to communicate.
>
> (Audio Journal, 06-30-08)

In these interactions Pancho was not marginalized for not speaking English fluently and his boss encouraged him to ask questions about what he did not understand. He positioned himself and was positioned by his boss as a language learner. At the same time, Pancho positioned his boss as a "good person" who was willing to help him communicate better in English by being patient and repeating concepts when Pancho did not understand them. During the interactions with his boss, Pancho learned new English words and expressions and could ask for clarification knowing that his interlocutor would not give a negative response, something which Pancho had reported happening to him in some contexts.

The conversations with his boss were very valuable for Pancho, as he continued sharing in his audio journal:

> En la hora del lunch, siempre se sienta junto a mí para tomar el descanso y nos ponemos a hablar, a platicar y la conversación siempre es amena. Siempre me platica de los planes que él tiene ahí en su rancho y pues me siento bien. (…) Es una conversación que anhelo tener porque casi no platico con gente en inglés.
>
> During the lunch break, he always sits with me and we talk and the conversation is pleasant. He always tells me about his plans for the ranch and I feel fine. (…) It's a conversation that I look forward to because I hardly ever speak with people in English.

(Audio Journal, 06-30-08)

Pancho looked forward to having these conversations with his boss because he rarely spoke English in other contexts and because he had developed a nice relationship with his boss, one in which Pancho was not only viewed as a worker, but also as a human being. In these interactions Pancho exercised his "right to speak" English (Bourdieu, 1977). He was regarded as worthy to listen and to be listened to as he heard about his boss's plans for the ranch and he talked about his own life. These interactions, though once a week, were very important both because they were language learning experiences which helped Pancho practice English and because they allowed him the opportunity to construct an identity as an English speaker.

PART TWO: SALIENT THEMES ACROSS PARTICIPANTS

Even though each study participant had unique experiences of English usage outside of the ESL classroom, and consequently, each had unique identity constructions as English speakers, in this section I will highlight themes that were salient across participants' individual stories. The different themes are: 1) Access to English speaking contexts, 2) Positionality as limited English speakers, 3) Posibilities of action with English, and 4) Posibilities for the future.

Access to English Speaking Contexts

Limited Access to English Speaking Contexts

As mentioned earlier, the study participants had very limited access to contexts where English was spoken. The participants sometimes used English in stores, at the hospital or at the bank, among other places, but in general, they did not have opportunities to participate in English-speaking figured worlds because often there were bilingual (English-Spanish) speakers available.

At home, none of the participants needed to use English because one of them lived alone and the rest lived with family members who spoke Spanish. Only one of the participants, Paloma, mentioned having English-speaking friends and once during this study reported having dinner with them and speaking English in that context.

At work, the participants' use of English varied. Rosa worked in an art supply company making wood panels. She did not need to communicate in English at work because her co-workers were all Spanish speakers. In addition, Rosa's boss was from Puerto Rico and his wife was Mexican-American, so they spoke Spanish with each other and with their employees and they spoke English with customers. Nicolás worked in a roofing company. His boss spoke English only with the supervisor, Nicolás' brother, who then gave instructions to the workers in Spanish. He had a chance to speak with his boss only sporadically, as described in the previous section.

The three participants who used more English at work were Paloma, Lucho, and Pancho. At the time of data collection, Paloma worked in five houses. When the owners

were home, she interacted with them in English for a little while before moving on to her chores. As described earlier, Lucho spoke Spanish with his co-workers at the construction site and he needed to interact in English only during the daily 10-minute meetings with the engineers. In the case of Pancho, as stated earlier, he used English a lot in his Saturday job. However, in his daily job in a company which built roads, he interacted in English with one of his supervisors only briefly to find out what he needed to do each day and other work related issues, but with another supervisor and with his co-workers, he spoke Spanish.

Holland et al. (1998) suggest that people make sense of who they are through participation in figured worlds, which are "socially produced, culturally constituted activities" (pp. 40-41). For the most part, the figured worlds where the study participants participated outside of the ESL class did not require them to use English. Hence, it was only on specific occasions that they had the possibility to use English and figure themselves as English speakers and have others "figure" them as English speakers. In the case of the figured worlds of work, three of the five participants used English, which allowed them the possibility to view themselves as English speakers at least 15 minutes a day.

Spanish in Central City

The use of Spanish in Central City was a recurrent theme across cases. Similar to what Pancho stated in the previous section about all the places where he spoke Spanish on a daily basis, during interview one (02-12-08) Paloma explained that "[ella] ya h[a]

vivido casi 20 años aquí hablando español y h[a] sobrevivido/[she's] lived here for almost 20 years speaking Spanish and [she's] survived". Paloma was not proud about living in Central City and "surviving" by speaking Spanish and not English, but she shared her experience to illustrate that Central City was a place where people could get by without speaking English. During the second focus group interview (07-26-08) we discussed this topic:

> *Lucho*: A veces cuando yo trato de hablar inglés, me responden en español./Sometimes when I try to speak English, they respond in Spanish
>
> *Fabiana*: ¿Y continúas hablando en español?/And do you continue to speak Spanish?
>
> *Lucho*: Sí./Yes
>
> *Fabiana*: ¿Por qué?/Why?
>
> *Lucho*: Pues, yo creo que ellos oyen que uno no habla bien y pues, se siente uno mal y sigue hablando en español. A mí eso me ha pasado./Well, I think that they hear that one doesn't speak well and well, one feels bad and keeps speaking Spanish.
>
> (…)
>
> *Lucho*: Ellos no quieren batallar./They don't want to struggle.
>
> Fabiana: ¿Ellos no quieren hacer el esfuerzo?/They don't want to make an effort?
>
> *Lucho*: Ellos no quieren hacer el esfuerzo de entendernos a nosotros y ellos cambian al español./They don't want to make an effort to understand us and they switch to Spanish.
>
> *Rosa*: Oh, sí. Seguido me ha pasado de que estoy tratando de hablar en inglés y me contestan en español y siguen hablando español. (…)/ Oh, yes. It's happened to me often that I try to speak English and they respond in Spanish and continue speaking Spanish.
>
> (Focus group interview 2, 07-26-08)

Similar to Paloma's experience at the hospital and Nicolás' experience at the shoe store described in the previous section, Lucho and Rosa had also experienced instances in which they were speaking English and their interlocutors continued the interaction in

Spanish. Lucho's understanding of these language switching instances pointed to his own limited English proficiency; however, he also made an important observation when he stated that English speaking interlocutors sometimes were not willing to "batallar/make an effort" to understand their English. The rest of the participants nodded when hearing Lucho's opinion and Rosa shared a similar experience.

