

Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional
Technology Dissertations

Department of Middle-Secondary Education and
Instructional Technology (no new uploads as of
Jan. 2015)

7-16-2009

On the Border of a New Culture: Spanish-Speaking Middle School Newcomers' Perceptions, Expectations and Attitudes

Margo H. Williams

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/msit_diss



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Williams, Margo H., "On the Border of a New Culture: Spanish-Speaking Middle School Newcomers' Perceptions, Expectations and Attitudes." Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2009.
doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/1059120>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology (no new uploads as of Jan. 2015) at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, ON THE BORDER OF A NEW CULTURE: SPANISH-SPEAKING NEWCOMER MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS, EXPECTATIONS AND ATTITUDES by MARGO WILLIAMS, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

Peggy Albers, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

Gertrude Tinker Sachs, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Mary Ariail, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Diane Belcher, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Date

Dana L. Fox, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Middle-Secondary Instructional Technology

R. W. Kamphaus, Ph.D.
Dean and Distinguished Research Professor
College of Education

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

By presenting this dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the advanced degree from Georgia State University, I agree that the library of Georgia State University shall make available for inspection and circulation in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I agree that permission to quote or to copy from this dissertation may be granted by the professor under whose direction it was written, by the College of Education's director of graduate studies and research, or by me. Such quoting or copying must be solely for scholarly purposes and will not involve potential financial gain. It is understood that any copying from or publication of this dissertation which involves financial gain will not be allowed without my written permission.

Margo Williams

NOTICE TO BORROWERS

All dissertations deposited in the Georgia State University library must be used in accordance with the stipulations prescribed by the author in the preceding statement. The author of this dissertation is”

Margo Williams
PO Box 450545
Atlanta, GA, 31145

The director of this dissertation is:

Dr. Peggy Albers
Department of Middle School Instructional Technology
College of Education
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303-3083

VITA

Margo Williams

ADDRESS: PO Box 942351
Atlanta, GA 31141

EDUCATION:

Ph.D. 2009 Georgia State University
Teaching and Learning/Language and Literacy

Ed.S. 2000 Georgia State University
Early Childhood Education

M.S. 1998 Georgia State University
Instructional Technology

B.A. 1989 Albany State University
Spanish

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2007-Present ELL Instructional Coach – Metro School System

2005-2007 ESOL Endorsement Instructor

2001-2007 ESL Specialist (K-9) – Metro School System

1994-2001 Kindergarten Teacher – Metro School System

PRESENTATIONS:

- “On the Border of a New Culture: Spanish-Speaking Middle School Newcomers’ Perceptions, Expectations, and Attitudes” (2009) Presentation at TESOL Conference, Denver CO, March 2009

- “On the Border of a New Culture: Spanish-Speaking Middle School Newcomers’ Perceptions, Expectations, and Attitudes” (2008) Presentation at GATESOL Conference, Jekyll Island, GA, November 2008.
- “A New Game Plan: Coaches for Educators of ELLS” (2008) Presentation at GATESOL Conference, Jekyll Island, GA, November 2008.
- “An Introduction to Shelter Immersion Observation Protocol (SIOP)” (2007) Presentation at Summer Leadership Conference -- Metro School System
- “Teaching Strategies for Newcomers” (2006) Presentation at Georgia NBPTS Conference -- Fernbank Science Center
- “Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Literature for Young People” (2006) Presentation at Diversity vs. Multiculturalism: The Ethical Transformation Conference -- Georgia State University
- “Designing and Implementing Appropriate Assessment for ELLs” (2006) Georgia Read Write Now Conference -- Georgia State University

PUBLICATIONS:

- Coaching: A New Avenue for Providing Teachers (and Administrators) Support for English Language Learners in *TESOL Resource Center*
- Coaching Isn’t Just for Athletes (2008) (coauthor) in *TESOL in Action*
- Making a Difference (2008) in *GATESOL Spring Newsletter*
- Meeting the Needs of ELLs (2005) *Literacy Lens*, Volume 5, Issue 1
- Mentoring New Teachers of ESL Students (2003) *ESOL in Elementary Education Interest Section of TESOL Newsletter*
- One + One = Learning in the Mainstream Classroom (2003) *TESOL Matters*

ABSTRACT

ON THE BORDER OF A NEW CULTURE: SPANISH-SPEAKING NEWCOMER MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS, EXPECTATIONS AND ATTITUDES

by
Margo Williams

The purpose of this study was to examine the Spanish-speaking newcomer middle school students' perceptions of school, expectations from school, and attitudes toward school. Of particular concern was how these students' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes developed over a 5-month period. The theoretical framework for the study was derived from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory; second language acquisition (SLA) theories (Dulay & Burt, 1973; Krashen, 1982; Johnson, 1996; Long, 1985; Schumann, 1978); and Norton's (1997) theory of identity, investment, and imagined communities.

The participants in this study were 4 Spanish-speaking middle school students enrolled in an Intensive English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class for students who have recently arrived in the United States, their parents, and the teacher-researcher. The study took place during the 2006-2007 school year at a diverse metropolitan city in the southeast region of the United States. Data sources included student and parent tape-recorded oral interviews, informal interviews, field notes, ethnographic participant observations, field notes, and a researcher journal. Through constant comparative analysis (Creswell, 2006), data were analyzed for themes relating to

students' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes. These themes were analyzed using the sociocultural and SLA frameworks.

The analysis of the findings indicated that most participants entered U.S. schools with preexisting positive perceptions about school and that they maintained these positive perceptions during the time of the study. The data revealed that the participants had high expectations from school and overall positive attitudes toward school. An analysis of the data demonstrated that the participants' new school environment was a critical factor in their perceptions, expectations, and attitudes. Implications of the study include the importance of honoring students' culture, previous learning experiences, and language abilities in order to facilitate SLA, literacy development, and teacher-student relationship development.

ON THE BORDER OF A NEW CULTURE:
SPANISH-SPEAKING MIDDLE SCHOOL
NEWCOMERS' PERCEPTIONS,
EXPECTATIONS AND
ATTITUDES

by
Margo Williams

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Teaching and Learning
in
the Department of Middle-Secondary Instructional Technology
in
the College of Education
Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA
2009

Copyright by
Margo Williams
2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people I would like to thank for their help and support during this research. I am appreciative of the members of my doctoral advisory committee. I am especially grateful to my committee chair, Dr. Peggy Albers. I appreciated her valuable guidance and expertise throughout the writing of this dissertation. I thank Dr. Gertrude Tinker Sachs and Dr. Diane Belcher for their valuable insight in second language acquisition. To Dr. Mary Ariail, I am grateful for her expertise in middle school pedagogy.

I am very grateful to the participants in the study (Cristián, José, Milagro, Leslie, and their parents). It was an honor to work with them over the year. I also want to thank all of the administrators who made this research possible.

My family and friends offered me love and support throughout this process. I give a very special thank you to them. Their support throughout this process was invaluable.

Most of all, I give loving thanks to my husband and best friend, Carlos, who provided ongoing support and encouragement throughout this process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
List of Figures	vii
Abbreviations and Acronyms	viii
Abbreviations and Acronyms	viii
CHAPTER 1	1
Introduction and Theoretical Framework	1
Theoretical Framework.....	9
Conclusion	19
CHAPTER 2	21
Literature Review.....	21
Learner Perceptions, Expectations, and Attitudes Affect Learning.....	23
Newcomers Adjusting to Life in New Land	23
Learner Perceptions, Expectations, and Attitudes Affect Learning.....	32
Classroom Communities Impact Learning	36
Conceptualizing Language Learning in Classroom.....	43
Newcomers Move from Nonparticipation to Participation in the Classroom.....	45
Contemporary Deficit Thinking.....	48
Creating and Negotiating Identities	53

Conclusions.....	58
CHAPTER 3	60
Methodology	61
Metro International School (MIS)	71
Design of the Study.....	77
Study Participants	80
José Alvarez	81
Cristián Morales.....	85
Milagro Ventura.....	87
Leslie Utitia.....	89
Student Participant Summary	93
Parent Participants	94
Data Sources	97
Trustworthiness of the Data	107
Writing the Results	109
Summary	110
CHAPTER 4	111
Results.....	111
Students and Parents Had Clear Perceptions, Expectations, and Attitudes about School 113	
“Doing” School: Newcomers Adjusting to School.....	153
Shattering Stereotypes of Parental Expectations	178

Conclusions.....	185
CHAPTER 5	186
Conclusions and Implications	186
Implications.....	188
Towards a Learning Community: Implications for Practice.....	200
Recommendations for Further Research.....	203
Major Contributions of the Study	204
Limitations of the Study.....	206
Summary	207
Epilogue	209
REFERENCES	211
APPENDIXES	233
APPENDIX A.....	233
APPENDIX B	236
APPENDIX C	237
APPENDIX D.....	239
APPENDIX E	240

List of Tables

Table	Page
1 EL Newcomers' Daily Schedule	94
2 Student Participants' Background Information	95
3 Student Participants' Background Information	98
4 Coding Categories and Data Evidence	103
5 Data Collection and Analysis Summary	107
6 Participants' Absences and Tardies	121
7 Learning Enrichment Opportunities	148
8 Research Results	184

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1 Prism model of language acquisition.....	37
2 WIDA Performance Definitions.	47
3 Map of Mexico and Central America.	80
4 José's haircut sketch.	82
5 José's illustration of his school in Mexico.....	116
6 Milagro's member check.	136
7 Leslie's member check.	139

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Conversation Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
EL	English Learner
ESOL	English to Speakers of Other Languages
LEP	Limited English Proficient
MIS	Metro International School
PHLOTE	Primary Home Language Other than English
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
SI	Sheltered Instruction
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
WIDA	World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

(Glossary in Appendix A)

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Over the centuries, families from other cultures and lands have come to the United States and made it their new home. Over the past 25 years, the number of immigrants has more than tripled. More than 14 million people immigrated to the United States during the 1990s, and another 14 million are expected to arrive between 2000 and 2010 (National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2008). These newly arrived immigrants often do not speak English. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 18% of the respondents reported speaking another language other than English at home. Of these census participants, more than 20% felt that they speak English “less than very well,” which suggests that these respondents may be English learners (ELs).

Statistics have shown that the population of ELs is the fastest growing segment of the student population in U.S. schools. Middle and high schools experienced the highest levels of growth, where ELs increased by almost 70% between 1992 and 2002. This increase has elevated the number of ELs to 10.5% of K-12 school enrollment (NCTE, 2008). During the 2005-2006 school year, over 49 million students enrolled in U.S. schools were classified as “Limited English Proficient,” or LEPs (National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2007), now known as ELs. Similar to the nationwide increase, the state of Georgia has experienced tremendous growth in the number of ELs enrolled in state schools. From 1993 to 2003, the number of ELs increased by 200% in Georgia (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES],

2004b). During the 2006-2007 school year, more than 75,000 Georgia students were classified as ELs and received language support services (Georgia Department of Education [GDOE], 2008). This change in demographics has prompted many schools to reassess their organization, curriculum, and instruction. They also have had to reevaluate their relationships with parents and the surrounding communities.

Although the United States is comprised of nation of immigrants, their right to receive specialized instruction has been debated and questioned (Carrera, 1989; Wright, 2005), most recently in Arizona, where state legislation has nullified many accommodations and placed numerous restrictions on programs initially developed for ELs (Wright, 2005). However, several legal precedents have established the educational rights of ELs. Initially, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, sex, or national origin by recipients of government funding, including the public schools. A decade later, Title VI served as the legal basis for the *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) decision, and the U.S. Supreme court ruled that placing language minority students in a “sink or swim” classroom with no language support was unconstitutional. At issue was whether education administrators were meeting their obligation of providing equal education for all students by treating all students the same. Also at issue was whether schools needed to provide specialized instruction for students who are learning English. In its 1974 decision, the Supreme Court unanimously decided in favor of the plaintiffs, ruling that schools must provide language support for ELs.

In 1994, the Title VII of the Bilingual Education Act was developed to promote education excellence by awarding competitive grants directly to school districts serving ELs. It also placed strong emphasis on professional development programs at the

undergraduate and graduate levels. More recently, under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002), formula grants were provided for language support services in schools. These grants were to be distributed by states on a per-capita basis and required annual assessments of English proficiency. All of these precedents were established to ensure the allocation of the appropriate education services for ELs in U.S. public schools. Although the nation's highest courts have spoken and guaranteed the educational rights of ELs, research has shown that middle school ELs continue to struggle academically. In 2005, only 4% of ELs in Grade 8 achieved proficiency on the reading portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, as cited in U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2007, compared to 31% of Grade 8 students who were English proficient.

However, U.S. schools have traditionally failed some students, including ELs (Nieto, 1994; 2002; 2008). Statistics also have shown that immigrant students have the highest dropout rate of all students in U.S. schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2007; see Appendix B). These rates vary depending on country of origin; age at time of immigration; and whether ELs are from first-, second-, or third-generation immigrant families (Ruiz de Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000). Immigrants from the southern region of the United States represent over 13% of the nationwide dropout rate. During the 2006-2007 school year, 3.4% of ELs in Georgia, or 23,000 of the state's students, failed to graduate from high school (GDOE, 2008).

Most alarming are statistics relevant to Spanish-speaking students. The majority (79%) of immigrants to the United States between 2000 and 2005 came from Latin American Countries (NCES, 2004b). In 2004, 44% of Spanish-speaking young adults born outside of the United States failed to graduate from high school (Aspira, 2004). In

2003, only 53% of all Spanish-speaking students graduated from high school on time (Greene & Winters, 2006). During the 2000-2001 school year, Spanish-speaking students in Georgia had a high school graduation rate of 59.8%, compared to 74.9% for Caucasians and 65.3% for African Americans (NCES, 2007). When considering Georgia's high dropout rates for ELs, immigrants, and Spanish-speaking students, these disproportionate statistics deserve investigation because they suggest that Spanish-speaking EL newcomers may have a higher risk of dropping out of school.

Why is there large gap in the high school graduation rate between ELs and proficient English speakers? A student's decision to drop out of high school may be the result of negative school experiences, including academic failure, grade retention, frequent suspension, or lack of parental support (Wells, 1989). Fry (2003a) asserted that ELs are disproportionately behind academically when they begin high school and disproportionately over age for their grades. Fry also contended that English language ability is another important indicator for the likelihood of Spanish-speaking students to drop out of school. English language proficiency is strongly correlated to learners' U.S. schooling experiences, with 44% of immigrant Spanish-speaking dropouts describing themselves as "Speaking English 'Not Well' " (U.S. Census, 2000).

Although there may not be one particular reason students drop out of high school, Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006) discussed their participants' decisions to drop out, which included not feeling part of the learning environment, the lack of connection to the school environment; the perception that school is boring, feeling unmotivated; and facing academic challenges in the classroom. This study noted that 71% of the Spanish-speaking participants were not motivated or inspired to work hard in school.

Although these aforementioned major factors contribute to the disparity in graduation rates, another reason focuses on students' language learning experiences when they first arrive in U.S. schools. It is during these initial language-learning experiences that ELs develop perceptions of U.S. schools, formulate their expectations of school, and develop their attitudes toward school. Perceptions, expectations, and attitudes impact student achievement and ultimately determine students' decision to continue their learning in a formal educational setting (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Norton, 2001). Researchers have agreed that students' initial school experiences set the stage for their future development as learners in the classroom (Woods, Boyle, & Hubbard, 1999).