The conversation continued:

> *Rosa*: En este estado lo veo más difícil el poder practicar inglés en el medio en el que uno se desenvuelve como en las tiendas, como en el trabajo, como en el hospital./Oh, yes, it's happened to me often that I'm trying to speak English and they respond in Spanish and keep speaking Spanish. (…) In this State I think it's more difficult to be able to practice English in the contexts where we move like in the stores, at work, or in the hospital.
>
> *Lucho*: Sí./Yes.
>
> *Nicolás*: Sí./Yes.
>
> *Pancho*: (nods)
>
> *Rosa*: Allá en Carolina del Norte tenías que hablar inglés porque eran todos americanos. Ahorita que vine a este supermercado, me sentí como si hubiera estado allá porque aquí no ves gente mexicana, pura gente americana./In North Carolina you had to speak English because they were all Americans [whites]. Now that I went to this grocery store, it felt like North Carolina because here you don't see Mexican people, only American [white] people.
>
> *Lucho:* Sí./Yes.
>
> *Pancho:* Y sin embargo, como quiera, mucha de esa gente conoce la lengua española./However, many of those people [whites] know Spanish
>
> *Rosa:* Sí./Yes.
>
> (Focus group interview 2, 07-26-08)

Rosa raised important issues in relation to Spanish in Central City. Like Pancho and Paloma, Rosa considered that in Texas, as opposed to North Carolina, speaking Spanish was always an option and a possibility in stores, at work, and at the hospital. This of course has to do with the size of the Hispanic population in Texas as well as with

the history and relation of Texas with Mexico. Rosa also pointed out the differences among neighborhoods when she referred to the people that she saw at the grocery store next to my apartment complex versus the people that she generally saw at the grocery stores where she generally went shopping. As described in Chapter 3, the focus group interviews took place in my apartment, located in a neighborhood mostly populated by university students. Even though Rosa may have exaggerated when she stated that the people at the store were "only American people" (implying whites), the point she was trying to make was still valid. That is, the neighborhoods where the participants generally went grocery shopping were populated by more Hispanic people than the neighborhood where I lived, and as a result, there were more chances of speaking Spanish than of English.

Pancho raised another important issue, that even though there were "only American people" at the store, they probably knew Spanish as well. To this, Paloma added:

> *Paloma*: Aquí en [Central City] bastante gente habla español, incluso gente de aquí, estadounidenses./Here in Central City many people speak Spanish, even people from here, Americans.
>
> *Fabiana:* Gente que ha aprendido español./People that have learned Spanish.
>
> *Paloma*: Y que lo ha aprendido muy bien porque se van a España, se van a América del Sur y hablan muy bien./And that they have learned it very well because they go to Spain, they go to South America and they speak very well.
>
> (Focus group interview 2, 07-26-08)

Paloma's comment is important because she highlighted an interesting fact about Central City, that many English speakers have learned Spanish and can communicate "very well"

in Spanish, which meant that the participants had even more chances of using Spanish in Central City than in other contexts.

These excerpts serve as evidence of the participants' understanding of the presence and use of Spanish in Central City, and specifically in the contexts where the participants lived, worked, and shopped, among other things. The presence of Spanish in Central City had an effect on the access to English and practicing English that the participants had, which in turn influenced their identity construction as English speakers outside of the ESL class.

Positionality as Limited English Speakers

Hablo Poquito Inglés

Holland et al. (1998) suggest that positional identities "have to do with how one identifies one's position relative to others, mediated through the ways one feels comfortable or constrained, for example, to speak to another" (p. 127). Positionality has to do with how people position themselves *vis a vis* others in the activities in which they participate. A recurrent theme across the study participants was their own positioning as limited English speakers in the various contexts were they interacted in English outside of the ESL class. We discussed this positioning during the second focus group interview:

> *Fabiana*: En distintas ocasiones Uds. han dicho que el inglés les permite valerse por sí mismos, ser más independientes, no necesitar la ayuda de otras personas, ayudar a otras personas. Sin embargo, siguen diciendo que hablan "un poquito" inglés. ¿Por qué?/On different occasions you have said that English allows you to do things on your own, to be more independent, to not need help from other people, to help other people. However, you keep saying that you speak "a little" English. Why?

Paloma: Yo pienso que decimos que hablamos poquito inglés porque nosotros quisiéramos ya estar en grados superiores (…)/I think we say that we speak "a little" English because we would like to be in a higher level.

Lucho: O platicar ya puro inglés, todo fácil./Or speak only English easily.

Paloma: Tener un nivel como para conversar fluido en inglés (…) Quisiéramos hablar como la gente que tiene otro nivel de aprendizaje. Así siento yo./To have a level to speak fluently in English (…). We would like to speak like the people that have a higher proficiency level.

Lucho: Yo también/Me too.

Rosa: Sí/Yes.

Lucho: Además [decir que hablamos poquito inglés] es para que la gente sepa que uno no les va a entender algunas cosas. Como avisándoles que nos va a costar a nosotros pronunciar algunas palabras./It [saying that we speak little English] is also for people to know that one won't understand some things. Like letting them know that it's going to be hard for us to pronounce some words.

(…)

Rosa: Para mí hablar poquito inglés es porque es poco comparado con el tiempo que he estado aquí en Estados Unidos. Siento que es muy poco mi nivel de inglés por los años que llevo aquí. (…)/To me, it's a little compared to the time that I have been here in the United States. I feel that my proficiency level is low in relation to the years I've been here.

(Focus group interview 2, 07-26-08)

During the preliminary data analysis that I carried out before the second focus group interview, a recurrent topic was the participants' understanding of their English language proficiency as limited and their positioning as limited English speakers in different contexts where they needed to interact in English. In their answer to my question, the participants shared that such positionality had to do with their desires for fluent communication and a higher level of proficiency. Rosa also shared that it had to do with her regret for not having a higher level of proficiency in English despite the ten years she had been living in the United States.

Lucho shared that by explicitly telling people that they speak "a little" English, they were in a way apologetically anticipating to their interlocutors that there could be communication problems due to their language proficiency and at the same time it could be interpreted as a call for patience and empathy. When the participants positioned themselves as limited English speakers in interactions with English speakers, they did so to justify their language mistakes before even making any. This positionality may have to do with the many experiences (described earlier) that the participants had in which their interlocutors positioned them as limited English speakers and switched to Spanish when they heard their English accent.

Possibilities for Action with English

Valerse por sí Mismos

Even though in many contexts the participants were positioned and/or positioned themselves as limited English speakers, they all agreed that their ability to communicate in English was a valued resource which allowed them to do things on their own. All the participants contrasted their current situation to the times when they were not able to communicate in English and needed other people to help them. Paloma reflected on the difference between her current and past experiences in English speaking contexts in the following manner:

> Right now I am more confident. Before I can't answer the questions that people had. It was frustrating. Sometimes I needed to ask people "do you speak Spanish?" I needed someone to interpret. I need to learn more, but now I can talk to people. Before I was mute and deaf.

(Interview 2, 06-24-08)

In the past, Paloma felt disabled because she could not communicate in English-speaking contexts and depended upon people's ability to speak Spanish to get what she needed. Paloma's powerful metaphor of feeling mute and deaf when she could not communicate in English is similar to Nicolás' description of his interactions in English in the past:

> Me siento orgulloso porque puedo entender o yo digo algo y me pueden entender. Antes no sabía nada entonces tenía miedo y nomás me reía. Pero uno no va a estar riéndose como un loco para quedar bien nomás. Tal vez le están diciendo una grosería a uno y uno se ríe.
>
> I feel proud because I can understand or they can understand what I say. Before, I didn't know anything, so I was scared and I only smiled. But you cannot smile like crazy only to look good. They could be saying something rude and you smile.
>
> (Interview 2, 06-13-08)

Nicolás felt proud when he could communicate in English-speaking contexts because he remembered the times when he could not do so and he valued his progress in language proficiency. Similar to Paloma who reported feeling deaf mute, in the past Nicolás could not understand when people spoke English and just smiled without even knowing if his smile was appropriate or not.