During these initial school experiences, learners develop various perceptions about their new school, a set of expectations from school, and different attitudes toward school. Rodriguez (2002) argued that while developing their perceptions, expectations, and attitudes about school, these EL newcomers face tough challenges in school. Most are totally immersed in their learning environment, but they have little or no language support services. Others may receive only an orientation or a survival English course. To further compound this lack of support, most teachers of ELs lack the expertise to provide these students with the appropriate instruction (Bunch, Abram, Lotan, & Valdés, 2001). Regardless of their initial experiences, newcomer ELs are held to the same expectations of native English-speaking students (Cummins, 2001). The NCLB (2002) has placed intense pressure upon schools to perform, with all students, including ELs, expected to pass standardized test scores.

For EL newcomers to succeed academically, more than classroom teaching is necessary. They also must adjust to the sociocultural differences between their old and

their new learning environments. Links exist among second-language use, membership in new academic settings, and social contexts. The ways in which newcomer ELs adjust to their new setting are critically related to the types of interactions they participate in as well as their language acquisition and integration into mainstream school. Therefore, it is critical for schools to understand the dynamic relationships among school settings, language learning, and learners' social identities.

Purpose of Study

In this study, I investigated Spanish-speaking EL newcomers' initial language learning experiences, perceptions of school, expectations from school, and attitudes toward school. For the purpose of this discussion, it is necessary to define several key terms. The NCLB (2002, Title IX) defined ELs as school-age elementary or secondary students who have any of the following traits:

- Not born in the United States or whose native language is not English;
- Native American, Alaskan Native, or resident of the outlying areas;
- From an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on an individual's English language proficiency level;
- Migratory and come from an environment where English is not the dominant language;
- Have difficulties speaking, reading, writing, and understanding English that may prevent them from meeting the state's proficient level achievement and succeed in classrooms where English is the language of instruction, or to fully participate in society.

In this study, ELs' *perceptions* referred to participants' interpretation and understanding of school and the whole education process (Slavin, 1988). ELs' *expectations* referred to what they want to gain from school and their anticipations about school. ELs' *attitudes* were "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6). In this discussion, ELs' attitudes referred to the participants' overall feelings toward school (previous and current schools). To define the term *newcomer*, I adopted the definition given by the school system (Metro School System) in which this study was located, which described newcomers as students who may have been born outside of the United States but arrived in the country within the past calendar year and speak a language other than English at home.

Given the number of Spanish-speaking immigrants currently enrolled in U.S. schools and the disproportionate number of Spanish-speaking students who fail to complete high school, I chose to focus on Spanish-speaking EL newcomers. Although Spanish-speaking immigrants were attending U.S. middle schools in unprecedented numbers as of the date of this study, few studies have investigated how these newcomers situate themselves in their new schools and how this impacts their learning. Because of the overwhelming dropout rate, the level of expectations for U.S. students, and the fact that initial experiences can determine students' decisions to continue their learning, this study investigated the following questions to determine newcomer middle school students' perceptions of, expectations from, and attitudes toward schooling in the United States:

1. What are Spanish-speaking newcomer students' perceptions of, expectations from, and attitudes toward school?
2. How are Spanish-speaking newcomers situating themselves in the education process?
3. What coping strategies do Spanish-speaking newcomer middle school students use to survive in the mainstream schooling environment?
4. What are the changes in Spanish-speaking newcomer students' perspectives and attitudes about education as they learn English?

This inquiry into Spanish-speaking EL newcomers will add to the literature by investigating these middle school newcomers' perceptions of, expectations from, and attitudes toward school. Although many studies have focused on high school students and college/university freshmen acclimating to U.S. schools, few ethnographic studies have focused solely on middle school (Grades 6, 7, and 8) students.

It is important to research this age group because the transition from elementary to middle school is a critical developmental period for learners (Doda & Knowles, 2008; Eccles et al., 1993; Jessor, 1993). Early adolescents face increased academic and social stress but decreased social support from teachers and other adults. At the same time, they are struggling with larger class sizes which are common in middle school, complexity, and importance of their peer group (Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2009). This is a critical age group to study because it is the time that either creates a foundation for future success in high school or destroys the chances for success in high school. To create this foundation, it is necessary to first investigate middle school students' feelings, especially those of newcomers, toward school. During this investigation, I documented students'

perceptions, attitudes, and expectations as they arrived, learned, and transitioned into the mainstream middle school environment.

Theoretical Framework

There are many complex issues surrounding newcomers in American schools. This study was theoretically grounded in the interconnectedness of language, culture, and identity. To provide the underpinnings to analyze research data, I examined Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978); Ellis (2002) and Krashen's second language acquisition (SLA) theories; and Norton's (2002) theory of identity, investment, and imagined communities.

Sociocultural Theory

Language learning is a complex process involving many components that are dependent on more than purely academic achievement. The sociocultural theory suggests that learning is culturally bound, dependent on social and cultural processes. The activities, settings, and learning that often accompany social practice (Norton & Toohey, 2001) form the basis for language development. Vygotsky (1978) created the foundation for sociocultural approaches to learning with his emphasis on the importance of social context in the process of acculturation. Vygotsky theorized that students learn through social interaction and culture, with language being the primary conduit to become acculturated. He further suggested that through "dialogues" (as cited in Woolfolk, 2004, p. 45), learners communicate and interact with others to learn the cultural values of a particular group or society. Vygotsky also believed that these learning experiences occur within cultural settings and must be examined within these cultural settings. Through his sociocultural theory, Vygotsky believed that culture helps to shape cognition.

Vygotsky (1978) also stressed that language learning is an active rather than a static process, positing that language learners do not learn passively by absorbing information disseminated from and by the teacher. Rather, students are active learners, creating and constructing meaning as they interact and transact with the different texts (Rosenblatt, 2004). McLaughlin & McLeod (1996) added that “from a sociocultural perspective, schooling is a socially constructed process where meaning is negotiated through interaction” (p. 1). As learning occurs, students create new identities for themselves within that context (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which may involve repeated engagements and experiences within practices and activities with more competent members of the group (Hall, 1993).

The social aspect of the sociocultural theory signifies interaction and participation. For newcomer ELs, their learning is rooted in their participation in organized talk, interaction, structured frameworks, and configured discourse tasks, which assist them with creating their identities and becoming competent members of their new learning communities (Mondada & Doehler, 2004). The human relationships that learners develop are at the heart of schooling, and the interactions between students and teachers and among students are more central to student success than any teaching or instructional methods (Cummins, 2001).

Vygotsky (1978) also posited that learners’ development is contingent upon interaction with others and the “tools” (McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996) of a culture. These tools are anything that the culture provides, including language, writing, and number systems, to help learners to develop and form their personal view of the world. These cultural tools are shared and passed from one learner to another in three ways as they

interact (Tomasello, Kruger, & Ratner, 1993). The first way, initiative learning, occurs when one person mimics, imitates, or copies another. The second, instructed learning, required that learners remember the instructions of the teacher or facilitator and then use these directions to regulate their behavior. The third way that tools are shared is through collaborative learning. During collaborative learning, groups of learners who strive to understand each other work together to learn a specific skill.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory also focuses on the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the difference between the "actual development level" (Vygotsky, p. 86) and the potential level of development that can be facilitated with scaffolding or assistance from an instructor or collaboration with more capable peers. As learners moved through the ZPD, they became more socialized in the dominant culture and begin to develop cognitive skills. Vygotsky compared this zone to "buds" or "flowers" of development rather than the "fruits" of development (p. 86), which referred to what learners could actually perform. Vygotsky theorized that the ZPD consisted of two features: scaffolding and subjectivity. Scaffolding is the support or assistance given to learners to facilitate learning. Subjectivity describes how two individuals or learners with dissimilar understandings arrive at a mutual understanding. They may begin a task with dissimilar understandings; however, through interaction, they eventually develop the same understanding.

Learning is more than the cognitive process of acquiring academic skills and knowledge. It first involves the learners becoming socialized to each learning environment or community. After the learners have learned the various patterns in environments, they can become more active participants in the academic learning

process. Examining EL newcomers through the lens of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory was key to understanding how they learn to socially situate themselves in their new learning environment. Through their interactions with their colleagues, ELs demonstrate their different perceptions of school, their expectations from school, and their attitudes about school.

SLA Theory

Understanding how EL newcomers acquire their new language can improve the ability of mainstream teachers to serve the culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms (Fillmore & Snow, 2000). According to Ellis (2002), SLA theories describe and explain learners' linguistic abilities. These theories, models, or hypotheses (Littlewood, 2006, p. 514) provide a global explanation for the learners' capacities to learn a second language. SLA theories can be classified as two relatively broad categories: theories that begin with the cognitive processes that motivate second language learning and theories that begin with the context of learning. Cognition-oriented theories suggest that language learning occurs as the result of innate mechanisms that exist specifically for the purpose of supporting language learning (Littlewood). The creative construction hypothesis, input hypothesis, universal grammar hypothesis, and cognitive skill learning model are categorized as cognition-oriented theories. In this section, I will provide a brief overview of each theory, hypothesis, or model.

In the 1970s and 1980s, theorists (Dulay & Burt, 1973; Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982) explained learners' second language development as a process of creative construction that occurs as the result of learners' exposure to the second language and as the result of innate cognitive strategies. The creative construction hypothesis viewed

language development as having an underlying system that could be described along a continuum. Learners construct their own grammar, called interlanguage (Selinker, 1972), as they develop along the continuum and a transitional competence (Corder, 1967) as they develop in the direction of the target language (Littlewood, 2006).

Krashen (1982) explained language learning in a more comprehensive theory through the input hypothesis, which distinguishes between learning and acquisition. Learning is a conscious effort that may occur through instruction or error construction, whereas acquisition is a subconscious act and guided by the learners' innate mechanisms (Littlewood, 2006). Krashen suggested that learners improve and progress in their second language development when they receive comprehensible input beyond their current level of linguistic competence, that is, input plus one ($i+1$).

Another cognition-oriented theory, the universal grammar hypothesis, suggests that learners develop a sophisticated knowledge of grammar rules and application (Nadeau & Kafatos, 2001). Chomsky (1965) argued that if this knowledge were solely a result of learning, it would be almost impossible for learners to acquire language without an extensive "trial and error experience and explicit feedback" (as cited in Nadeau & Kafatos, p. 131). However, because learners develop this knowledge easily without explicit instruction, Chomsky suggested that a universal ability to communicate must be innate to all humans. However, Chomsky's proposals are problematic in two ways. If the functional distinctions in language universals were encoded on a "genetic template" (Nadeau & Kafatos, p. 131), they would all be present in all human brains in the same way. In addition, all language systems would be highly constrained and similar in the structural complexity. Another issue involving Chomsky's proposals is that the highly

distributed nature of language processing in learners' brains makes it very unlikely that this grammar can be traced to one neurological source.

The creative construction hypothesis, input hypothesis, and the universal grammar hypothesis consider language learning a unique form of learning that requires an explanation itself. However, many researchers have not accepted this view (Nadeau & Kafatos, 2001). Instead, they have argued that the general principles of cognitive psychology adequately explain second language learning concepts (Johnson, 1996). This model views second language learning as a somewhat less complicated process than other models, such as the creative construction, input, and universal grammar hypotheses, which view language learning as following a natural sequence because of innate mechanisms that are activated by input from the environment. However, both models appear to capture salient aspects of the language learning experience.

The second category of SLA theories, context-oriented theories, suggests that language learning occurs as the result of external context and the ways it facilitates the process of learning (Littlewood, 2006). The interaction hypothesis, output hypothesis, scaffolding hypothesis, acculturation model and social identity theory are categorized as context-oriented theories.

The interaction hypothesis (Littlewood, 2006) stresses that although comprehensible input makes learning possible, the conditions that facilitate comprehensible also must be considered. When language learners experience opportunities for social interaction, they can negotiate the meaning of language, request for clarification of words and phrases, and check for comprehension, all of which provide opportunities for comprehensible input. Research has shown that increased opportunities

for interaction and negotiation lead to increased comprehension. Researchers (Cummins, 2007; Echevarria & Graves, 2006) also have studied the types of classroom interaction activities that lead to the negotiation of meaning.

Unlike the input hypothesis described earlier as a cognition-oriented theory, the output hypothesis is a context-oriented theory. The output hypothesis argues that comprehensible input is not sufficient for language learning and that output plays a major role in language acquisition (Littlewood, 2006). For learners to learn the target language successfully, they must speak and write because this forces them to attend to the different aspects of grammar and notice the gaps in their linguistic knowledge. The input hypothesis further suggests that learners need opportunities to negotiate meaning and receive feedback on their language usage to progress in the target language.

In the scaffolding hypothesis, social interaction provides the means by which language learning occurs. Based on the work of Vygotsky (1978), the scaffolding hypothesis suggests that social interaction is the most important stimulus for all learning (Littlewood, 2006). Vygotsky believed that there is a ZPD in which learners cannot perform independently, but can perform with the assistance of an expert (e.g., teacher, peer tutor, etc.) and with scaffolding. Scaffolding describes the support that learners receive to enable them to perform within the ZPD. “The expectation is that what is currently possible through scaffolding will later become possible without it” (p. 519). Researchers (e.g., Lantolf, 2000) have suggested that learners who help each other during social interaction produce more language together than they do apart or alone.

Although the interaction hypothesis and the scaffolding hypothesis explain the immediate context within which social interaction takes place, other theories extend the

perspective to a wider sociopolitical context of learning (Littlewood, 2006). The acculturation model and the social identity theory are concerned with immigrants' experiences in their new country. In his acculturation model, Schumann (1978) held that language learning involves a process of acculturation and is dependent upon the "degree of social and psychological distance that learners perceive between themselves and the speakers of the target language" (as cited in Littlewood, p. 520). The social identity model (Norton, 2000) is founded upon the influences that link language and identity: Language is one way by which identity is constructed, and identity affects the ways in which we use language.

Many elements and processes take place within a wider social and sociopolitical context that explains second language learning. Many theories have been offered by researchers to explain the cognitive and contextual basis for second language learning. However, no theory exists that has satisfactorily integrated the cognitive and contextual bases of second language learning. Furthermore, it is questionable to attempt to develop such a theory because language learning is such a complex process that is all but impossible to explain with a single monolithic theory.

Investment, Identity, and Imagined Communities

Examining learners' investment in the target language better explains their success or failure in learning the language (Norton, 2002). Norton (1997) did not support classifying learners as either motivated or unmotivated, arguing that assigning these static identities becomes the learners' permanent character traits. Describing learners as motivated or unmotivated also implied that the learners are solely to blame for not learning rather than there being another more comprehensive reason for their lack of

motivation. Norton (1997) suggested that many educators believe that if only students were motivated, they would be better students. However, she contended that this notion does not capture the total student identity because in some settings, students may appear to be motivated, whereas in other settings, they may not. This seeming difference in learners' attitudes demonstrates that much more is involved in learners' decisions to participate in academic or social activities. This phenomenon cannot be reduced to simply describing students as motivated or unmotivated. Categorically labeling students as apparently lacking motivation "fails to do justice to the complexity of a student's life, history, and desires" (Norton 1997, p. 411).

Learners' investment, or lack thereof, toward the target language better explains this phenomenon. Norton (1997) defined investment as the "socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (p. 411). When learners invest in target language learning practices, they demonstrate their desire for a wider range of identities and an expanded set of possibilities in the future as a member of that target language community, thus investing in a desired identity. Norton argued that investment is not a fixed personality trait, but rather an active sociological construct that captures the ever-changing relationship of the learner and the social world. Norton challenged educators to question learners' investment in the language practices in a community rather than label them motivated or unmotivated learners.

Lave (1996) and Lave and Wenger (1996) discussed learners' attitudes toward the target language and how this affects language learning. However, Norton (1997) posited that language learners' investment in language practices within a community is

associated with more than their past and present experiences, which often is their teachers' primary focus. Norton suggested that learners' hopes and desires for the future also are important and that educators should incorporate those hopes and desires for the future into language learning practices. Many learners want to be part of a community not only of the present but also of the future. They either envision or fail to envision themselves as part of the future or an imagined community. Learners' investments in their imagined communities are investments in imagined identities. In order for teachers to engage with these students, they need to understand how questions of identity and investment are integrated into classroom practices.

As learners enter classroom settings with their own experiences and personal histories (Moll, 1993), they begin to position themselves in comparison to the various texts and language practices within the classroom. However, Norton (2002) contended that depending on the language practices within a given setting, learners may not become fully invested in the learning community.

Norton (1997) explained that language learning and identity are tightly interwoven. ELs are acquiring a new language and forming new social identities. Norton defined learner identity as "how they [learners] 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). As language learners engage in conversation, they are not only exchanging information with whom they speak but also organizing and reorganizing who they are and how they relate to the social world by constructing and negotiating their identities (Norton, 1997). For different cultural and linguistic groups, this construction and negotiation may vary because of linguistic and cultural experiences

(Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995b). Language learners may ask themselves, often subconsciously, under what conditions can they speak, how will their utterances be received, or how relevant are their histories and experiences to this interaction? Language learners' perceptions of themselves, their histories, and their desires for the future determine what they speak about, to whom they speak, and why they speak. This multifaceted issue becomes more complex when there is a greater power difference between the language learner and the listener.

Conclusion

After considering the existing data related to ELs' and Spanish-speaking students' graduation and academic performance, it was imperative to investigate these issues. The aim of this study was to document the extent to which Spanish-speaking middle-school newcomers' overall perceptions about school, expectations from school, attitudes toward school, and investments in the learning environment exist during their first 5 months of school in the newcomer programs in their schools. Newcomers' perceptions, expectations, attitudes, and investments were examined through the lens of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which states that sociocultural factors affect learning. Ellis's (2002) and Krashen's SLA theories will be used to analyze data. Also, Norton's (1997) theory of investment, identity, and imagined communities, which states that rather than classify learner as either motivated or unmotivated, they must be invested in their learning community as they create their new identities and envision themselves in their imagined communities, was used to analyze newcomers' perceptions, expectations, attitudes, and investments. These theories provided the foundation upon which the data

from this study was analyzed and discussed. Chapter 2 presents additional relevant literature related to newcomer and EL learning.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

In chapter 1, the statistics surrounding the Spanish-speaking immigrants' high school completion and the importance of examining middle-school Spanish-speaking EL newcomers' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes were explained. The theoretical assumptions guiding this project also were presented. Chapter 2 introduces and presents relevant literature about this phenomenon. The chapter concludes with a summary of the relevant literature.

Sociocultural factors, the stages of language acquisition, and learner investments are significant factors in learners' educational success or failure (Garcia, 1992; Norton, 2001; Stubbs, 2002). Linguistically diverse learners enter school at various ages, with various first-language literacy levels, with various previous learning experiences, and at various learning stages. These learners do not enter the classroom as blank slates; rather, their linguistic, personal, emotional, and academic histories accompany them when they enter American schools for the first time (Fairbanks & Broughton, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 1997).

By the time newcomer middle school students enter U.S. schools, they have already developed certain levels of literacy and communication skills in their native language (at times even a second language). At the same time, many teachers assume that these first-language literacy and communication skills automatically translate into academic success in the second language, which is not necessarily true for all students.

Variables other than knowledge of grammar, reading, or writing skills are necessary to ensure school success. Newcomers' academics histories, as well as their personal beliefs and attitudes, work together to facilitate learning the new language and succeeding in school (Hymes, 1972).

Non-English-speaking newcomers' success in U.S. schools is dependent on their ability to learn and adapt to the new learning environment and bridge their language learning experiences to those of English. These students experience changes in their academic and social identities as they become acclimated to the new educational, linguistic, and cultural setting (Peirce, 1995). Their ability to understand and communicate in the new language is crucial for academic success (Clément & Gardner, 2001).

Often, teachers assume that students are learning and following the somewhat predictable stages of language development. However, unless students grasp the sociocultural language norms, find strategies to negotiate meaning, and develop a pragmatic competence in the new language (Hymes, 1972), they will not succeed in learning to read, write, and speak socially appropriate English (Canale & Swaine, 1980). Rather than becoming recipients of and participants in the U.S. educational system, some Spanish-speaking newcomers have become victims of it (NAEP, as cited in USDOE, 2007), failing to graduate high school.

Within the body of research focusing on the abilities of newcomer ELs to become acculturated to their new learning environments, several key areas of studies emerged and are discussed in this chapter in the following order:

- Adolescence as a Life Stage

- Newcomers Acculturating
- Learner Perceptions, Expectations, and Attitudes Affect Learning
- Classroom Communities Impact Learning
- Conceptualized Language Learning in the Classroom
- Newcomers Move from Nonparticipation toward Participation in the Classroom
- Contemporary Deficit Thinking
- Creating and Negotiating Identities

Following the review of literature in these eight areas, a brief conclusion summarizes this chapter.

Adolescence as a Life Stage

Transitions are almost always a difficult time in life. Although immigrant adolescents experience many stresses and challenges, not all are attributed to the immigration from one country to another. The stresses and challenges associated with cultural adaptation are often compounded by the transition from childhood to adolescence. Because the focus of my study was on middle school (i.e., adolescent) students, it is important now to provide a theoretical and pedagogical background for the literature and studies involving adolescent participants that I present and discuss. In this section, I present a brief overview of prevailing theories surrounding adolescence.

Adolescence is a crucial time period between childhood and adulthood when children learn and unlearn various attitudinal and behavioral patterns acquired in childhood (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006; Muuss, 1996; Seidman, Lambert, Allen, & Aber, 2003). Benedict (1934) described adolescence as a time when a tremendous amount of unlearning, reorganization, and new learning takes place. Children

are undergoing biological changes associated with puberty, which can add further stress and challenges. Children undergo tremendous changes as they transition from childhood adulthood. Middle school classrooms are often the stages where many of these changes play out.

Bucholtz's (2002) discussion of the adolescence stage included Western psychologists' description of this stage as a biological and physiological development as youths develop into adults. She described adolescence as "a time of potential crisis brought on by the uncertainties of the physical and social transitions between life stages" (p. 528). This time also can cause difficulties for students who experience shifts or changes in culture.

Hamburg and Takanishi (1989) discussed the critical transition of adolescence. They suggested that during this time, there is a disjunction between biological and social development because although adolescents' bodies may be maturing, the brain does not reach full maturity until near the end of adolescence. During adolescence, these young individuals may be confused about adopting adult roles and have difficulty foreseeing the future. Adolescents also may experience an erosion of family and social support networks. It is also during this time that adolescents have greater access to potentially life-threatening activities such as unprotected sex, drugs, smoking, vehicles, weapons, and other activities that may appear to be casual, recreational, and relaxing, not realizing that the effects could endanger them or others. Hamburg and Takanishi also suggested that individuals adopt self-damaging behavioral patterns during adolescence when that could negatively affect their futures.

This brief summary does not cover the complete scope of theory and pedagogy of the adolescent life stage. However, it is important that the reader understand that the literature and data presented here be understood within the existing body of knowledge regarding the adolescent stage of life. Because adolescence is such a critical life stage, it was important that I present some of the prevailing theories and thoughts regarding this stage. For adolescent ELs, this time is even more crucially formative. In addition to language and cultural differences, they also must contend with the biological and physiological changes and crises associated with adolescence. In the following section, I will discuss how EL middle school newcomers begin the acculturation process during the adolescent stage.

Acculturation for Newcomers

As newcomers begin their lives in a new land, they are faced with a new culture and language. Often, newcomers enroll in language or orientation classes as a way to learn the new culture and language. The role of language in acculturation was explored extensively by Schumann (1978; 1986; 1990) in his acculturation model. In his theory of acculturation, Schumann, (1978) suggested that language learners will succeed in learning the target language only to the extent to which they acculturate themselves to the target language group. Conversely, less interaction with the target culture results in less language acquisition and use. Berry (1980), building on Schumann's (1978) definition, described acculturation as the process by which culturally diverse groups adjust to one another. Berry (2003) further defined acculturation as the multidimensional process of adapting to a culture as the result of changes in cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors that come from contact with culture.

Learners' level of acculturation is often expressed in terms of social distance and psychological distance (Barkhuizen, 2006). Newcomers experience psychological acculturation, that is, the internal changes that immigrants experience when they come into direct contact with members of the host culture as they adjust to their new country (Padilla & Perez, 2003).

Several theories have been proposed to explain the process by which newcomers become acculturated and incorporated into the mainstream host culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). In 1914, Park (as cited in Persons, 1987) suggested a three-stage model (contact, accommodation, and assimilation) that describes how people from different cultures seek to become acculturated into the new culture. According to Park, as different cultural groups interact, they seek ways to accommodate each other and minimize conflict. The essential element focuses on newcomers learning the dominant culture of the United States. However, Teske and Nelson (1974) presented their psychological perspective on acculturation, which included changes in behaviors, norms, institutional changes, and personal values. However they failed to further their psychological analysis of how members of diverse cultures accommodate to one another (Padilla & Perez, 2003).

Berry (1980, 1997) expanded on this view of acculturation to include two distinct dimensions of adaptation: the extent to which minority cultures desire to maintain their original culture and the extent to which minority cultures wish to have contact with and participate in the host culture. Berry suggested that combinations of these dimensions result in four strategies: integration, assimilation, separation (rejection), and marginalization (deculturalization). Berry's model is important because it recognizes the importance of multicultural societies, that individuals have a choice in whether or how

much to become acculturated, and that individuals can reverse the acculturation process (Padilla & Perez, 2003).

Although the acculturation theory has been generally accepted by researchers, there are two potential problems (Greenland & Brown, 2005). Primarily, although some researchers (e.g., Berry & Kim, 1988) have emphasized acculturation as a process, other researchers (e.g., Liebkind, 2001) have contended that the various aspects and components of acculturation may vary over time, thus making it difficult to define acculturation as a process. Another criticism of the acculturation theory is that it does not explore the relationship between acculturation and other sociocultural dynamics such as prejudice. Yet other researchers have presented findings that acculturation has no relationship to academic performance (Moscicki, Lock, Rae, & Boyd, 1989).

Trickett and Birman (2005) used a differentiated model of acculturation to assess the relationship styles to school adaptation among a group of 110 refugee adolescents from the former Soviet Union. Study participants' acculturation was examined with respect to both American and Russian cultures and within each culture in the areas of language competence, behavior, and identity. The participants' school adaptation was determined by examining their academic performance, overall behavior, and sense of belonging as part of the school community. Using questionnaires, Trickett and Birman found that the different patterns of overall American and Russian acculturation were associated with different school outcomes. The results also indicated that language competence, behavior, and identity varied based on the participants' cultures. In general, higher levels of American acculturation better predicted school adaptation.

The results also suggested that conceptualizing acculturation as a multifaceted concept regarding culture, origin, or culture of resettlement. Although Trickett and Birman (2005) attempted to explain school adaptation among refugees, they failed to consider the key factors that may affect refugee adolescents' abilities to assimilate, such as previous learning experiences, life experiences, and the circumstances of their arrival in their new country. Depending on the circumstances, refugee adolescents may or may not successfully acculturate into a new society. The researchers also failed to consider the disparity between the two languages, which could have influenced the participants' abilities to acculturate to certain levels.

When many immigrants begin school in the United States, the demographics, which may have been relatively homogeneous in terms of culture, language, religion, and gender, often are quite different from their previous schools. Hispanic students' acculturation to a predominantly Black high school was the subject of the research by Hughes, Hollander, and Martinez (2009). Using 61 open-ended questions during interviews and observations, the researchers studied the ways in which 16 Hispanic students acclimated to a predominantly Black high school in the southeast region in the United States. The researchers found that the participants displayed various levels of acculturation to the various ethnic groups. Half of the participants acculturated and affiliated themselves with the dominant U.S. culture, but the other 8 participants did not acculturate to the dominant U.S. culture in the predominantly Black high school.

Using Berry's (1980, 1997) model of acculturation, Hughes et al. (2009) described the participants' adaptation to the new culture as assimilation, separation, integration, or marginalization. Hughes et al. sought to measure the degree to which a

sample of Hispanic high school students acculturated to a predominantly Black high school. Although the researchers did provide data to show to what degree the participants acculturated, they failed to describe how the participants acculturated or why they acculturated to certain groups in the high school. Another point to consider is that although 16 participants were included in the study, only 6 of the participants were female, which could have biased the results. The researchers failed to acknowledge that this could have been a limitation of the study.

LeCroy and Krysik (2008) investigated the extent to which school attachment and adjustment predicted academic success among Hispanic 170 adolescents in Grades 7 and 8 and whether the associations between these factors were similar for Hispanic and White adolescents. Using a self-report questionnaire during a 50-minute period, the researchers gathered data on the participants' socioeconomic status, linguistic acculturation, school attachment, school involvement, expectancy for education, peer characteristics, parental support and grade point average (GPA). Although the data yielded many results, the results regarding Hispanic participants showed a correlation between GPA and school attachment, peer affiliation, and supportive family relationships.

LeCroy and Krysik (2008) also found a correlation between school attachment and peer affiliation/supportive family relationship, but they failed to clearly define the causes of school attachment, types of peer affiliations, and how the families demonstrated their support of the participants. During the discussion of the theoretical framework, the researchers explained the influence of generational status (first, second, or third generation, or U.S. born) on acculturation. Again, the researchers failed to consider the generational status of the Hispanic participants' acculturation.

Newcomers' adjustment and acculturation can vary depending on their gender. In her 5-year longitudinal study, Qin-Hilliard (2003) questioned 411 recently arrived adolescent immigrant students from Central America, China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico. She collected student report cards; conducted interviews; collected behavioral checklists completed by the participants' teachers to examine the participants' grades, future aspirations, attitudes toward school, time spent on homework; and gathered the teachers' perceptions of student engagement, perceived support at school, peer influences, school safety, parental expectations and control, and ethnic identity to determine the participants' ability to adapt. An analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data showed that over time, the immigrant girls earned higher grades and expressed higher future expectations than the male participants. The girls also were more likely to be protected from risk factors and supported by a network of friends, family, and teachers. Qin-Hilliard presented her findings specific to the different ethnic groups that participated in this study. She successfully grounded her research in theory; provided a rationale for her research; collected and presented qualitative and quantitative data to support her findings; and included a discussion and implication for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers working with immigrant populations.