The participants also talked about the independence that speaking English afforded them as they were able to do things on their own, from complaining about something at the grocery store to getting a car out of a car pound. All participants described experiences interacting in English in different stores (groceries or auto parts) and Paloma, Rosa, and Nicolás described instances in which they used English to make a complaint about a wrong price or a wrong change. The three participants highlighted the

importance of being able to complain about the problems they had encountered. During a focus group interview Rosa shared her ideas about this topic:

> Esas situaciones que parecen pequeñas, que parecen insignificantes, realmente no son insignificantes porque tú controlas tu situación. (…) Además yo pienso que las personas te respetan más cuando tú entiendes. (…) Es importante saber hablar inglés hasta en las cosas pequeñas que tú puedas reclamar.
>
> These situations, that seem small and irrelevant, are not really irrelevant because you control the situation. (…) I also think that people respect you more when you understand. (…) It's important to know how to speak English even in the small things that you can complain about.
>
> (Focus group interview 1, 01-06-08)

Holland et al. (1998) suggest that agency "happens daily and mundanely" (p. 276) and it has to do with the capacity of human agents to improvise and redirect themselves in order to respond to situations. Rosa and the other participants understood the power that knowing English had in the day-to-day and mundane interactions that could happen at any store and the possibilities that using the language afforded them. For them, the interactions were not irrelevant as they carried both the value of being able to speak up about things they considered to be wrong, to be respected and heard by others and the value of knowing that they could use English to respond to situations, something that they were not able to do in the past.

Possibilities for the Future with English

Another theme that was salient across the five cases was the role that the participants afforded to English in their future. The participants looked at their near future differently because three of them planned to continue living in Texas and two of them planned to return to their home country, Mexico. However, despite their different plans,

they all considered that they needed to keep investing in learning English both in informal and formal contexts such as work or an ESL class.

When discussing the notion of investment, Norton (2000) explains that "[i]f learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase the value of their cultural capital" (p. 10). All the study participants invested in learning English because they understood that English was a resource that would allow them better possibilities for the future.

In the United States

Paloma, Lucho, and Pancho planned to stay in Texas and they all shared that they wanted to keep learning English because, as aforementioned, they all considered English to be a valuable resource for interacting in English-speaking contexts. Paloma expressed her desire to learn more English and then take baking courses at the local Community College. Lucho imagined feeling more "natural" in his participation in the daily meetings at work and in the stores. Similarly, Pancho wished to have longer conversations with those with whom he needed to interact in English at work or when buying something. As opposed to Paloma, who imagined that knowing more English would give her the possibility of participating in the figured world of community college, Lucho and Pancho did not envision themselves participating in new figured worlds. However, they did imagine themselves as English speakers in the figured worlds of work.

Back Home

Rosa and Nicolás planned to stay in Texas for one or two more years and then return to Mexico. When asked about the reasons to keep learning English Nicolás stated:

> Porque me sentiría orgulloso de llegar a mi país con un idioma diferente. Donde quiera podría conseguir yo trabajo allá. Hablar otra lengua me hace sentir orgulloso.
>
> Because I would feel proud to arrive to my country with a different language. I could find a job anywhere there. Speaking another language makes me feel proud.
>
> (Interview 1, 02-25-08)

Nicolás considered that English was a valuable resource to take home, one which would allow him to find a job "anywhere". Given the value that he afforded to English, he felt proud of his English speaker identity and of being able to take such capital back home.

Similarly, Rosa imagined that knowing English would allow her the possibility to have a good job in Mexico. During a focus group interview she shared:

> El inglés en México me va a dar un mejor trabajo. (…) Puedo trabajar en una compañía de Estados Unidos en México. Hay muchas compañías de aquí que necesitan gente bilingüe. Los trabajos en la mayoría de las buenas compañías son para gente bilingüe. (…) Entonces quiero echarle ganas al inglés para llevármelo para eso.
>
> English in Mexico is going to give me a better job. (…) I can work in an American company there. There are many companies from here that need bilingual people. In many of the good companies the jobs are for bilingual people. (…) So I want to make an effort learning English to take it with me to Mexico and do that.
>
> (Focus group interview 2, 07-26-08)

Like Nicolás, Rosa seemed to have no doubts about the value of English in the Mexican job market. She understood that being bilingual was a valuable resource that she could

take with her when she returned home. She positioned herself as a bilingual person who could gain access to a good job.

DISCUSSION

There were not many contexts outside of the ESL class where the participants needed to communicate in English. However, there were instances in which the participants interacted in English and had a chance to view themselves as English speakers. For the most part, the participants did not need to communicate in English in the figured worlds of work or home. Lack of access to English speaking contexts was seen as something negative by the participants because they believed that interactions with English speakers would help them improve their English. The high prevalence of Spanish in Central City was also considered by most participants as something that negatively influenced their possibilities to use and learn English. Speaking Spanish was generally an option in stores, at the bank, or at the hospital, and it was common for the participants to begin an interaction in English and continue it in Spanish because their interlocutors could speak Spanish.

When the participants communicated in English, many times they felt a sense of accomplishment which contributed to their self understanding as English speakers. There were other times in which the participants in which not being able to communicate in English frustrated them. Despite the many possibilities that speaking English afforded them, all the participants positioned themselves as limited English speakers and considered that they spoke just "a little English."

It was probably due to this self positioning as limited English speakers that all the participants considered that they needed to continue learning English both in formal and informal contexts. Despite their different future plans (Paloma, Lucho, and Pancho planned to stay in the United States and Rosa and Nicolás planned to move back to Mexico), all the participants wanted to continue investing in learning English because they desired a future in which their English speaker identities would allow them a variety of opportunities.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I presented a descriptive analysis of the participants' experiences of identity construction as English speakers in the contexts where they interacted in English. The unique experiences of Paloma, Rosa, Lucho, Nicolás, and Pancho and the salient themes across participants show the complex identity negotiations that the participants went through in the different contexts where they had access to interacting in English. In the next chapter, I will summarize the main findings of this study and address the limitations of the study. I then examine the possible implications for teaching and research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain's (1998) practice theory of self and identity concentrates on how people develop identities and agency as they participate in social practice. In this study, I have examined some of the social practices of Paloma, Rosa, Lucho, Nicolás, and Pancho in an attempt to understand their linguistic identity and agency development while learning English in the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program and in other contexts where English was spoken. Also, following Norton (2000), I have studied the participants' investment in learning English and the ways in which their desires to learn the language and their identity as English speakers were affected by social factors. In this final chapter I re-examine the questions that guided this research study summarizing the findings from my data analyses and interpretations. I also address the limitations of the study and discuss research and teaching implications.

REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do adult Hispanic English learners negotiate their identities as English speakers and exercise agency in the ESL classroom?

Following Holland et al. (1998), Urrieta (2007) explains that figured worlds have four characteristics: 1) they are "cultural phenomena, to which people are recruited or into which people enter and that develop through the work of the participants", 2) they are "contexts of meaning within which social encounters have significance and people's

positions matter", 3) they are "socially organized and reproduced" and people learn how to relate to each other, and 4) they "distribute people by relating them to landscapes of action" (p. 108). The ESL class at Posada de Inmigrantes was analyzed as a figured world because it was a cultural phenomenon populated by recognizable others, where positions mattered, and where identities were formed. Rosa, Paloma, Lucho, Nicolás, and Pancho participated in this figured world for similar reasons and they did so before, during, and (some of them) after this research study.

As analyzed in Chapter 4, different participants had different positions in the figured world of the class. These positions were dynamic, but for the most part, Rosa had a certain position of power in the class as she was positioned by her classmates and positioned herself as a proficient English speaker. Nicolás positioned himself and was positioned by a classmate, Benjamin, as a proficient speaker who could help him understand assignments and translate unknown words. Lucho considered that his level of English was inadequate to remain in the Level 2 course and wanted to go back to the level 1 course. Despite staying in Level 2, he positioned himself as a student with limited literacy skills and oral proficiency. When Paloma attended class, she participated in the activities, asked questions and volunteered answers positioning herself as a regular student despite her sporadic attendance. Unlike Paloma, once he started going to class sporadically, Pancho positioned himself in the periphery of the figured world and did not participate in class much. The different positions that the participants held in the figured world of the ESL class influenced their participation in the course and, in turn, their identity construction as English speakers.

For the study participants, the figured world of the ESL class was one of the few contexts where they knew they would interact in English. A salient idea when referring to the importance of going to the ESL class was that "aunque sea una palabra uno aprende cuando va a la clase/at least you learn a word when you go to class." In addition, the data analysis suggests that the participants felt welcome in the figured world of the ESL class, which in turn made them feel comfortable participating in it. During a focus group interview, Paloma shared her ideas about the ESL class, an idea which was echoed by all participants.

> *Paloma*: Es que la escuela ahí es como que es una familia. Llega [Rosa], llega [Nicolás], llegan los maestros. Cualquiera que llegue lo recibimos como en nuestra casa.
>
> The thing is that school is like a family. Rosa arrives, Nicolás arrives, the teachers arrive. We welcome everyone like at home.
>
> *Lucho:* Y los recibimos bien./And we welcome them in a nice way.
>
> *Paloma:* ¡Sí!/Yes!
>
> (Focus group interview 1, 06-01-08)

In this exchange Paloma and Lucho used a powerful analogy and compared the ESL class to a family or a home, where everyone was welcome. Even though three of the study participants attended class sporadically, they felt part of the figured world of the ESL class and they had the agency to decide to go to class when they could.

How do adult Hispanic immigrants learning English in a major central Texas city negotiate their identities as English speakers and exercise agency in contexts where English is spoken?

Similar to other studies (Menard-Warwick, 2009; Norton, 2000), lack of access to English-speaking contexts emerged as a key factor in the identity development as English

speakers of these study participants. If identities are constructed and reconstructed in social practices, as Holland et al. (1998) argue, the participants in this study did not have many opportunities to develop their identities as English speakers. The figured worlds of family and work were for the most part Spanish-speaking figured worlds and the opportunities to speak English in other contexts were very limited. At work, Rosa and Nicolás did not need English and the interactions in English that Paloma, Lucho, and Pancho had were restricted to approximately 15 minutes per day (with Saturdays being an exception for Pancho). The high presence of Spanish in Central City, especially where the participants lived, shopped, went to the doctor, went to church, or went dancing, also influenced the opportunities that they had to interact in English-speaking contexts. As Paloma put it, "[she'd] lived [in Central City] for almost 20 years speaking Spanish and [she'd] survived" (Interview one, 02-12-08). For the study participants speaking Spanish was always an "option" in Central City.

The findings of this study show that many times the participants addressed people in English and their interlocutors responded in Spanish. Even though the participants did not mind and sometimes welcomed the switching of languages, they understood the limitations this imposed on their chances to practice speaking English and hence develop an identity as English speakers. Such language switching can also be interpreted as the participants being positioned as illegitimate speakers of English by their interlocutors. Lippi-Green (1997) explains that "[w]hen speakers are confronted with an accent which is foreign to them, the first decision they make is whether or not they are going to accept their responsibility in the act of communication" (p. 70). The author explains that the

members of the dominant language group may reject "the communicative burden" (p. 70). When talking about the communication with English speakers Lucho shared:

> Ellos no quieren hacer el esfuerzo de entendernos a nosotros y ellos cambian al español./They don't want to make an effort to understand us and they switch to Spanish.
>
> (Focus group interview 2, 07-26-08)

The many instances of language switching that the study participants reported may have had to do with their interlocutors not accepting the burden of communicating in English with people who speak English with an accent.

Another salient theme across participants was their self positioning as limited English speakers. Even though the participants had various levels of English proficiency, all of them considered that they only spoke "a little" English. Throughout the study all the participants described various instances of communication in English and the various things that they could accomplish by speaking English. In many of those interactions the participants reported feeling confident, happy, and proud for what they had been able to accomplish. Despite the (small or big) accomplishments, the participants chose to keep positioning themselves as limited English speakers. The participants gave two reasons for such positioning. One reason they provided was that they considered that given the time that they had been living in the United States (between 8 and 18 years), their English proficiency should be better. This somewhat simplistic explanation does not take into account the social and economic factors that impacted their language learning such as lack of access to English speakers or having to prioritize work and family over language learning. Another reason they gave was that by positioning themselves as limited English

speakers *vis á vis* native speakers of the language and stating that they could only speak "a little" English, the participants considered that they were "warning" their interlocutors about a possibly difficult interaction. This "warning" could also be understood as a way to ask their interlocutors for patience or empathy in the interaction. In a way, the participants were anticipating to their interlocutors that interacting with them might entail a "communicative burden" (Lippi-Green, 1997).

Another finding of this study has to do with the possibilities for action that the English speaker identities afforded the participants. Holland et al. (1998) argue that:

> […] identities are hard-won standpoints that, however dependent upon social support and however vulnerable to change, make at least a modicum of self-direction possible. They are possibilities for mediating agency (p. 4).

Their identity as English speakers allowed the participants the possibility to respond to situations using English. Nicolás' greetings to his boss, Rosa's explanation about her not having a driver's license to a police officer, Lucho's participation in the daily meetings with the engineers at work, Paloma's handling all her visits to different doctors without her "interpreter", and Pancho's chats with his boss on Saturdays are all examples of the ways in which the participants exercised agency in English-speaking contexts while (re)negotiating senses of selves as English speakers.

What social factors affect Hispanic English learners' investment in learning English to construct their identities and exercise agency as English speakers in a major central Texas city?

Norton Peirce (1995) developed the concept of investment to complement the concept of motivation in SLA. Unlike motivation, which is primarily a psychological

construct, investment takes into consideration the social aspects that influence a learner's desire and commitment to learn and practice a language in formal or informal contexts, such as a language classroom or a target language community. The findings of this study suggest that all the participants were invested in learning English. On several occasions the participants stated "hay que echarle ganas al inglés", a saying which implies not only putting effort into learning English but also as Urrieta (2009) argues it implies "doing things with passion, doing things with everything you've got." (p. 187). The participants were learning English "con ganas;" however, there were several social factors that affected their investment in learning English.