In their study of 275 middle and high school Latino students, E. Y. Valencia and Johnson (2006) investigated the students' perceptions, level of acculturation, and academic aspirations. They also sought to determine whether these factors varied by acculturation level and gender. The participants ranged in age from 11 to 20. Most participants were born in Mexico, and their length of time in the United States ranged from 2 to 18 years. Using a 22-item self-report bilingual questionnaire, the participants

provided information about their perceptions of needs and barriers, level of school involvement, level of perceived support, and future life goals and academic aspirations. The participants' levels of acculturation were measured by combining language preference and years of residence in the United States.

E. Y. Valencia and Johnson (2006) found that the low-acculturated student more often reported language-related problems as barriers to school involvement and perceived discrimination. They also found that high acculturation allowed some students to feel a greater sense of belonging to their community and experiencing fewer barriers, including perceived discrimination. The higher acculturated participants more frequently desired to attend a college or university. Although the researchers claimed that gender influenced all of the factors presented, that is, perceptions, acculturation, and academic aspirations, an analysis of the gender-based data was not presented. In addition, because the data were self-reported, there was no information to verify the participants' actual academic performance.

In her study of Latino students in a predominantly White high school, Marx (2008) explored the cultural and linguistic dynamics of 50 Latino students, who comprised 5% of the school's student population. Using a 23-question survey and a questionnaire of 8 open-ended items, Marx collected information from the participants about their feelings of being welcome at the school. Although Marx provided bilingual surveys, all of the participants chose to answer in English. The data showed that these Latino students were not happy with their school experiences because of a lack of connection with their teachers and administrators, and a lack of outreach by the school to connect to their homes and cultures. Marx presented data related to the general

participant sample, but she failed to disaggregate these data in terms of gender, country of origin (or participants' families' countries of origin), generational status, and English language proficiency level, all of which could have influenced the interpretation of the results.

Newcomer immigrants' ability to successfully adjust or acculturate to the new culture is crucial. Berry (1980) and Schumann (1978, 1986) suggested that newcomers will succeed in learning the language of the host culture only to the extent to which they acculturate themselves in the language of the host culture. Through data collection and analysis, the studies presented in this discussion supported these researchers' theories of acculturation. Although acculturation affects language learning, it is not the sole predictor of successful language learning. The learners' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes also affect learning.

Learner Perceptions, Expectations, and Attitudes Affect Learning

Learning in an EL classroom was based not solely on curriculum and teaching methods. Learners' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes also were key components in the learning process. "Learner views of learning cannot be ignored, in particular, when there is a mismatch between teacher beliefs and learner beliefs" (Savignon & Wang, 2003, p. 225). Researchers must examine these factors if teachers are to succeed in providing the most appropriate learning environment for ELs.

Newcomers' perceptions of school played a powerful role in their perceptions of their new school environment. In this paper, perceptions refer to the interpretation of stimuli that may be influenced by mental/emotional state, experience, knowledge, motivations, and other factors (Slavin, 1988). Learners' expectations of school have been

the subject of much research. Biddle (1979) used his role theory to assert that learners enter school with certain beliefs (Biddle, 1986) from which expectations are derived about the school and the learning environment. Biddle (1986) defined learner expectations as “subject held or emitted statements that express a modal reaction about characteristics of [subject or] object persons” (p. 132); in the case of this study, it means that the learners expected the school to perform certain functions.

Baker (1992) defined an attitude as a “hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behavior” (p. 10). Baker suggested that attitudes are inferred from the direction of external behavior and that “language attitudes may be constructed through the inspection of one’s own actions” (p. 11). Therefore, attitudes are a convenient way to explain and predict behavior patterns. Baker also explained that language attitudes have been examined from various pedagogical and social points of view. The pedagogical aspects included factors that may affect second language learning and second language proficiency.

Language preference, reasons for learning a language, if the speaker has integrative or instrumental motivation to learn a second language, language teaching, and classroom processes in language lessons. The social aspects include language groups and communities, and the parents’ language attitudes. (Baker, p. 23)

There have been numerous discussions (Blumer, 1955; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Gardner, 1985) on the narrow definitions of attitudes. However, in my study, attitudes were considered in a broad sociocultural context to better comprehend their link to students’ language learning (Butler & Gutierrez, 2003).

Clément and Gardner (2001) further emphasized the importance of attitude and motivation by categorizing these variables as cognitive characteristics, attitude and motivation, and personality variables. The cognitive characteristics included language

learning aptitude and language-learning strategies used by students. The attitudes and motivation characteristics included such affective measures as the learners' attitude toward other language groups and the learning situation, as well as the learners' motivation. The personality variables included such personality characteristics as associability, extraversion, empathy, field dependence/independence, anxiety, and linguistic self-confidence. Clément and Gardner stressed that these three categories affected the level of proficiency and the period in which students can learn another language. Using Clément and Gardner's definition as a foundation, attitudes in this study referred to the newcomers' feelings toward the teachers, the learning environment, or the class itself.

Learners' attitudes can affect their willingness to communicate in another language. Yashima, Zenuke-Nishide, and Shimizu (2004) found that learners' attitudes can affect learning. Using two sets of questionnaires, they investigated the variables that affected Japanese learners' willingness to communicate in English. The first set of questionnaires included 166 participants, and the second set of questionnaires included 60 participants. The study focused on the learners' initial 3-week period of enrollment in an intensive English course. During both sets of questionnaires, the participants ranged from ages 15 to 17.

The first investigation included 150 females and 16 males (Yashima et al., 2004). The second investigation included 17 males and 43 females. In this quantitative study with ELs, the researchers found that the learners who had more positive attitudes toward English language learning and who envisioned themselves as English speakers tended to be more motivated to study English and become more fluent in the language. They also

found that the participants communicated more when they had positive relationships with the teachers, co-learners, and hosts within their learning environment. Although Yashima et al. presented data to support their findings, the data were not sufficiently analyzed to consider the findings related to the participants' gender differences.

Learners' attitudes toward classroom practices and perceptions about English language learning in general were the focus of Savignon and Wang's (2003) study of Taiwanese high school students learning English. In their responses to a questionnaire, 174 students expressed their attitudes about learning English. The researchers concluded that the students' attitudes about their teachers' instructional practices affected their English language learning.

In her study of middle school second language learners, Mantle-Bromley (1995) found that the learners' attitudes affected SLA. The sample included 114 language learners. Middle school students in 12 classes of a foreign language exploratory program participated in a study attempting to maintain and/or improve students' attitudes toward French and Spanish speakers. The students participated in culture-related lessons that implemented attitude-change theory in their design. Over a 9-week period, Mantle-Bromley conducted interviews, observed classes, and collected open-ended questionnaires. Her research questions related to the affective component of attitudes.

Mantle-Bromley (1995) found that many young students enter their first language class with many misconceptions about language learning that may hinder their progress and diligence in language study. She also found that the learners' attitudes could be directed toward the teacher, the class, speakers of the target language, and the culture of the target language. This study focused on native English speakers' language learning

experiences, which may be very different from immigrants' language learning experiences in an English-speaking classroom. Immigrants also experience many acculturation factors that may influence their language learning. This study demonstrated that learners' attitudes can be changed depending on their language learning experiences with the target language.

Immigrants' ability to successfully learn the target language relies on more than instructors teaching the chosen curriculum. Learners' perceptions of the target language and learning environment, expectations from the learning environment, and attitudes toward the target language and learning environment play a crucial role. Savignon and Wang (2003) stressed that the learners' views cannot be ignored. Biddle (1986) suggested that learners enter learning environments with predetermined expectations. Clément and Gardner (2001) emphasized the importance of learners' attitude and motivation. Other researchers (Yashima et al., 2004; Savignon & Wang; Mantle-Bromley, 1995) have found similar results.

Classroom Communities Impact Learning

Although many educators typically focus solely on the cognitive and academic development of students, researchers (Collier, 1995; Thomas & Collier, 1997) have understood the saliency of social and cultural processes with language learning because social and academic skills develop simultaneously during learning. In their prism model (see Figure 1) for language acquisition for newcomers, Thomas and Collier proposed that four major components (i.e., sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive processes) were necessary to acquire a second language in the school context.

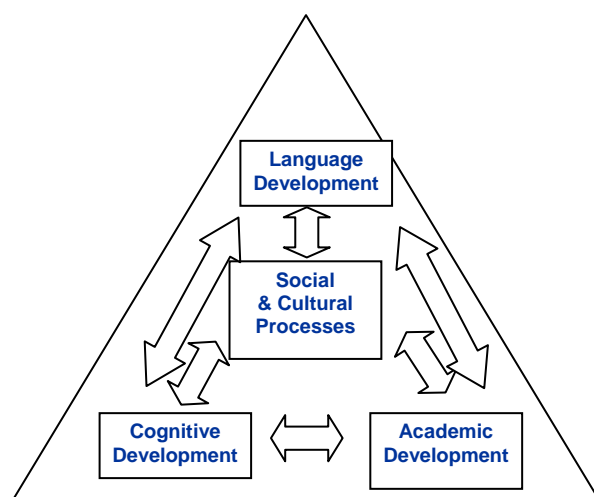


Figure 1. Prism model of language acquisition.

Note. Copyright, V. P. Collier, 1994.

Although the prism model was comprised of four components, the sociocultural component was central to ELs' language acquisition. These sociocultural processes included everyday life experiences from their past, present, and future, and in all contexts, be it home or school. Sociocultural factors can strongly influence newcomer ELs' responses to the new language, affecting the process positively only when the students are in a socioculturally supportive environment.

Cummins (2001) suggested that language does not occur in isolation, contending that human relationships are at the heart of schooling. The interactions between teachers and learners and among learners are more central to student success than any method for teaching literacy or any other content area. Cummins stated, "Human relationships are at the heart of schooling . . . powerful relationships are established between teachers and students, these relationships can frequently transcend the economic and social disadvantages that afflict communities" (p. 1).

These human relationships, which form the basis of classroom communities, impact learning. Learning is situated in activity, context, and culture (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that vary from classroom to classroom, creating a positive or a negative educational experience. Classroom communities can embrace and propel these language learners toward language proficiency, or they can create an atmosphere where the learners become marginalized (Bruner, 1986), thus reinforcing cultural and social class differences (Bowles & Gintis, 1977). Classroom communities also “legitimate and reproduce certain forms of knowledge, ways of speaking, and ways of relating to the world that capitalize on the familiarity and skills” (Bourdieu, 1979, as cited in Valdés, 2001, p. 16).

Valdés (2001) reported on the challenges and realities of classroom communities of four ELs (Lilian, Elisa, Manolo, and Bernardo). Valdés’s ethnographic study examined how these learners struggled to learn English while maintaining their dignity within the classroom community. Within classrooms at Garden Middle School, they questioned, negotiated, and created new identities based on the culture and context of their learning environments. Valdés noted the various ways that the students were excluded from participation in the learning communities. Valdés found that the classroom communities focused more on the learners’ limitations and did not provide them with an environment where they could advance their language learning.

Glimpses of the classroom communities of ELs in a small northern city struggling to educate Latina/o immigrants were visible in DeStigter’s (2001) ethnographic study. This 3-year qualitative study examined the lives of a small group of Latino students attending a predominantly White high school in a rural area of southeast Michigan.

Although these communities established the mission to “challenge each student to achieve academic excellence” (DeStigter, p. 69), they failed to accomplish this goal. Through his reflections, DeStigter revealed how these learning communities systematically created a culture of failure and low expectations for these students. He reported that the classroom communities failed to provide activities, contexts, and classroom communities which allowed appropriate cultures language learning to occur. DeStigter found that these learning communities practiced “structured exclusion” (p. 69), which systematically marginalized learners. This type of learning community failed to support the ELs’ language learning needs, thereby contributing to their failure to learn.

Fu (1995) investigated classroom communities. Her 1-year qualitative study described the classroom communities in a small New England town of four Laotian students (Tran, Paw, Cham, and Sy) as they learned English. Data were collected when Tran and Cham were in high school and when Paw and Sy were in junior high school (middle school). Throughout her research, Fu found that the learners’ classroom communities systematically denied them the opportunity to participate in organized classroom conversations and interaction. Their classroom communities also hampered their efforts to define their identities and become competent members of their learning communities (Mondada & Doehler, 2004). Fu described the discrepancy between what one learner (Tran) wanted to learn about and what the teachers assumed was outside his ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Within the classroom community, learners develop their perceptions of language use, bilingualism, and academic activities, all of which may affect academic performance. Butler and Gutierrez (2003) conducted interviews to investigate the

learning climates of Grade 4 students in an English-only school district in California to determine whether the learning climate affected the ELs' reading abilities. The participants were 67 Grade 4 students from a San Francisco Bay area school. The learning climate was the learners' perceptions of their own abilities and their perceptions of others about their abilities. Through 15- and 20-minute interviews with each participant, Butler and Gutierrez found that the stronger students had more positive perceptions than the weaker students about their own academic skills, their language mixing abilities, their parents' English proficiency, and the influence of their first language on their English reading. Although the researchers collected data through interviews, the participants were not interviewed in their first language. Interviewing the participants in their first language would have allowed them to more fully express their thoughts about their first language (L1) proficiency levels. In addition, the participants, all of whom were students in Grade 4, were asked to "self-evaluate their L1 proficiency" (Butler & Gutierrez, p. 176). Without any example or explanation of how the participants' were to self-evaluate their L1, it was difficult to assess the validity of the instrument used to gather data.

Other experiences of ELs' classroom communities were noted by Fairbanks and Broughton (2003), who investigated the experiences that constructed the classroom culture in one Grade 6 language arts classroom and the learners' negotiation and responses to their experience as class members. The 6 female participants were interviewed and observed during the study. The results showed that the classroom community limited the students to the "status quo by limiting the girls' educational experiences" (Fairbanks & Broughton, p. 422).

Second language use, membership, and social context are inextricably linked, according to a study of recently arrived immigrant students in Australian high schools. Miller's (2000) 18-month qualitative study focused on students as they transitioned from their newcomers' intensive ESL program to their mainstream integration in high school. Data from these case studies included videotaped focus groups, interviews, classroom and school observations, and student work samples and diaries. The students had spent 2 to 6 months in the English program. The heterogeneous group of 13 participants varied in ethnicity, language background, age, gender, and academic ability.

Miller (2000) found that the participants relied heavily on their first-language groups for social interactions at school. These students were influenced by the social practices around them. She also found that although the students had transitioned from the newcomers' program, their opportunities to use English decreased. Once they were in the high schools, the students discovered that they were neither heard nor understood by their mainstream peers.

Cushman (2003) brought forward the voices of 20 high school ELs with her qualitative research. Data were collected from a school in the San Francisco Bay area. Through interviews, Cushman sought the students' advice for teachers and the general public to create a culture of respect and success, motivate students, and build stronger student-teacher relationships. According to Cushman, the ELs felt that it is important for teachers to:

- Focus on the important thinking they do, not just the language mistakes they make.
- Share their goal to excel academically, not just get by.
- Make connections between academic content and students' own experiences.
- Provide students with real and important texts to read – but at a level they can handle.
- Help them understand the secrets of “book language.”
- Teach students to take risks in their new language.
- Provide alternative methods to present knowledge.
- Help students learn from each other.
- Allow them to use their own language as they figure things out. (p. 161)

Cushman successfully shared the voices of her study participants. She also successfully relayed the importance of listening to the voices of high school ELs.