The participants' investment in learning English formally by going to the ESL class offered by Posada de Inmigrantes was influenced by many factors. As described in Chapter 4, Rosa and Nicolás were the participants that consistently attended the ESL class during this study, while Paloma attended class sporadically, and Pancho and Lucho stopped attending the class in the middle of this study. Similar to one of the participants in Skilton-Sylvester's (2002) study of four Cambodian women learning English in Philadelphia, the participants' investment in learning English by participating in the ESL class was influenced by work-related issues. For all the participants attending the ESL class involved an effort that some of them were not able to make after a long day at work. Paloma was a housekeeper, Rosa made frames in an art supply factory, Nicolás worked in roofing, and Lucho and Pancho worked in construction. All these jobs involved a high degree of physical effort, which made the participants feel tired and sometimes not have the energy to go to class from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. Despite their desire to learn the language,

the participants prioritized work over going to class. Even though Rosa was rarely absent to class, during a focus group interview she reflected on the impact of work and economic problems on investment:

> Yo en este momento estoy trabajando 10 horas y 11 horas [al día], pero ¿por qué? Porque el salario para nosotros es el mínimo, que no nos alcanza para vivir. Yo estoy sobreviviendo en Estados Unidos. (…) Yo quisiera dejar de trabajar para poder ir a la escuela, pero no puedo. Quién me va a mantener a mí. Nadie me apoya. Yo solita me tengo que mantener.
>
> Right now I am working 10 or 11[a day] hours. Why? Because we get paid minimum wage here, it is barely enough to live. I am surviving in the United States. (…). I would like to quit my job to be able to go to school, but I can't. Who's going to provide for me? Nobody provides for me. I have to provide for myself.
>
> (Focus group interview 2, 07-26-08)

All the study participants were working-class people. They needed to work in order to survive, they had low-wage jobs, and they had to work hard in order to keep their jobs. They all migrated to the United States for economic reasons (except for Paloma who migrated because her husband received political asylum) and due to their immigration status they did not have access to better paying jobs or to guaranteed job protectons. Undoubtedly, all these factors influenced the participants' investment in going to class despite their desire to learn English and "echarle ganas al ingles."

Another important factor that influenced the participants' investment in learning English was the high presence of Spanish in the daily lives of the participants, including the use of Spanish by white people who could speak Spanish. Despite the fact that, for the most part, their daily life did not include English, the participants wanted to learn the language. Norton (2000) explains that "[i]f learners invest in a second language, they do

so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase the value of their cultural capital" (p. 10). All the study participants invested in learning English because they understood the value of speaking the language. In the case of the study participants, speaking English meant independence, confidence, and the possibility to "defend themselves" in English without having to ask their interlocutors if they spoke Spanish. The participants invested in learning English because they hoped it would allow them the possibility to claim their right to speak. At the same time, Rosa and Nicolás who planned to move back to Mexico, invested in learning English because English is considered a valuable resource in Mexico which would give them access to better employment opportunities.

LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations of this study in terms of its design has to do with the data collection period. Data were collected over a six-month period. A more longitudinal study could have revealed more information in relation to the participants' identity development over a longer period of time.

My understanding of the figured world of the ESL class could have been enhanced if I had interviewed at least some of the teachers that taught the Level 2 course. The teachers' perspectives on the ESL course, their reasons to volunteer in the program, their beliefs about teaching, and their beliefs about the students that took the course would have added valuable information this research study.

Another limitation is related to some of the instruments of data collection. In terms of the observations, one of the weaknesses of observations is the potential researcher bias. Despite my attempts to record as many aspects of the lessons or the outside of class interactions as possible, it was certainly not possible to record everything and what I recorded in my field notes is just my particular view of the observed phenomenon. In addition, the observations outside of the ESL class were difficult to organize because some of the participants could not think of places where I could go with them in order to see them interact in English. This was probably due to the high use of Spanish in Central City. Another instrument of data collection that presented some limitations was the oral journal. Even though I gave the participants some guidance about what to record in their MP3 players, I consider that if I had provided more guidance maybe they would have recorded more entries.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND RESEARCH

This research study contributed to the growing body of research on issues of identity and language learning by providing a detailed account of the identity and agency development as English speakers and the investment in learning English of five adult Hispanic language learners in Texas.

As shown in this study, the participants were for the most part physically, socially, and linguistically separated from English-speaking contexts. Like in several other studies (Norton, 2000; Menard-Warwick, 2009; Skilton-Silverstein, 2002), the limited access to English speakers outside of the ESL class meant that the participants

had limited possibilities for developing an understanding of themselves as English speakers.

Given the particular context of the study, a central city in Texas with a long history with Mexico and Central America, when the participants had opportunities to interact with English speakers, they were many times positioned as illegitimate speakers of English and were denied their "right to speak" English as their interlocutors switched to Spanish. Unlike other studies (Giroir, 2014; Miller, 2000; Norton, 2000; Skilton-Silverstein, 2002) in which the participants only had access to their native language at home and/or with a few other members of their immigrant group, the prevalent use of Spanish in many of the contexts where the participants interacted in Central City limited even more their opportunities to use English and develop identities as English speakers.

Another finding of the study shows that the participants were able to use their sometimes limited linguistic resources to exercise agency in various circumstances in their lives. In her study of Eastern European immigrants Vitanova (2005) concludes that "through everyday acts of creativity" the participants "re-established their voices" (p. 166). Similarly, in this study the participants were able exercise agency by creatively using the social and linguistic resources they had at hand. Future research should investigate ways in which language teaching can contribute to help learners exercise agency in contexts which constrain the exercise of human agency.

In relation to investment, the analysis of the data reveals that the participants were invested in learning English. However, their investment in learning the language may not

be entirely explained by Norton's notion of investment. Norton (2013) explains that investment:

> is a construct that signals the complex relationship between language learner identity and language learning commitment. [She] argue[s] that a learner may be a highly motivated language learner, but nevertheless have little investment in the language practices of a given classroom or community. (p. 3)

Norton's notion of investment highlights the learner's commitment to the language practices of a classroom or community but does not consider that some learners, like the participants of this study, may be invested in the language practices of the ESL class but not go to class or not participate in English interactions due to a variety of social aspects. In this regard, I agree with Skilton-Silvertein (2002), who argues that an understanding of the complex lives of adult learners is necessary to explain their investment in ESL programs (p. 24).

The findings of this study show that there were various social factors that influenced the participants' investment in learning English. Social class stands out as a salient factor in this study. The working-class status of the participants influenced their opportunities they had to go to class as they had to prioritize work over their English class. Norton (2013) argues that identity researchers in SLA need to study the connections between social class and language learning (p. 24). I agree with Norton in that future research should look at the particular ways in which social class influences identity, agency, and investment in language learning.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT ESL

In this study, I have examined the particular experiences of five adult Hispanic English learners and it is not my intention to generalize their experiences to all adult ESL learners. However, I consider that the findings of this study can inform teaching practices in Adult ESL, especially in areas with few economic resources for ESL instruction and in contexts where, due to a variety of social aspects, the ESL classroom might be one of the few contexts where learners have the opportunity to use the language they are learning.

The participants in this study were invested in learning English and going to class mostly because they had the desire to communicate with English speakers. However, due to their lack of access to contexts where English was spoken, the ESL class was one of the few places where the participants would hear English and where they would be heard when speaking English. Given the limited access to English-speaking contexts, Adult ESL classes should provide ample opportunities for learners to practice English. Interacting in English is key to developing proficiency in the language and an English speaker identity. At the same time, the content of the interactions in the course should be meaningful to learners. The survival English curricula of many adult ESL courses are not realistic because they do not focus on the relations of power present in the real communication that learners might have outside of the class. In the typical role playing activity of a customer buying something at the department store, the possibility of the clerk responding in Spanish is probably not going to be present. Hence, adult ESL programs should provide spaces for learners to claim their right to speak.

In Adult ESL courses there should be activities that promote discussion about the many factors that affect the learners' investment in the language, the ways learners are positioned and position themselves in interactions outside of the classroom, as well as many other issues that have to do with their own experiences learning and practicing English. Norton (2000) proposes "classroom-based social research" (p. 152) as a way for learners to systematically investigate their own interactions with speakers of the target language (using an observation chart) and become more aware of their opportunities to use the language and the power relations in their interactions. She also proposes that the learners keep a diary about their recorded experiences. I agree with Norton in that these projects could be good ways to make the lived experiences of the learners an integral part of the language curriculum in adult ESL courses.