The social context of school success for Latino middle school students was analyzed by Wooley et al. (2009). Utilizing the School Success Profile 220-question survey, the researchers assessed 37,354 middle school students across seven states. Of this data set, the 848 Latino participants' responses were evaluated as a subset. The Latino data subset included responses from Grade 6 (326), Grade 7 (326), and Grade 8 students (269). In terms of language, 753 respondents completed the survey in English and 95 in Spanish. Among the key findings, Wooley et al. found that the teacher-student relationship plays a pivotal role for Latino middle school students, a developmental period when early adolescents experience increased demands at school, decreased social support from adults in their lives, and an increasingly important peer culture that can be source of stress, as was noted by other theorists (Eccles et al., 1993; Wenz-Gross, Siperman, Untch, & Widaman, 1997).

Another finding from Wooley et al. (2009) focused on friends' support and friends' school behaviors as predictive of student behaviors, satisfaction with school, and academic performance. Although this study provided valuable insight on the value of the

teacher-student and student-student relationships, it had limitations. The study failed to consider the national origin or generation of the respondents. Wooley et al. used only multiple-choice questions and answers, instead of open-ended questions, which could potentially have limited the participants' responses. The instrument was administered in one setting. Although the researchers restricted the data set to respondents who answered at least 95% of the 220 items, I question the validity of the respondents' answers once fatigue and boredom set in.

The central theme in all of these studies was the classroom community and the students' lack of full and active participation in the learning process. These studies showed that classroom communities are the language learning centers for newcomers and that their experiences within these communities can influence their learning by fostering true language learning or stifling it.

Conceptualizing Language Learning in Classroom

Although perceptions, expectations, and attitudes affect learning, classroom discourse can also influence learning. There has been much research on the change in dynamics in the educational settings of ELs. Gee (2000) and other theorists (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Cadzen, 1988; Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Kress, 1985; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Street, 1984, 1995) commented on these new literacy studies that have addressed sociocultural pluralities, which stress that there are multiple literacies and many different ways of writing and reading, with each deeply rooted in specific sociocultural practices and each connected to a distinctive and political (power, status, etc.) (Gee, 2000) set of norms, values, and beliefs about language, literacy and identity.

DeStigter (2001), who examined norms, values, and beliefs about language learning, critically analyzed the discourse in English learners' classrooms. Through his analysis, DeStigter found that teachers, texts, and the school systematically have disempowered ELs. The norms, values, and beliefs about language, literacy, and identity were reflected in the Addison High School educational system. ELs were systematically squeezed out of the educational process, which had been guaranteed to them by so many legal precedents.

Another glimpse of discourses that occur in learning environments was provided by Valdés (1996, 1998, 2001), who focused on what Spanish-speaking students are learning, or not learning, in school environments, and the discourses that exist in these learning environments. Valdés (1998) found that the eagerness of these newly arrived youngsters soon dissipated into “vacant expressions” (p. 9) when the students who had looked so eagerly toward school in the United States became disappointed. She described the cultural conflict between the discourses of the class and the language/learning “funds of knowledge” (Moll, 1993) from home and community environments. These researchers recognized the impact of teacher talk, classroom conversation, and school curriculum on learners, especially language minority students. However, if teachers and educators are to be successful in educating the diverse population of public school students, they must recognize that cultural and linguistic diversity is the global norm.

The experiences of immigrant students in a public high school were the basis of Olsen's (1997) qualitative study. At Madison High, over 20% of the students were born in another country and over one third came from homes where English was not spoken. In this 2.5-year study, Olsen attended classes and interviewed teachers, administrators,

students, and parents. Olsen found that the school as a whole practiced structured exclusion in that ELs were routinely tracked academically into “skills classes (remedial classes)” (p. 192) and “regular” classes instead of the “honors” classes, where students participated in classes necessary for admission into 4-year university programs. Olsen also documented instances in the school culture where the participants were forced to relinquish their national identities and languages to be accepted in an academic and social world that eventually denied them full participation.

Cummins (2001) contended that it is crucial for educators to analyze critically the societal discourses that are “vying for their [students] allegiance” (p. 223). Cummins prompted educators to ask themselves the following questions: To what extent are different claims supported by verifiable data? Whose interests do these claims serve? What forms of instruction are in the best interests of children and serve the common good of our society? What kinds of knowledge, skills, and values will best serve students as they graduate into the 21st century? Is this the kind of education that I would want for my child? Cummins believed that teachers, as opposed to outside forces, were the key to successfully educating these diverse student populations.

Language learning in the classroom is influenced by many factors. Classroom discourse, institutional structures such as academic tracking, and the dynamics in the educational setting can affect whether ELs progress with their English language development.

Newcomers Move from Nonparticipation to Participation in the Classroom

Most EL newcomers enter U.S. classrooms with very low English language proficiency levels, which may limit their full participation in the academic and social

dialogues within the classroom. During the time of this study, the state had recently become a member of the World-Class Instruction Design and Assessment Consortium (WIDA, 2007), which provided assessment and guidance with the education of ELs. Based on research and theory, WIDA (see Table 1) described the continuum of SLA as based on six stages (1-Entering, 2-Beginning, 3-Developing, 4-Expanding, 5-Bridging, and 6-Reaching) of language development that describe ELs' abilities and expected performance at each stage. At the given level of English language proficiency, ELs will perform, process, understand, produce, or use the following:

Table 1. WIDA Performance Definitions

WIDA Performance Definitions					
The SLA process involves the gradual scaffolding from Entering toward Reaching					
Entering (1)	Beginning (2)	Developing (3)	Expanding (4)	Bridging (5)	Reaching (6)
- pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas - words, phrases or chunks of language when presented with one-stop command, directions, WH-, choice or yes/no questions, or statements with sensory, graphic or interactive support	- general language related to the content areas - phrases or short sentences - oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one to multiple-step commands, directions, questions, or a series of statements with sensory, graphic or interactive support	- general and some specific language of the content areas - expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs - oral or written language with phonological, syntactic or semantic errors that may impede the communication, but retain much of its meaning, when presented with oral or written, narrative or expository descriptions with sensory, graphic or interactive support	- specific and some technical language of the content areas - a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences or paragraphs - oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic or semantic errors that do not impede overall meaning of communication when presented with oral or written connected discourse with sensory, graphic or interactive support	- specialized or technical language of the content areas - a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays or reports - oral or written language approaching comparability to that of proficient English peers when presented with grade level material	- specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas at grade level - a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade level - oral or written communication in English comparable to proficient English peers

ELs are situating themselves during their first few weeks in their new learning communities. Based on the dynamics within this community, many learners choose to either participate or not participate in the language learning experience (Norton, 2001). Their participation in a community may be low at first because of feelings of marginalization or language barriers. Learning and the social situation in which it occurs, that is, situated learning, can determine whether learners will participate in the process (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As students begin to cross the language barrier, they move toward more participation in the community, thereby establishing a share in the community.

However, when considering the social arrangements within a community, these arrangements may facilitate or prevent members from engaging in full participation (Norton, 2001). Lave and Wenger (1991) suggested that for new members of the community to access full participation, they must have “access to a wide range of ongoing activities, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation” (p. 100). Access to these cultural resources is critical for ELs to become full participants in their learning communities. If they are denied access to these resources, they will ultimately fail to become part of the existing social arrangements, which may interfere with their learning (Moll, 2005).

The ways in which ELs were included in mainstream English-speaking classrooms and the ways in which ELs moved toward participation in an elementary classroom were researched by Da Silva Iddings (2005). Using observations, interviews, field notes, video and audio taping, the findings of this qualitative study suggested that ELs’ progress toward language proficiency is often complicated by unequal participation

in the classroom activities, vague or unclear purpose of instruction, and ambiguity in communication by classroom teachers. The researcher found that the existing conditions in the classroom created a disconnection between the participants in the classroom community, thus creating a divide in the shared knowledge among members of the class, which prevented the participants from moving toward full participation in the classroom. As a native Portuguese speaker and a former teacher, the researcher presented aspects of her life that could potentially influence the analysis and results of the study. The researcher then presented a substantial explanation of her analysis of the data. However, the researcher did not present a discussion of the data analysis with the same depth and breadth.

Becoming a part of this social arrangement may not be a reality for members of some communities. Wenger (1998) suggested that some learners are interacting with communities that they are *not* a part of. They have been marginalized and will never be accepted into these communities. According to Wenger, these students are “catching a peek into foreign chambers, glimpses of other realities and meanings” (p.165). Marginal learners are “people in difficulty who are reacting to unfavorable school conditions. They are young people making self-defeating efforts to form a stable connection between themselves and the educational setting” (Sinclair & Ghory, 1987, p. 181). As ELs becoming more adept at community practices, they increase their responsibility in the community and become more active participants (Norton, 2001).

Contemporary Deficit Thinking

Although legislation has been enacted to dissuade blatant discriminatory practices against ELs, such as segregating students by language proficiency and denying

appropriate services for ELs, these prevalent forms of thought still exist that hinder the potential of minority students within the educational system; it is contemporary deficit thinking (Trueba, 1989, 1991, 1997; R. Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). Valencia and Solórzano (1997) described contemporary deficit thinking as the belief that marginalized children, particularly language minority students, suffer from personal deficits that explain their failure for academic success. One view of contemporary deficit thinking identifies three factors that explain the educational state of minority learners: poverty, culture/language, or home environment. These kinds of deficit thinking draw attention away from the institutional factors contributing to ELs' marginalized state, blaming learners for preexisting situations that they did not create. Trueba (1997) asserted:

Even the most pedagogically advanced strategies are ineffective in the hands of educators who believe that ethnic, racial, and linguistic minority students are at best culturally disadvantaged and in need of fixing, or, at worst, culturally or genetically inferior, and consequently beyond help. (pp. 2-3)

Whether its rationale is poverty, culture and language, or home environment, the result is that contemporary deficit thinking ideology defrauds ELs and affects their education. The most imperceptible obstacle that ELS may face in their learning environments is stereotyping. Hughes (2003) introduced 2 high school ELs who described how they are typically stereotyped by teachers:

Teachers see students taking their classes; they stereotype them. By saying, 'OK, he's probably not going to graduate. He's probably not going to make it.' Because that is what they have experience at. But they do stereotype people. Basically it's, 'he's not going to be able to make it.' They're not really willing to help the students. Because of this belief that he will not make it. And I even had teachers who think its right to make him feel that way.

And my first day in it was an accelerated chemistry class. I was the first one to class. It was the first class of the day. The teacher walks in, looks at me, and walks out of the room and looks at the room number. Comes back in and asks me if I was aware that that was Chemistry 1X, rather than Chemistry 1. And I told

him yes, I was aware that this was Chemistry 1X. This is where I belong. And he kind of looked at me in disbelief and just shrugged and went into his office.
(p. 233)

In addition to overcoming the language barrier, some ELs also must overcome negative stereotypes, another factor that can affect learning. Often, ELs are categorized as at-risk students, suggesting that they have certain characteristics that stigmatize them (Waxman, Walker de Felix, Anderson, & Baptiste, 1992). However, caution must be taken when using such a broad term. Hughes (2003) examined whether 32 successful students of Mexican descent perceived themselves as marginalized learners. Through in-depth and extensive interviews, Hughes investigated the high school experiences of the participants. Hughes found that the students perceived that many of their teachers used stereotypes in regard to classroom structures and interactions. The students felt that many teachers were teaching to the stereotypes, often using previous experiences with students of Mexican descent to justify their actions with their present students. Lippi-Green (1997) suggested that stereotyping and discrimination arise from the social circumstances and identities attached to language use. This pattern of thinking could be described as contemporary deficit thinking. This form of thinking often leads to the creation of stereotypes and discrimination (Miller, 2000).

Edwards and Romero (2008) investigated the relationship among discrimination stress, coping strategies, and self-esteem among Mexican descent youth. Researchers describe discrimination as, “the daily hassles that occur because of the lower status of minority groups, including negative stereotypes or prejudiced comments, as well as negative actions toward individuals based on ethnic group membership” (p. 25). Seventy-three adolescents (11-15 years old) participated in a 78- question bilingual questionnaire

administered during the participants' hour-long health class and after school hours at local community centers. The sample size was split almost evenly between males (32, 44%) and females (40, 55%); 1 respondent failed to indicate his/her gender. Edwards and Romero investigated the participants' demographics, language preference, coping strategies, discrimination stress, and self-esteem. They found that the majority of participants reported discrimination experiences and high levels of stress. The immigrant participants reported more stressors and higher levels of stress than fourth generation or later participants. The participants who preferred to speak Spanish reported more discrimination stress than the English speakers did.

Edwards and Romero (2008) also reported that discrimination stress may be "compounded for youth who are immigrants and who predominantly speak Spanish" (p. 34-35). Although they used generational status (number of years in the country or generation in the country) as a factor in the results, they did not present the participants' generational status as part of the demographic information discussion within the report. Although the findings and implications seemed rational, there were no data presented to support the findings.

Brown and Souto-Manning (2008) also focused on deficit perspectives in their study of how deficit perspectives contribute to Latino students' failure in terms of school success. In this qualitative study, the researchers sought to understand how one family made sense of their school experiences in Puerto Rico and South Carolina. The researchers followed the Dominguez family for more than 6 months, and they observed, interviewed, and audio taped over 20 hours of recordings. The family had been in the United States for a year when the study began. Both parents were college educated in

Puerto Rico; Teresa was in Grade 3 (after completing 2 years of school in Puerto Rico where she had received mostly Spanish academic instruction), and Kevin was in Kindergarten and had never attended school in Puerto Rico. The researchers found that the parents were routinely influenced by the deficit messages received through media and the school as they celebrated their children's accelerated English language development to the loss of the native language proficiency.

Brown and Souto-Manning (2008) also found that the parents routinely faulted Puerto Rican schools for Teresa's low grades and the academic problems that she was experiencing in her school in South Carolina. The Dominguez family refused to attribute blame to Teresa's present school for her academic concerns. The researchers also found that both Teresa and Kevin were immersed in English-only environments, to the detriment of the first language, at school, which may have contributed to the family's deficit perspective of their children's language learning experiences in Puerto Rico. Ms. Dominguez struggled with the fact that her children were beginning to lose their ability to communicate in Spanish when they began to use English at home. The results of this study demonstrated that teachers should include recognize and support linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom. The results of this study also suggested that learning communities should embrace cultures of all students and support the maintenance of learners' multiple cultures.

Contemporary deficit thinking centers on the belief that marginalized children, particularly language minority students, suffer from personal deficits that explain their failure to succeed academically. This belief explains that poverty, culture and language, or home environment negatively influences the learners' academic performance, which

draws attention away from the institutional factors contributing to the learners' marginalized state. Whether the rationale is poverty, culture and language, or home environment, the result is that contemporary deficit thinking ideology defrauds language learners and affects their education.

Creating and Negotiating Identities

Learners bring into each situation social identities that relate to how they understand their relationship to the social world, how that relationship is socially constructed across space and time, and how they understand their possibilities for the future within a given context or situation (Norton, 1997). McNamara (1997) suggested that ELs' experiences constitute "a complex renegotiation of their social identity in the new society, a process that has profound implications for their attitudes to their own language and the learning of the majority group's language" (p. 561). I contend that each language learner's social identity (or identities) in relation to the larger social structures must begin to be understood before researchers can begin to accurately explain ELs' learning.

After ELs are able to create new identities in their new environments, they must learn to negotiate their new identities, which is fundamental to their academic success (Cummins, 2001). When ELs developed sense of self is affirmed and extended through interactions with their teachers and colleagues, they are more likely to participate more fully in class instruction, which leads to further academic effort and learning. "The more we learn, the more we want to learn, and the more effort we are prepared to put into that learning" (Cummins, p. 2).

Conversely, when ELs' language, culture, and experience are ignored or excluded in classroom activities, they are instantly disadvantaged (Cummins, 2001). If all of their life experiences are dismissed as irrelevant, the learners are at an instant disadvantage. In many classrooms, this may signify few connections between learners' lives and the curriculum and instruction, which means that the learners are expected to learn in an "experiential vacuum" (Cummins, p. 2). Because of these conditions, ELs' silence and nonparticipation often are interpreted as a lack of ability or effort, and teachers' interactions with learners have reflected a pattern of low expectation that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Hunter (1997) described the importance of social identity and explained how social identity in relation to school expectations can conflict with identities among ELs peers and how learners' negotiations of these conflicts bear on language learning for ELs. In this 2-year study of multicultural urban Canadian Grade 5 and Grade 6 classrooms, Hunter investigated Portuguese and Chinese immigrant ELs' relationships to the social world and the language-learning process. Through naturalistic observations, text collection and analysis, and informal interviews with teachers and students, Hunter focused on peer and teacher interactions, students' behavior during the writing period, and the content and contexts of the students' writing tasks.

Hunter's (1997) microethnography focused on Roberto, a Portuguese EL newcomer at the school, and the ways in which he met the academic demands of school while developing his social identity among peers. During the research, most of Roberto's male peers chose to write about popular culture and fantasy adventure, which often included violence and killing, which the teacher disliked. Initially, Roberto seemed to

write about topics favored by the teacher, such as stories centered on family and other related themes. Throughout the research project, the classroom teacher had discouraged the students from creating stories that included fantasy adventure and violence. This study documented how Roberto struggled to create a social identity that allowed him to become an accepted member of his gender group at the expense of his academic development. Over time, fantasy play with his male peers and disregard for the teachers' preferred writing topics took precedence in Roberto's writing composition. Hunter concluded that Roberto's identity as an insider in his peer group seemed to require an investment in the popular discourse (writing and play, which included reference to popular culture and fantasy adventure) and precluded an investment in the home and family discourse (writing topics preferred/favored by the teacher).

Miller (2000) focused on language use, identity, and social interaction during her study of newcomer migrant high school students. Three newcomer ELs from various linguistic backgrounds participated in this qualitative study that tracked the participants from their arrival in the intensive ESL program to their enrollment in high school ESL classes. This study also examined the participants' integration into their mainstream general education classes.

Using interviews, classroom observations, and student journals, Miller (2000) explored the links among second-language use, membership, and social contexts through the accounts of recently arrived immigrant students in Australian high schools. Miller argued that self-representation is key to linking language use and identity. Miller found that understanding the ways in which students represented themselves and were represented in school was the key to understand their social interactions, language

acquisition, and successful integration into mainstream school, all of which could influence their academic achievement.

Although my research and discussion focuses on immigrants to the U.S. and ELs, second language learning theory and research are generalizable to other language learning experiences as well (Cummins, 2001; Ellis, 2002). King and Ganuza (2005) investigated patterns of national, cultural, and linguistic identification among Chilean-Swedish transmigrant adolescents in Stockholm, Sweden. The researchers used interviews and observations to determine adolescent participants' views on ethnic and national identity; general perceptions of Chileans and Swedes; and attitudes toward Spanish, Swedish, and Spanish-Swedish code switching. During this 3-year study, King and Ganuza conducted ethnographic interviews (which were audio taped) and sociolinguistic surveys; used language assessment measures; and participated in ethnographic observations of a small cohort (27 primary participants) of adolescents. The participants, ages 10 to 19, were Chilean adolescents residing in Sweden during the time of the study. Bilingual interviewers conducted the interviews at participants' homes.

King and Ganuza (2005) found that many of the participants described themselves as having a "double identity" (p. 184), feeling both Swedish and Chilean depending on with whom they were interacting. Their identity, ethnicity, and nationality also depended on their citizenship status because not all participants were Swedish or Chilean citizens, but rather permanent residents. Other participants formed their self-identity based on the resistance or reaction to their treatment by mainstream Swedish society, feeling that they were not welcome by mainstream Swedish society. The participants discussed their perceptions of Chileans and Swedes, which seemed to be based on stereotypical images

(i.e. Swedes were said to be cold, stiff, distant, boring; Chileans were described as funny, warm, generous, and good). The male participants tended to be most negative in their descriptions and perceptions of Swedes.

King and Ganuza (2005) also found that the participants were divided regarding their preference of the Spanish or Swedish languages. Approximately one third preferred Swedish, one third preferred Spanish, and one third felt equally connected to both languages. The participants who felt more connected to Swedish believed that it was easy to speak, useful in Sweden, and was the language in which they felt more competent and comfortable. Through their research, King and Ganazu provided clues to explain how transmigrant adolescents position themselves with their complex social positions, suggesting that they are in the process of “constructing and identity that is both Swedish and Chilean,” seeing themselves as “part ‘insider,’ part ‘outsider’ ” (p. 191).

The development of ethnic identity during adolescence was the focus of French et al.’s (2006) 3-year investigation to determine the developmental trajectory of ethnic identity. Using surveys, the researchers measured the participants’ (African-American, Latino American, and European American) ethnic identities. The 420 participants’ self-reported data related to their demographics and ethnic identity. The researchers found that the younger and middle adolescents’ self-esteem rose over the 3 years. They also found that for most of the participants, this was their first experience attending a culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse school because their elementary schools had been primarily ethnically and culturally homogeneous.

Although the European American participants’ self-esteem remained constant over the 3 years, the African-American and the Latino participants’ self-esteem rose

drastically over the last 2 years of the study. French et al. (2006) concluded their study with the suggestion that ethnic identity will be more salient for people of color than for European Americans who are members of the majority group. I concur with the findings of this study. Although the researchers used quantitative data to reach the findings, a qualitative study would have allowed the readers to not only see the results but also provide a voice to the participants so that the reader could hear and understand why ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identity is so salient.

As the forces of globalization continue to force different linguistic and cultural groups to interact, the issue of immigrant identity will become increasingly more numerous. As immigrants begin to acculturate to their new environment, they bring with them social identities that relate to how they understand their relationship to the social world, how that relationship is socially constructed across space and time, and how they understand their possibilities for the future within a given context or situation (Norton, 1997). These learners' experiences will influence how they perceive themselves and the outside world.

Conclusions

Research has suggested that language learning is not a one-step, easily defined process. Many variables influence students' abilities to learn another language. Sociocultural factors, stages of SLA, and learners' investments in a learning community play a powerful role in language learning. As I began my research on these factors and their relationship to EL Spanish-speaking middle school newcomers, I found that several themes became salient:

1. Learners' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes affect learning.
2. Classroom communities impact learning.
3. Language learning is conceptualized in various forms in the classroom.
4. Newcomers move from nonparticipation to participation.
5. Contemporary deficit thinking regarding ELs continues.
6. EL newcomers create and then negotiate their new identities when they enter their new learning communities.

Although the studies in this literature review provided the foundation for this study, it was necessary for me to delve deep into the data to find examples to support these themes. Chapter 3 describes the methodology that I employed to answer the research questions and support the themes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The study results reported here examined in detail the attitudes, perceptions, and expectations of Spanish-speaking EL newcomer middle school students from schools situated in the southeast region of the United States. This study investigated the research questions originally outlined in chapter 1:

1. What are Spanish-speaking newcomer students' perceptions of, expectations from, and attitudes toward school?
2. How are Spanish-speaking newcomers situating themselves in the education process?
3. What coping strategies do Spanish-speaking newcomer middle school students use to “survive” in the mainstream schooling environment?
4. What are the changes in Spanish-speaking immigrant students' perspectives and attitudes about education as they learn English?

In Chapter 2, I presented the relevant literature and research focused on EL newcomers. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research methodology, including my role as the researcher, how I gained entry into the field, my position as an EL teacher, the time line and setting for the study, and the design of the study. Next, I discuss my data sources and the organization and classification of the data, followed by an interpretation and analysis of the data. Lastly, I present my steps in writing up the study and my methodology conclusions.

Methodology

Inquiring about and into phenomena requires that researchers conduct their investigations within established theoretical frameworks. As the researcher in this study, I worked within the theoretical frameworks of sociocultural theory, SLA theory, and theory of investment, identity, and imagined communities. These theories enabled me to more fully investigate newcomer students' perceptions of, expectations from, and attitudes toward school; the changes in immigrant students' perspectives and attitudes about education as they learn English; and the coping strategies newcomer students use to "survive" in the mainstream schooling environment.

Within this qualitative inquiry, there were many different "ways of knowing" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Although there are choices in the type of research, researchers must choose the form that best describes the participants, settings, conclusions, and other relevant data. I chose to use ethnographic case studies to carefully and diligently search for evidence to answer the research questions. My own philosophical beliefs aligned more closely with qualitative than quantitative research. Jonassen (2004) defined qualitative research as focused on developing and understanding human sociocultural systems and including includes ethnographies, case studies, and general descriptive studies. Goetz and LeCompte (as cited in Jonassen) further described ethnographies as "analytic descriptions or reconstructions of intact cultural scenes or groups" (p. 1046).

The data yielded from my qualitative research allowed me to see aspects of attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions that are not as evident in quantitative data collection methods (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b). The study participants' attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions were abstract phenomena that were best explained through words and

phrases rather than numbers and equations. Using qualitative research allowed me to peer into these data and draw conclusions from them.

LeCompte and Schensul (1999b) commented on the appropriateness of qualitative methodology to study individuals in the school setting. By using a qualitative methodology, I was able to define the problem as a complex and embedded in multiple systems. Investigating newcomers' attitudes, behaviors, or perceptions about and within school proved to be complex task. Exploring the factors associated with the problem in order to understand and address them, or identify them when they are not known, was more easily accomplished through qualitative research. I also chose to use qualitative research because it allowed me to document the processes; describe unexpected and unanticipated outcomes; and clarify the range of settings where the problem or situation was occurring at times when the settings were not fully identified, known, or understood.

Qualitative research also allowed me to see the multiple, socially constructed realities that were complex and indivisible (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). More specifically, ethnographic research (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999b) provided an even more powerful lens through which to examine these multiple, socially constructed realities. The purpose of ethnographic research centers on understanding sociocultural problems in communities or institutions and using the research to solve problems or aid in bringing about positive change in institutions or communities. The impetus for my research was the high rate of high school dropout for newcomer Spanish-speaking ELs.

It is my belief that middle school is the most critical time for ELs because they begin to develop their own beliefs about school and its purpose. Therefore, it was critical to understand the phenomena surrounding middle school ELs' perceptions of school,

expectations from school, and attitudes toward school. It is my hope that the knowledge gained from my research will bring about positive change in schools and learning communities, positively impacting the high rate of high school dropouts among Spanish-speaking EL newcomers. In addition, because this study examined Spanish-speaking middle school EL newcomers' changing attitudes and perceptions over a given time, an ethnographic design provided the most appropriate format to accurately describe the extent to which the participants' perceptions, expectations, attitudes, and investments existed.

Role of the Researcher

I was the researcher for this study, and I also served as the primary means for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting the data, as well as responding to the various situations by maximizing opportunities for collecting and producing the information (Merriam, 1998). As the researcher, I functioned in two different roles: participant observer and learner. As a participant observer and the teacher of these four newcomer students (Merriam), I was immediately immersed in the setting. My primary objective as a qualitative researcher was to "understand the people" (LeCompte, Schensul, Weeks, & Singer, 1999, p. 8) whom I set out to study. As their teacher, I accomplished this through daily interactions with the participants. Because the initial setting for the study was in my classroom, it was important for me to look at everyday occurrences within this setting as teacher and researcher.

Another component of being a participant observer included considering everything read, seen, and heard in the research site related to Spanish-speaking EL newcomers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Researching

and connecting these to the phenomenon studied yielded stronger conclusions. As a participant observer and their teacher, I studied how the students responded, visually, aurally, and in writing, and noticed changes over time. From such observations and speech, I better sensed their perceptions toward school, expectations from school, attitudes toward school, and numerous other behaviors.

As a participant observer, I also became a “learner” (Spradley, 1979, p. 3) in the field. Spradley suggested that ethnography entailed “learning from people” (p. 3) rather than “studying people” (p. 3). As I studied this phenomenon, I gained new insight into how newcomers situated themselves in their new learning communities, learning about the coping strategies that the participants utilized and examining data for changes in the participants’ perceptions, expectations, attitudes, and investments toward school.

As a veteran newcomer teacher, I had worked with a number of different groups of newcomers over the years. The participants who comprised the sample group were similar in many ways to these other groups of newcomers. These similarities among groups offered me a chance to study them in a more systematic way by observing and learning.

In my position as the participants’ teacher, as an African-American female, and as a nonnative Spanish speaker, I approached this research with a different perspective. As the participants’ teacher, I realized that the existing power difference could influence their responses. As an outsider to the student community, I had to take detailed notes and strive to understand the ongoing phenomena during the research. As an immigrant to the Spanish-speaking language and culture, I used a native Spanish-speaker interpreter to ensure that I understood the participants’ responses to the interview questions.

Potential for Vulnerability

Although qualitative studies that utilize samples of multilingual children yield great results, care must be taken to protect the children's rights (LeCompte & Schensul, 199b). I recognized this fact with this study, which involved my own students, because there was an uneven relationship between the participants and me (Norton, 2002). In research, there is a need to protect the participants in studies; this is even more essential for multilingual children. As my students' teacher and advocate, I understood that studying the participants and their parents was new to the community. They had few institutional protections, and they were vulnerable individuals. Therefore, I exercised extreme care to ensure that the participants' rights and wishes were respected during the study and will be respected even after the study. Letters of invitation to participate in this study were distributed in both English and Spanish (see Appendix C). Interpreters were available for all interviews, and the students were reminded that it was not mandatory to participate in the study. The participants also were allowed to modify and edit the transcriptions of the interviews during member checks.

In addition, as a researcher, I drew upon six tenets (Cameron, Fraser, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson, 1992; Norton Peirce, 1995) of critical methodological research, which sought to ensure that errors were minimized in data sampling, collecting, and analysis:

1. *Critical research always reflects researcher bias.* I was constantly aware that my own history and experiences intersected in diverse and complex ways with the study. The fact that I was (a) the participants' teacher and researcher in the field, (b) a middle-class African-American female, and

2. *Critical research aims to investigate the complex relationship between social structure and human agency.* I investigated why, for example, several students refused to ask questions in class. I questioned the participants' purpose for learning English. Such questions could not be addressed by observing the language learners in isolation. I had to address them by drawing on their own experiences and the dynamics within the classroom;
3. *Critical research assumes that inequities of race, class, and ethnicity produce unequal power relations in society.* As I conducted my research, I deeply considered the fact that the participants were learning English to gain access to the dominant group in the United States and that the current political and anti-immigration climate supported unequal power relationships;
4. *Critical researchers are interested in understanding how individuals make sense of their own experience.* Although my goals and procedures were made explicit through the use of an interpreter and even though my research methods were open, interactive, and dialogic, I understood that the participants had their own agendas. During my research, I listened carefully for these agendas and tried to address them, allowing the participants to introduce new topics and questions during the interviews, which generated valuable data and new insight;

5. *Critical researchers are interested in locating their research within a historical context.* I understood that the middle school participants were not objects and were not to be treated as objects. Each participant had personal, family, and educational histories. I probed and learned as much as possible about each participant's educational, personal, and family backgrounds. I tried to make connections among these different relationships;
6. *Critical researchers believe that the goal of educational research is social and educational change.* My desires for change in the achievement of Spanish-speaking middle school students and in the increase in the graduation rate for Spanish-speaking high school students were the motivating factors behind this study.