For adult ESL courses to focus on the social factors and power relations that influence the learners' identity development as English speakers, adult ESL teachers cannot view teaching as an ideologically neutral activity. Auerbach (1995) challenges neutrality in ESL practice and argues that "pedagogical choices about curriculum development, content, materials, classroom processes, and language use … are, in fact, inherently ideological in nature" (p. 9). Adult ESL teachers need to move away from traditional language teaching approaches to more engaging and critical approaches to language teaching. Hawkins and Norton (2009) explain that:

> Critical language teachers make transparent the complex relationships between majority and minority speakers and cultural groups, and between diverse speakers of the majority language, thus having the potential to disrupt potentially harmful and oppressive relations of power. (p. 32)

For language teachers to be able to promote critical awareness of social inequalities, they first need to be aware of such inequalities themselves. Of key importance, hence, is that ESL teachers and volunteers receive appropriate training in order to embrace a critical approach to language teaching in adult ESL courses.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

When discussing the relevance of identity research to language learning in the introduction to the second edition of her book Identity and Language Learning 10 years after its publication, Norton (2013) reminds us that:

> SLA theorists need to address how relations of power in the social world affect learners' access to the target language community (…). Identity theorists are therefore concerned about the ways in which opportunities to practice speaking, reading, and writing, acknowledged as central to the SLA process (cf. Spolsky, 1989), are socially structured in both formal and informal sites of language learning. (p. 2)

While not claiming to be an "identity theorist," through this dissertation I attempted to address the relations of power that are present in language learning by examining the lived experiences of five adult Hispanic language learners and their negotiations of identity as English speakers, their agency in contexts where English was spoken, and their investment in learning English. It is my hope that the findings and the pedagogical implications of this study inform adult ESL practice and, in turn, help adult language learners like Rosa, Paloma, Lucho, Nicolás, and Pancho have a more transformative language learning experience.

Appendix A: ESL Coordinator Permission Letter

December 12, 2007

Dr. Jody Jensen, Ph.D.
Chair, Office of Research Support and Compliance
P.O. Box 7426 Campus Mail
Austin, TX 78713
jlj@mail.utexas.edu

Dear Dr. Jensen:

The purpose of this letter is to grant Fabiana Sacchi, a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, permission to conduct research at the ESL program offered by [redacted].

The project, "Language Learning, Identity, and Agency: An Ethnographic Multiple Case Study of Adult Hispanic Language Learners," is a six-month study which explores how Hispanic language learners negotiate their identity in a new language and in a new culture. In January 2008, Fabiana will need to invite students taking the Level 2 ESL course to participate in the study. Once the students interested in participating in the study (5 to 9 students) have signed a consent form to participate in the study, Fabiana will observe the participants in their Level 2 ESL classes. She will conduct class observations throughout the six months of the study. During these observations, Fabiana will take notes of the classroom interactions of her study participants.

[redacted] was selected as the study site because of the number of adult Hispanics who attend our ESL courses. Fabiana has been a very dedicated volunteer ESL teacher at [redacted] since October, 2004, and we are glad that she has chosen to do her study with students learning English in our ESL program.

I, Jonathan Hurley, do hereby grant permission for Fabiana Sacchi to conduct her study "Language Learning, Identity, and Agency: An Ethnographic Multiple Case Study of Adult Hispanic Language Learners" at the ESL program offered by [redacted]. Please do not hesitate to call me at
(512) 656-0556 or email me at hurleyjonathan@hotmail.com if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Hurley
ESL Coordinator

Appendix B: Letter Asking for Study Participants

January, 2008

Hello,

My name is Fabiana Sacchi, and I am a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin. I am looking for several (5 to 9) Spanish-speaking Level 2 ESL students at [redacted] who would like to participate in a six-month study about their experiences learning and using English in Texas. The title of the study is *Language Learning, Identity, and Agency: An Ethnographic Multiple Case Study of Adult Hispanic Language Learners*.

If you want to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

- Participate in three interviews about your experiences using English in the United States.
  - The interviews will be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient for you
- Participate in two focus-group discussions with other study participants.
  - The group interviews will be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient for you and the other study participants.
- Participate in an audio journal project in which once every 2 weeks you will record your experiences speaking English in different contexts.
  - You will be provided a digital voice recorder for this activity.
- Allow the researcher to observe you during class time at [redacted].
  - The researcher will observe classes during the 6 months of the study
- Allow the researcher to accompany you to two places where you speak English (such as the workplace, the doctor's office, the post office, or other environments) in order to observe how you participate in interactions with English speakers.
  - You will choose the places where you will feel comfortable being accompanied by the researcher.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, so you are free to refuse to participate. If you want to participate in this study, please fill out the following information and give it to your ESL teacher or let me know by phone at (512) 826-5979 that you are interested in participating.

Thank you very much,

Fabiana

Participant Information
Name: _____
Telephone number: _____

Enero, 2008

Hola:

Mi nombre es Fabiana Sacchi y soy una estudiante de doctorado en la Universidad de Texas, Austin. Estoy buscando algunos (5 a 9) estudiantes hispanos de Nivel 2 en [redacted] a los que les interese participar en una investigación. El proyecto dura 6 meses y el propósito de la investigación es analizar las experiencias de los estudiantes cuando hablan inglés. El título del estudio es *Aprendizaje de idiomas, identidad y agencia: Un estudio sobre hispanos adultos que aprenden inglés*.

Si acepta ser parte del estudio se le pedirá que haga lo siguiente:

- Participar en 3 entrevistas sobre sus experiencias usando inglés en los Estados Unidos.
  - Las entrevistas serán a la hora y en el lugar que a Ud. más le convenga.
- Participar en 2 entrevistas grupales con los demás participantes en el estudio.
  - Las entrevistas serán a la hora y en el lugar que a Ud. y a los demás participantes del estudio les convenga.
- Participar en un proyecto de grabación de un diario personal para compartir experiencias sobre sus interacciones en inglés. Ud. deberá grabar 1 vez cada 2 semanas sobre sus experiencias.
  - Le daremos una grabadora de voz digital para que Ud. tenga en su casa y pueda grabar sus experiencias.
- Permitirle a la investigadora que la/lo observe durante la clase de inglés de [redacted].
  - La investigadora va a observar clases durante los 6 meses que dura el estudio.
- Permitirle a la investigadora que lo/la acompañe a 2 lugares donde Ud. tiene que hablar en inglés (por ejemplo: el trabajo, el hospital, el correo, o cualquier otro lugar) para que ella pueda observar su interacción con personas que hablan inglés.
  - Ud. va a elegir los lugares a los que la investigadora lo/la acompañará. Ud. podrá elegir los lugares donde se sienta más cómodo/a yendo con la investigadora.

Su participación en este estudio es totalmente voluntaria y puede negarse a participar sin que su decisión tenga ninguna consecuencia. Si quiere participar en el estudio, por favor complete la siguiente información y désela al profesor/la profesora de inglés o avíseme a mí directamente al teléfono (512) 826-5979.

¡Muchas gracias!