Entry into the Field

After defining and outlining my role as a researcher, I sought ways to gain entry into the field, which was a crucial element in conducting this qualitative study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Gaining access to the field in which I conducted research was a process. My classroom served as the field and provided the necessary environment to observe and interact with the participants, and then document their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Before proceeding with the study, I secured permission from the school system board of education to conduct research in the school by submitting a formal application to the Metro International School System (MIS, a pseudonym) Department of Research and Evaluation. Permission also was secured from the MIS principal, the West Metro Middle School (a pseudonym) principal; the parents of the participants; and the

participants themselves. After securing approval from the MIS, I submitted and received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of my university.

Permission letters for the participants and parents were a preliminary but critical part of the project. These permission letters explained the purpose of the study, how the information was to be collected, the voluntary nature of the study, and my contact information. I recognized that the new immigrant parents were hesitant about granting permission for such a study, so I conducted phone conferences with two of the parents to address their concerns about the study. To further allay the parents' concerns, all correspondence was translated into Spanish, the participants' native language (LeCompte et al., 1999).

Although obtaining the necessary permission to conduct the study was a preliminary step, I needed further access to the research field. Becoming a trusted person (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) in the field allowed me to become a part of the setting. During this time, I learned how my participants' actions and behaviors corresponded to what they verbalized. This was particularly important during the beginning stages of the data collection process because during this time, I determined the areas of investigation and developed a strong relationship with the participants. I built rapport and understanding with the participants by sharing my language learning experiences (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b).

My Position as an EL Teacher

Although there are many methods and environments in which to learn more and study ELs and their learning processes, I chose to research and learn more about my students in the classroom in which I taught. For me, this study was much more than

fulfilling the requirements of my educational degree program. I also wanted my study to inform not only my classroom teaching practice but also the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) profession in general because there is not an abundance of literature focusing exclusively on Spanish-speaking middle school EL newcomers' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes. My expectations were that my findings would add to this body of knowledge.

As a researcher in the classroom environment, I had several advantages over researchers new to this field. I had already built a rapport with my students because I had already established a relationship with them, their parents, their home-school teachers, and their principals. My regular routine of parent conferences had created an open line of communication with them, and my monthly contacts and visits to West Metro Middle School had also contributed to building rapport with students, their parents, and teachers. I established a rapport with my students by sharing my language learning experiences with them. I had shared with my students my thoughts and feelings toward the language learning process as I studied and learned Spanish.

My personal beliefs as a teacher also guided this study. As an ESOL teacher and a teacher mentor, I believe that all students can learn. However, instruction presented by teachers must be constructed so that students are able to grasp it. It is imperative that the instruction teachers provide for ELs fall within ELs' ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). I believe that students bring with them substantial prior knowledge and cultural capital (Heath, 1983; Moll, 1993; Valdés, 1996) from their first languages and cultures to my classroom. My beliefs also included the belief that classroom communities could positively or

negatively impact students' attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and expectations, which could ultimately affect students' learning.

Time Line for the Study

Data collection began in January and ended in May 2007, spanning 13 weeks (see Appendix D). A 5-month study period was selected because most students enrolled in the newcomer program received intensive English services for between 4 and 5 months.

Although a time line had been established, I recognized that I had to be flexible because in some face-to-face interactions, unforeseen circumstances occurred, which delayed some plans (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). For example, I had to work around the state-mandated testing, during which data collection was not allowed; fire and tornado drills, and student absences.

The initial student, parent, and teacher interviews were completed during the first 3 weeks of the data collection. The second phase of interviews was completed during the 5th, 6th, and 7th weeks. During the 8th, 9th, and 10th weeks, the third set of interviews was completed. During the 11th and 12th weeks, the fourth set of student interviews and final parent interviews were conducted. Throughout the data collection process, I observed the participants and managed the data. I kept permission slips field notes, transcripts, audio tapes, print based artifacts, and my researcher journal in a binder. The binder was divided into sections, with a section dedicated to each student. As I began to understand themes from the data, I created large wall charts to post these themes and supporting data retrieved from the study. For 13 weeks, I gathered, coded, and analyzed data. After the thirteen weeks of data collection, I used several additional months to complete the data analysis.

Metro International School

Setting for the Study

The research for this project was conducted at Metro International School MIS, a new student registration center and school (with student enrollment averaging between 100 and 150 students) developed to assist newcomer ELs as they become acclimated to life in the United States and to the public school environment. The MIS was located in a suburb of a large metropolitan city in the southern United States. It was part of a large public school system that was slowly beginning to embrace the cultural and linguistic changes of its student population. At the time of the study, the MIS shared a campus with a vocational special needs high school at the time of the study. This vocational school operated as a completely separate school. It had its own principal, counseling staff, office staff, teaching staff, and curriculum. Although these two schools shared the same building, tensions and problems often arose as both schools negotiated time and use of the cafeteria, recreation field, restrooms, parking spaces, and intercom system. However, during the data collection period, both schools had new principals who vowed to create a better working relationship between the two schools.

As a registration center, MIS was the hub of all international student activity in the school system. Here, with the help of multilingual interpreters, students were registered for their neighborhood schools where they participated in core content classes; I-20 visas (government documents that allow students to remain in the country legally) were processed; international transcripts were evaluated; and students were tested and placed in the most appropriate grade level. After registering at MIS, students then

returned to their home schools for their specific bus schedules, homeroom assignments, and any other information for their schools.

The staff of the MIS was very diverse in terms of race, languages spoken, and life experiences. The staff members, who spoke more than 20 languages among them, included both teachers and office personnel (interpreters, assistant director, and director). Interestingly, all of the teachers and paraprofessionals were either bilingual or multilingual.

The MIS also functioned as a newcomer school where ELs who were new to the district school system spent up to one semester learning basic English. Most students had entered the country within the past 6 months. However, some students had been in the country for closer to 1 year. Students in Grades 3 to 12 who scored less than 2.0 on the WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT), which was administered during the registration process, were transported by bus to and from their home schools for a portion of each day. The class schedule offered routine and helped newcomers learn how American public school schedules operated in MIS as well as in their home schools (see Table 2).

Table 2. EL Newcomers' Daily Schedule

Metro International School EL Newcomers' Daily Schedule	
7:50 – 8:15 a.m.	Breakfast at West Metro Middle School
8:15 – 8:45 a.m.	Bus ride to Metro International School (MIS)
8:45 – 11:00 a.m.	Intensive English Classes at MIS Focused on developing students' English/Language Arts/Reading and/or Social Studies vocabulary (using WIDA standards)
11:00 – 11:45 a.m.	Lunch/Break
11:45 – 1:15 p.m.	Intensive English Classes at MIS Focused on developing students' Math and/or Science vocabulary (using WIDA standards)
1:15 – 1:45 p.m.	Bus ride back to West Metro Middle School
1:45 – 2:00 p.m.	Independent Study Skills (located in Media Center)
2:00 – 2:50 p.m.	Physical Education
2:55 – 3:45 p.m.	Mathematics
3:50 p.m.	Afternoon dismissal from West Metro Middle School

Six teachers and three paraprofessionals instructed the students in Grades 3 to 12 in intensive English. Although the school has more than doubled in size, at the time of the study, there were six classes:

- Two primary (Grades 3-5).
- Two intermediate (Grades 6 and 7-8).
- Two high school (Grades 9-10 and 11-12).

The students were bused to the MIS from their home schools at 8:45 a.m. each morning and departed for their home schools each day at 1:30 p.m. During the time at the

school, the students received intensive English lessons. Although this time at the school included a 30-minute lunch period, it did not include extra subjects, such as physical education, math, or science. Students participated in these classes when they returned to their home schools each day.

Registration and enrollment were ongoing throughout the school year at the MIS. New students arrived and registered daily. Also, every Friday, students who had learned sufficient English and had achieved a 2.0 on the W-APT exited the program and returned to their home schools with a schedule of regular classes and ESOL support services at the local school. Because of the transitory nature of the program, each class had as many as 50 students or as few as 10 students during any given week. However, because the curriculum was a 6-week cyclical program, all students eventually were exposed to the entire curriculum, regardless of when they entered the program.

Although the curriculum focused on survival English (requests, commands, basic English, etc.), teachers also used the state WIDA (2007) standards as part of the curriculum. The WIDA English language proficiency (ELP) standards encompassed the Pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade curriculum. The standards focused on developing ELs' vocabulary in five areas: social instructional language, language arts, math, science, and social studies. Each of these five English language proficiency standards defined how ELs processed and used language in the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening ELP standards focused on ELs' ability to process, understand, interpret, and evaluate spoken language in a variety of situations. Speaking ELP standards prompted the learners to engage in oral communication in a variety of situations for a variety of audiences. Reading ELP standards focused on the learners'

ability to process, understand, interpret, and evaluate written language, symbols, and text with understanding and fluency. The ELP writing domain focused on the learners' ability to participate in written communication in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes.

In my classroom, the primary research site, I served as the lead teacher. My trilingual classroom assistant also assisted with instruction in the classroom and helped during the data collection period. Ms. Abdallah spoke English, Somali, and Spanish. My classroom (see class layout in Appendix E) had three computers, a classroom library, art resources, an overhead projector, and a dry-erase board. A wall of windows allowed the maximum amount of light into the classroom. The classroom library had abundant audio-visual equipment (VCR, cassette player, CD player, language masters, Karaoke set, and micro-cassette players/recorders). The students used traditional desks that were easily rearranged to fit the needs of the class activities.

When students first arrived at the MIS, they were often filled with excitement and fear; excited because of the possibilities to make new friends and learn English yet fearful because experiencing school in a new country was at times overwhelming. Some students would become so frightened that they would literally become sick because of their anxiety.

With the exception of the beginning of the school year, newcomers entered the class where classroom communities had already been established. At the beginning of the year, I tried to establish and maintain throughout the year a classroom that allowed students to feel comfortable with taking risks and using their new language without fear of ridicule. I always tried to communicate to my students that we, including myself, were

all learners, regardless of the amount of time that had been spent learning English because there was always so much more to learn. Most students began classes at MIS as shy and quiet middle school students. However, after learning basic English and making new friends, most of my students talked and conversed with others in the class. Over time, their dress also changed. Unaware of the dress code policy of U.S. schools, most middle school students initially wore school uniforms from their previous schools or very conservative clothing. However, as the students learned more English and desired to dress like their middle school peers, they began to wear clothes that resembled what students in their home school (West Metro Middle School) wore. Over time, many of my male students would begin to wear baggy pants and oversized shirts and jackets; whereas many of my female students would wear tight pants and short tight shirts. Often, with this new freedom of dress in stark contrast to many of their previous schools' dress codes, my students had to learn the boundaries. Throughout the year, I had to have several conferences with certain students about their clothing, which may have been too tight or too revealing, or which may have depicted violence or alcohol.

During the time of the research, my class was comprised of 25 students in Grades 6, 7, and 8. The class held 15 boys and 10 girls. Although most of my students spoke Spanish as their primary language, other students spoke Amharic, Arabic, French, Karen, Kirundi, and Somali. My students also had various first language literacy levels, first language educational backgrounds, and English proficiency levels. My students had many different stories to tell about how they arrived in the United States: Some students were sponsored by refugee agencies; some were adopted by American families; others were sponsored by family members already here in the United States; and yet others

walked across the border from Mexico and through several states to arrive in our city. Regardless of where they originated from or how they came to the United States, my students and their families stayed because they either desired a better life or they had no choice because they came as refugees.

MIS Community

The MIS was located in middle-class neighborhood of a large suburb. It was situated on the city transit lines near two major interstate highways so that the parents could access the school easily. Students who attended the school were bused in from other schools from around the school district. The teaching community of MIS was in the midst of change during the study, transforming from a small program to a constantly expanding program that had begun to emulate the students' home school with instruction, scheduling, and overall expectations. The program used to provide an orientation to the students' new life in the United States. However, during the time of the study, the program provided sheltered classes, which focused on developing newcomers' language and vocabulary related to the core curriculum subjects of English language arts/reading, social studies, math, and science. The teachers at the MIS represented various cultural and educational backgrounds, which created a unique learning environment in each classroom.

Design of the Study

As I began my study, I reviewed my research goals. Primarily, I wanted to work with the participants over the 4 to 5 months they were enrolled at MIS so that I could examine how their language learning experiences affected their attitudes about, expectations from, and attitudes toward school over time. Second, I needed a

methodology that would allow me to “explore intimate experiences in a language that had not yet been mastered by the participants” (Norton, 2000, p. 24) and their parents. Third, I wanted to work with participants who were recent arrivals in the United States and were in the initial stages of English language learning.

Multiple-Method Ethnographic Case Study

I chose to conduct a case study because this research “told a case” (Mitchell, 1984, p. 121) based on theory, hypotheses, and concepts. Using multiple-method case study methodology allowed me to examine situations in a detailed and structured way, explain problems, and learn about the ongoing phenomenon. I was able to explore the “intimate experiences” (Norton, 2000, p. 24) of the participants. A case study gave me the freedom to conduct sustained observations and collect data over time. A case study also allowed me to more accurately describe the participants’ changes as they moved from newcomers to more acculturated participants. This exploration of a system of events, programs, activities and individuals (Creswell, 2006) allowed me to describe the various occurrences, situations, and phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

Purposeful Selection of Participants

Because my classroom was the setting for this study, the voluntary participants were chosen from the students enrolled in the newcomer’s program. Imitating other similar case studies (DeStigter, 2001; Fu, 1995; Valdés, 2001), I initially focused on 6 students to comprise my sample. However, because of the highly transient number of EL families who move away from the school system, only 4 students participated for the full duration of the study. Although the final data were derived from only 4 participants, they were sufficient to identify themes and draw conclusions. Fewer than 4 participants would

not have allowed the data to become fully saturated. Focusing on more than 4 participants would not have allowed me enough time to delve into each participant's perceptions, expectations, and attitudes adequately since participants were only enrolled in the MIS for less than 1 year.

Several factors helped to determine the participants chosen for this study. Within the MIS district, several middle schools failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP). I was particularly interested in one middle school with a high population of ELs: West Metro Middle School. At the time of the data collection, 12 students from this school were enrolled in my class. Eleven of these 12 students from West Metro Middle School spoke Spanish as their primary or home language. The administration at West Metro Middle School welcomed any form of research that would positively impact student achievement. In addition, the parent liaison at West Metro was eager to translate documents and assist with this project. All of these factors helped me to select the students from this school for participation in this study.