Fabiana

Appendix C: Consent Form

IRB PROTOCOL # 2007-12-0060

Title: Language Learning, Identity, and Agency: An Ethnographic Multiple Case Study of Adult Hispanic Language Learners

Conducted By: Fabiana Sacchi *(Principal Investigator)*, Ph.D. Candidate, Foreign Language Education
Of The University of Texas at Austin: Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Office: BEN 4.102 -1 University Station, B3700. Austin, TX 78712
Telephone: (512) 826-5979 e-mail: fsacchi@mail.utexas.edu
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Luis Urrieta, Assistant Professor
Of The University of Texas at Austin: Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Office: SZB 528G-1 University Station, D5700. Austin, TX 78712
Telephone: (512) 232-4129 e-mail: urrieta@mail.utexas.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current for future relationships with UT Austin or participating sites. To do so simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

The purpose of this study is to explore how adult Hispanic immigrants who are learning English in the United States negotiate their identities and exercise agency in the different contexts in which they use English. The main objectives of the study is to analyze the particular experiences of adult Hispanic immigrants who use English in Texas, how the language learners negotiate a sense of who they are in the different contexts where they use English, and the role of English in the identity negotiation.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- Participate in three interviews about your experiences using English in the United States.
  - The interviews will be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient for you, and they will be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance.
  - The interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder
- Participate in two focus-group discussions with other study participants.
  - The group interviews will be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient for you and the other study participants, and they will be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance
  - The group interviews will be videotaped
- Participate in an audio journal project in which once every 2 weeks you will record your experiences speaking English in different contexts.
  - You will be provided a digital voice recorder for this activity.

- Allow the Principal Investigator to observe you during class time at [redacted].
  - The researcher will observe 10 classes during the 6 months of the study
  - The researcher will take notes during the observations.
- Allow the Principal Investigator to accompany you to two places where you speak English (such as the workplace, the doctor's office, the post office, or other environments) in order to observe how you participate in interactions with English speakers.
  - You will choose the places where you feel comfortable being accompanied by the researcher.
  - The observations will be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance
  - The researcher will take notes during the observations.

Total estimated time to participate in the study
15 hours throughout 6 months

Risks and Discomforts:
The risk of participating in this project is minimal. If you feel uncomfortable with some of the questions or with sharing some of your experiences, you may choose not to share such information.

Benefits:
There are no benefits for participation in this study.

Compensation:
- As a bilingual (Spanish-English) teacher, The Principal Investigator will be available one hour per week to assist you with any needs pertaining to your English language skills (ESL homework, exam preparation, translation of documents, etc.).

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:
- The researcher will protect your privacy by ensuring that you maintain control throughout the study over the type and amount of information you choose to share.
- The confidentiality of your data will be maintained at all times by assigning a pseudonym (known only to the researcher) to you and all of your data. The audio and video files will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. The files will be kept in a locked file cabinet and on a passport protected computer in the investigator's office. The audio and video recordings will be heard and viewed only for research purposes by the investigator. After the digital voice recordings and videotapes have been transcribed, they will be destroyed.
- The confidentiality agreement will be breached if the researcher should observe abuse of a child or elderly person during home visits. State law requires that the researcher report any abuse to relevant agencies, such as Child Protective Services or the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.
- The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data

will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the Principal Investigator or her Faculty Sponsor. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of page 1. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support and Compliance at (512) 471-8871 or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the information in this form and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

_____ Date: _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Investigator:_____ Date: _____

Título: Aprendizaje de idiomas, identidad y agencia: Un estudio sobre hispanos adultos que aprenden inglés

Realizado por: Fabiana Sacchi *(Investigadora Principal)*, Estudiante de doctorado, Enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras
The University of Texas at Austin: Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Oficina: BEN 4.102 -1 University Station, B3700. Austin, TX 78712
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Profesor asesor: Dr. Luis Urrieta, Assistant Professor
The University of Texas at Austin: Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Oficina: SZB 528G-1 University Station, D5700. Austin, TX 78712
Teléfono: (512) 232-4129 Correo electrónico: urrieta@mail.utexas.edu

Se le pide que participe en un proyecto de investigación. Este formulario le provee la información sobre el estudio. La investigadora principal (la persona encargada de esta investigación) también le describirá esta investigación y puede contestar las preguntas que Ud. tenga. Por favor, lea la información a continuación y haga cualquier pregunta que tenga antes de decidir si participa o no en el estudio. Su participación es totalmente voluntaria y puede negarse a participar sin que su decisión tenga ninguna consecuencia. También puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento si así lo desea, lo cual no afectará sus relaciones presentes o futuras con la Universidad de Texas o sus asociados. Si este es el caso, avísele a la investigadora que desea dejar de participar en el estudio. La investigadora le dará una copia del formulario de consentimiento.

Propósito del estudio:

El propósito del proyecto es explorar cómo los inmigrantes hispanos que aprenden inglés en los Estados Unidos negocian su identidad en los diferentes contextos en que usan inglés. Los objetivos centrales del estudio son analizar las experiencias particulares de un grupo de inmigrantes hispanos que estudian inglés en Texas, cómo estos inmigrantes negocian su manera de entender quiénes son en los diferentes contextos en que se comunican en inglés, y el rol del inglés en su negociación de identidad.

Si acepta ser parte del estudio se le pedirá que haga lo siguiente:

- Participar en 3 entrevistas sobre sus experiencias usando inglés en los Estados Unidos.
  - Las entrevistas serán a la hora y en el lugar que a Ud. más le convenga y serán programadas con al menos 24 horas de antelación.
  - Las entrevistas serán grabadas usando una grabadora de voz digital.
- Participar en 2 entrevistas grupales con los demás participantes en el estudio.
  - Las entrevistas serán a la hora y en el lugar que a Ud. y a los demás participantes del estudio les convenga y serán programadas con al menos 24 horas de antelación.
  - Las entrevistas grupales serán filmadas.
- Participar en un proyecto de grabación de un diario personal para compartir experiencias sobre sus interacciones en inglés. Ud. deberá grabar 1 vez cada 2 semanas sobre sus experiencias.
  - Le daremos una grabadora de voz digital para que Ud. tenga en su casa y pueda grabar sus experiencias.
- Permitirle a la investigadora principal que la/lo observe durante la clase de inglés de [redacted].

- La investigadora va a observar 10 clases durante los 6 meses que dura el estudio.
- La investigadora va a tomar notas durante las observaciones de clase.

- Permitirle a la investigadora principal que lo/la acompañe a 2 lugares donde Ud. tiene que hablar en inglés (por ejemplo: el trabajo, el hospital, el correo, o cualquier otro lugar) para que ella pueda observar su interacción con personas que hablan inglés.
  - Ud. va a elegir los lugares a los que la investigadora lo/la acompañará. Ud. podrá elegir los lugares donde se sienta más cómodo/a yendo con la investigadora.
  - Las observaciones serán programadas con al menos 24 horas de antelación.
  - La investigadora va a tomar notas durante las observaciones.

La duración de su participación en el estudio:

- La duración aproximada es de 15 horas durante 6 meses.

Riesgos:

El riesgo al que se expone participando en este proyecto es mínimo. Si se siente incómodo/a con algunas de las preguntas o compartiendo alguna experiencia, sepa que puede no contestar cualquiera de las preguntas o puede no hablar de cualquier tema que lo/la incomode.

Beneficios:

- No existen beneficios directos por participar en este proyecto.

Compensación:

- La investigadora principal, que es profesora bilingüe (español-inglés), estará disponible una hora por semana para asistirlo/la en cosas que Ud. necesite relacionadas con el idioma inglés (ayuda con la tarea de la clase de inglés, ayuda con exámenes, traducción de documentos, etc.).

Privacidad y confidencialidad:

- La investigadora va a proteger su privacidad asegurándole que Ud. siempre va a tener el control sobre el tipo de información y la cantidad de información que Ud. quiera compartir con ella.
- La confidencialidad se va a mantener en todo momento ya que desde el comienzo del estudio a cada participante se le asignará un seudónimo. A los archivos de audio y video se les dará un código para que no se pueda averiguar de qué persona son. Los archivos serán guardados bajo llave en la oficina de la investigadora y en una computadora asegurada con clave personal. Las grabaciones de audio y video serán escuchadas y miradas solamente por la investigadora. Después de que las grabaciones sean transcriptas, los archivos digitales serán borrados.
- Este convenio de confidencialidad se romperá si la investigadora llegara a observar abuso de menores o de ancianos durante las visitas a su casa. La ley estatal requiere que la investigadora reporte los casos de abuso a las agencias pertinentes como la agencia de Servicios de Protección de Menores o el Departamento de Servicios de Protección a la Familia del estado de Texas.
- La información que Ud. dé en esta investigación se podrá compartir con otros investigadores en el futuro por motivos de investigación que tal vez no estén mencionados en este formulario. En estos casos, la información no tendrá nada que pueda ser conectada

con Ud. o con su participación en el estudio.

A parte de la investigadora principal y el Profesor asesor, sólo las agencias de Protección a los Humanos y el Comité de Investigación con Humanos de la Universidad de Texas tienen el derecho de repasar sus documentos y protegerán la confidencialidad de estos documentos hasta el punto permitido por la ley. Si los resultados de esta investigación son publicados o presentados en una conferencia de investigación, su identidad será protegida.

Contactos y preguntas:
Si tiene preguntas sobre el estudio, este es el momento de hacerlas. Si tiene preguntas después, si necesita información adicional o si desea dejar de participar en el proyecto, comuníquese con la investigadora principal o con su profesor asesor. Los nombre, números de teléfono y correos electrónicos se encuentran al principio del formulario. Si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante, quejas, dudas o preguntas acerca del estudio, comuníquese con Jody Jensen, Ph,D., jefe de la Mesa Directiva de Aprobación Institucional de la Universidad de Texas para la Protección de los Participantes Humanos al teléfono (512) 232-2685 o con la Oficina de Investigación y Cumplimiento al (512) 4718871 o al correo electrónico orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Usted recibirá una copia de este formulario para su expediente.

Declaración de consentimiento.
He leído la información y tengo la información suficiente para decidir sobre mi participación en esta investigación. Consiento participar en el estudio.

Nombre: _____

Firma _____ Fecha _____

_____ Fecha: _____
Firma de la persona que recibe el consentimiento

Firma del investigador: _____ Fecha: _____

Appendix D: Interview One

Interview One: Life History

1- Tell me about yourself.
   - Where are you from?
   - How long have you lived in the United States?
   - Is your family here with you?
   - Why did you (and your family?) decide to come to the US?
   - Where (in what cities) have you lived since you came?
   - Do you have family members who still live in your home country? How often do you see them? How do you communicate with them? Have they visited you in the US? What do they think about your life here?

2- Work history
   - What was your occupation when you lived in your country?
   - What do you do now?
   - What other jobs have you had in the US?

3- Tell me about your educational background.
   - How many years did you go to school in your country?
   - If you have children,
     i. Did/do you like their school?
     ii. Did/do you help children with homework?
     iii. Did/do you participate in school events?
     iv. Did/do you meet with your child's teachers?

4- Tell me about your English learning experience.
   - When did you start learning English? Did you learn English back home?
   - Where have you learnt English? (Institutions, jobs, etc.)
   - What experiences would you say have helped you learn English?
   - Why did you choose to study at Posada de Inmigrantes?

5- Tell me about your experiences using English in the past.
   - How did you feel the 1st time you spoke English? Do you remember where/when/with whom it was?
   - Can you think of a time in the past when you felt frustrated because you couldn't communicate in English?
   - Can you think of a time in the past when you felt happy because you could communicate in English?
   - How do you think your experience might have been different if you had already known how to speak English before coming to the US?

6- Is there anything else that I did not ask you and that you think I should have asked you?

Appendix E: Interview Two

Interview Two: Learning/using English

1. Why are you studying English? What do you like about studying English?
2. Why are you studying English in the Posada de Inmigrantes ESL program?
3. In what contexts do you speak/need to speak English? (In class, at work, at the grocery store, etc.?). How do you feel when you speak English in those contexts?
4. What things are different in your life now that you can speak English?
5. How do English-speakers react when you speak to them in English? How does that reaction make you feel?
6. How do Spanish-speakers react when they hear you speak English? How does their reaction make you feel?
7. What do your children/husband/wife/etc. think about you learning English? Have relationships with family members changed because of you learning English?
8. Has anything changed in your life because of speaking more English?
9. Have you ever felt discriminated against in the United States? Was that experience connected with your speaking/not speaking English?
10. Is there anything else that I did not ask you and that you think I should have asked you?

Appendix F: Interview Three

Interview Three: Reflections on the meaning of your experience (as an English learner and as an English speaker)

1- Given that you have been learning English for a while and that you can communicate in English in different contexts, how do you understand the role of English in your life?

2- Are you going to keep learning English in the future? Why?

3- You have mentioned different instances in which you were able to do things (to act) because you could speak English. How do those types of instances affect your life?

4- You have also mentioned instances in which you were not able to do things (to act) because people did not understand you when you spoke English. How do those types of instances affect your life?

5- If you could change something about your experience in the US in relation to English. What would you change? Why?

6- Is there anything else that I did not ask you and that you think I should have asked you?

Appendix G: Focus Group Interview One

Focus Group Interview One: Guiding questions

1- Many of you have said that you feel good when you speak English. What does feeling "good" mean to you? Can you explain to me some of the positive feelings that you have when you can communicate in English?
2- Many of you have used phrases such as "me da miedo/I'm scared" or "me armo de valor/I have to gather my courage" when I have to speak English. In what contexts do you feel that way?
3- Have you ever felt discriminated against because of your English proficiency?
4- When you talk about learning English, most of you use the phrase "hay que echarle ganas/we have to make an effort" to learn English. Can you explain to me what you mean by "hay que echarle ganas"?
5- Many of you make a big effort to go to the ESL class at night after a long day at work. What are the benefits of going to class? What motivates you to go to class?
6- How do you think the English classes at Posada de Inmigrantes could better meet your needs?
7- How do you think your life will be different when you know more English?

Appendix H: Focus Group Interview Two

Focus Group Interview Two: Guiding questions

1. Most of you said that you want to learn English because you want to talk with English speakers. How do you feel when you speak to someone in English and s/he responds in Spanish (and it's not her/his native language)?
2. All of you said that learning English is very important for you; however, some of you have attended just a few classes during the study. What are the reasons for your absences?
3. Some of you said that knowing more English may be more important than having "papers". Do you all agree with this idea? Why?
4. Even though throughout this study you have shared with me many experiences about English usage and how speaking English allows you to accomplish things, to feel more independent, etc., you all say that you speak "a little English". Why is that?
5. Some of you have shared that you want to return to your home country in the near future. Why are you learning English if you plan to go back home?

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