I wanted the collected data to represent a broad range of perceptions, expectations, and attitudes, so I chose an equal number of males and females to participate. Through purposeful selection, I initially chose 6 participants (3 males and 3 females) from the same school. However, because of attrition, the sample decreased to 4 participants. The final participants included 2 males and 2 females. Interviews with the participants' mothers yielded further data. The participants were selected based on several criteria: home school location, first language, gender, and the amount of time enrolled in the intensive English program at MIS. Although the participants' teachers at West Metro were invited to participate in this study, all three teachers declined, citing

various reasons: not enough time, no interest, and not feeling comfortable with participation. Because of this, data sources were limited to student interviews, parent interviews, my observations of the students, student artifacts, and researcher journal entries.

Study Participants

The participants in the study were chosen from my class, the intensive English Grade 6, 7, and 8 class, from the MIS. The 4 participants came from Spanish-speaking countries from North and Central America, 3 from Mexico and 1 from Honduras (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Map of Mexico and Central America.

The participants entered my class with various levels of first-language literacy levels and educational experiences. Their English language proficiency levels ranged from the Entering (1) to the Beginning (2) stage of the WIDA English Language Proficiency Scale. To protect the participants' identities, any specific data that would identify the students were excluded. The participants were given the following

pseudonyms: José Alvarez, Cristián Morales, Milagro Ventura, and Leslie Utitia. A description of each participant follows.

José Alvarez

José Alvarez was a Grade 6 student from a large town in Mexico, where he attended school. José was the only child in the family, living with his mother, father, and uncle in an apartment close to his home school, West Metro Middle School. José was a very quiet, shy, and reserved student, seeming to enjoy school and learning, rarely missing a day.

He had been in the United States for almost 3 months before he was registered for MIS. José's family could not afford the \$100 required for his immunization and hearing/vision/dental certificates, which were state required to attend public school. Although schools could have offered a 30-day waiver for these screenings, this still would have not been enough time for José's parents to save the money for the required documents for school, which helped to explain why José had waited 6 months before he began school.

When José finally began classes at MIS, he was very quiet and shy, rarely speaking in Spanish or English. On José's first day, he revealed that he spoke a "little inglés" (a little English). He seemed to understand basic English greetings. Although he was quiet, he was very observant of the things going on around him. He seemed to work hard not to draw any extra attention to himself, as he sat quietly at his desk, rarely asking or answering any questions when he first arrived.

José was of average height and had a body framework, which was thin compared to most students in the class. He always wore oversized clothes, which made him look bigger than he actually was. José's pride and joy seemed to be his hair. When he first

arrived, the blonde streak in his spiked hair was truly unique. Over time, he had the blonde streak cut out and allowed his natural dark brown hair color to grow back. Over the course of the study, his uncle, who was a barber, experimented with several intricate interesting designs around José's neck and hairlines. As a teenager, he had begun to express his personality with artistic haircuts. As time passed, José began to share his plans for his next haircut, sometimes even designing them on paper (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. José's self-portrait of his new haircut.

Unlike most other newcomer students, whose anxiety and frustration of all the recent changes in their lives were evidenced in their behavior, José was a well-behaved student. Usually, as students' English language proficiency levels increased, so did the amount of time spent correcting their behavior. However, when I examined my discipline log, José's name was never noted. According to my records, José never had a discipline issue while enrolled in my class.

As the year progressed, José began to volunteer to help other students in the class. He treated other students as if they were his younger siblings. During the data collection period, I never noticed any kind of competition or rivalry between him and the other

students. He worked well with all the other students. During lunch, he often sat with other Spanish-speaking students from the class. However, I noticed that whenever students discussed topics such as “novios” (boyfriends) and “novias” (girlfriends), José slowly separated himself from the group.

On one occasion during lunch, I noticed that while his classmates were laughing and giggling about something, José quietly picked up his lunch tray and changed tables. I called him over to my table to ask why he changed tables; José merely smiled, shook his head, and shrugged his shoulder and said, “I want to sit here.” Later that day, another student informed me that two boys from the group were saying “palabras groseras” (bad words) debating who could pass gas the loudest, which had offended José, so he changed tables.

At home with the family. José seemed to have a happy home life. Whenever he spoke of his family, he always smiled. He lived with both parents and his uncle in an apartment close to his home school. Several times during the semester, José brought in to show several pictures of his family. During my interviews with his mother, she spoke fondly of the activities that they did together as a family. She spoke of the times they went shopping or to the park in the afternoons.

José’s parents came to this country 4 years ago when he was only 7. They left José in Mexico with his grandparents while they came to the United States to seek employment for a better life for their family. Although there were periods of long separation, José’s parents made frequent trips back to Mexico to visit him and his grandparents.

As the youngest member of the family, José was also the family member who the family seemed to place their most hopes for a better future. When I spoke with Ms. Alvarez, she emphasized how important it was for José to learn English. She even enrolled him in the after-school tutorial class to help him with his homework because she did not speak enough English to assist him. When I asked about her thoughts of American schools, she stated, “It is good that he is learning so that he can make a living, I always tell him. Because here, it is important to know a lot of English.” She stated that whenever the family went shopping, José always served as the interpreter during most transactions. During one of my observations with José, he related that he was “speaking a lot of English. My mom is very happy.” This statement underscored how much the family valued the ability to speak English.

Where I’m from -- Learning in the homeland. When José initially joined the class, I examined all of his transcripts and school records. His records indicated that he was an average Grade 6 student in Mexico. However, José did not complete this grade because his family immigrated to the United States, where he was placed in Grade 6 again. His previous teacher in Mexico made several observations during his last three grading periods. During the first grading period, she noted on his report card, “You need to concentrate on reading challenging texts. Read more to become a better reader.” During the second grading period, his teacher noted that José’s studies and grades had improved. However, by the end of the third grading period, his records showed that he was experiencing problems in school and was not showing enough effort in class. The teacher reported that he always copied from the student sitting behind him. By the end of the last

grading period, he was encouraged to continue studying and improving his reading abilities.

Although José's report indicated that he had some academic difficulty at the end of the school year, as veteran educator, I have learned that transcripts and school records may not provide the most accurate picture of students' abilities. Ms. Alvarez stated that José had been retained in Grade 2, the year his parents moved to the United States and he was left in Mexico. This separation could have affected him emotionally and academically, and may have accounted for his academic difficulties. Despite these seeming academic difficulties and the fact that José had been separated from his parents at times, José's mother spoke extensively about how much he enjoyed school in Mexico.

Cristián Morales

Cristián Morales was a Grade 6 student from a large metropolitan city in Mexico, where he attended and excelled academically in school before coming to the United States. Cristián was the height of most other students in my class. He wore his hair cut just above his ear and combed toward his face. He usually wore either his school uniform from his school in Mexico (khaki pants and white shirt) or the voluntary uniform colors of West Metro Middle School, (khaki pants and blue shirt). Cristián lived with both of his parents and younger sister in an apartment close to the West Metro Middle School. Unlike José, Cristián was very outgoing and talkative, and often initiated conversations with his friends or any new students who had begun the class at MIS. On his first day of school in my class, Cristián immediately made friends with other Spanish-speaking students. Before the week was over, he had made friends with and even tried to communicate through drawings with his French and Arabic-speaking peers.

Cristián was always happy when he came to my class. I recalled only one instance when Cristián was not smiling. He had been involved in a car accident and was in severe pain, refusing to miss 1 day of school because of the accident. Cristián maintained good relationships with the other students in the class, playing and joking almost daily with all the other students, which bothered some students at times. Although his classmates were beginning to behave like mature teenagers, Cristián still behaved more like an elementary school student, still interested in cars, sports, and “futbol” (soccer). Unlike some of his peers, Cristián was not yet interested in cell phones or “novias” (girlfriends).

Although Cristián had a playful side to his personality, he took his academic assignments very seriously, completing almost all of his class work and homework. On the rare occasions that he “forgot” to do his homework, he always asked if he could bring in assignments the following day, which he consistently did. His work always reflected the best of his ability. Often, instead of using materials (construction paper, markers, glue, etc.) that I provided, Cristián would redo class projects, using his own materials from home and submit a second project the following day.

At home with the family. Cristián was a happy student, which seems to be a reflection of his home life, always smiling whenever he spoke about his family, especially his little sister. Sometimes, his homework assignment would be to read to his “hermanita” (baby sister). He would smile, often while complaining, saying “she doesn’t listen.” Along with his immediate family (his mother, father, and sister), Cristián also had a large extended family, “many American cousins,” here in the United States. Cristián spent a lot of time with his English-speaking family on the weekends, his “American”

cousins were helping him learn English. From Cristián's accounts of their time together, they were a very close family and enjoyed spending time together.

Where I'm from - Learning in the homeland. Cristián's last report card from his school in Mexico showed that he was a good student. His cumulative final grade from Grade 5 was 8.4 on a 10-point scale. Cristián excelled in art, physical education, and math. He was promoted to Grade 6 for the following school year, with his teacher noting that he had a very positive attitude toward school. During our interviews, Cristián spoke fondly of his school. He had a particularly high regard for his Grade 5 teacher who taught all eight of his subjects. Unlike other students from Mexico, Cristián had not studied English in school; rather, he learned it through television and his "American cousins."

Milagro Ventura

Milagro was a female student from a major metropolitan city in Honduras, where she excelled in academics and in sports. Milagro was a somewhat reserved student who was very quiet until she felt more comfortable with speaking with others. Within 10 days of arriving in the United States, Milagro registered for school. She was placed in my class because she had a qualifying score to receive intensive English instruction. However, by the end of the first week, it was quite evident that Milagro was quite proficient in English and seemed to be very confident in her English-speaking abilities, demonstrating that she was at the entering level of English language proficiency (WIDA, 2007). Although she was quiet, her English writing far surpassed other students with the same language score. By the second week of class, Milagro spoke only in English when she talked to me. She would revert to Spanish only if she could not think of the word in English. Then, as soon as she had made her point, she would continue the conversation in English.

Milagro was about the same height and build as other students in the class. She always wore jeans and sweatshirts and kept her hair pulled back into a ponytail. Milagro did not seem to be interested in make-up, hair, and clothes, only her cell phone. Similar to José, Milagro was not an extremely talkative student. Only after knowing someone for an extended time would she converse for any period of time. After completing her daily class assignments, she would often sit quietly reading or working on assignments from West Metro Middle School.

When I invited Milagro to participate the study, she was very enthusiastic about it. When I explained that I would use pseudonyms, she immediately said that she had already chosen her name, “Milagro Ventura.” When I asked her why she chose this name, she said that she had always liked the name and wished that she could have been named this. “Milagro” means “miracle,” and it had a special significance for her. “Ventura” was a name that she had always been fond of. The family was well established there and had a home, a car, and good jobs. The family came to the United States because of Ms. Ventura’s employment. Before coming to this country, Milagro had an active extracurricular life. In her private school, she was part of a swim team that practiced weekly, and she belonged to the debate club and the basketball team. On several occasions, she brought in medals or certificates that she had won during competitions.

At home with the family. Milagro lived with her mother, father, uncle, an 18-year old brother, and a 24-year old sister. Unlike most immigrant families from her school, Milagro’s family lived in a single-family home rather than an apartment. Everyone in the family either worked or went to school. Ms. Ventura had a job that required frequent travel. Nevertheless, the family members were still very tight knit. Even when her mother

was traveling, Milagro kept in touch with her via her personal cell phone, sometimes calling her during the day. It appeared that Milagro enjoyed a happy home life, and always spoke positively about her family or home life.

Learning in the homeland. Because Milagro had not completed Grade 7 in Honduras, she was placed in Grade 7 in the United States. Her records indicated that she was an exceptional student in Honduras, excelling in academics and sports. She seemed to bring that same enthusiasm for learning to her new classroom in the United States. When I asked about her school in Honduras, Milagro described her teachers as “good,” and on one occasion, she held her hands to her heart as she described one teacher in particular. Education was very important to Milagro. While enrolled in my class, she often used her Spanish/English dictionary as she listened and wrote. She was a perfectionist and always asked questions to ensure that she understood and completed all of her work correctly

Leslie Utitia

Leslie Utitia’s home was in a large town in central Mexico. Similar to Milagro and Cristián, Leslie excelled in academics prior to coming to the United States. When Leslie began classes at MIS, I was surprised by her height. She was the tallest student in my class, towering at least 5 inches over all the other students. I had to verify her birthday and school records to make sure that she had been appropriately placed. Leslie always wore her hair pulled into a tight ponytail; she wore no jewelry or lip gloss. She also behaved in a very mature manner and was not fascinated with most of the things that the other students her age did and said. She seemed uninterested in typical teenage interests: boys, fashion, and cell phones.

Similar to Milagro, Leslie was very enthusiastic about participating in the study. She, too, suggested her own pseudonym, Leslie Utitia. When asked why she chose this name, she explained that she had always liked the name. Most days, Leslie was very talkative and friendly. However, there were other times when she had to be reprimanded because of her conduct. Overall, Leslie seemed to enjoy school. Leslie had very good attendance, missing days only when she needed updated vaccination. She began the year as a quiet, mild-tempered student who made friends easily. However, as the year progressed, Leslie's temperament changed. She became more talkative and aggressive. I began to receive reports that she would push other students who provoked her. Leslie's best friend also was in the class. They were almost inseparable and wanted to do everything together. Usually, I allowed them to sit next to each other and work collaboratively until they began to talk excessively during instruction time.

At home with the family. Leslie lived with her mother, father, 4-year-old sister, and aunt. Leslie had older sisters who stayed behind in Mexico to continue school at the local university and maintain the family home. Unlike most other students from our class, Leslie and her family lived in a single-family home in a predominantly Spanish-speaking community. Although the family lived in a home, Leslie had to share a bedroom with her 4-year-old sister, which she did not like because she wanted her own space, as she had in Mexico.

The fact that her older sisters were still in Mexico attending the local university was very difficult for Leslie. She missed them tremendously. In fact, during one of our interviews, Leslie's mother (Ms. Utitia) became so upset that she began to cry about the situation, expressing how lonely and depressed Leslie was because her sisters and friends

were in still in Mexico. Leslie missed them so much that she had threatened to run away to Mexico to be with them. After the interview, I noted in my journal:

Ms. Utitia begins to tell me that Leslie is not happy here and wants to return to Mexico. She begins to cry. I ask her why Leslie wants to return to Mexico. She says that Leslie is lonely here because she has no friends outside of school. Also, her 2 older sisters are still in Mexico. She wants to return to Mexico to be with them. Leslie has threatened to run away from home to return to Mexico to be with her friends and family there.

Ms. Utitia also expressed that although Leslie was doing fine at school, her life at home was an issue. When Leslie came home from school each day, she had no one to talk to, which was a significant contrast to her life in Mexico. There, she would walk to school with her neighborhood friends and socialize with them after school. Although her best friend lived across the street from her, there was a dangerous and busy highway, so it was difficult for Leslie to socialize with her friends outside of school. Ms. Utitia was extremely concerned because Leslie' education was very important for the family. Ms. Utitia explained that this was the reason for the family to come to the United States, so that Leslie could learn English, which would give her more opportunities and help her to have a better life. However, Ms. Utitia and her husband did not want Leslie to become so discouraged and depressed that she would not thrive in school or begin to "get into trouble" with other teenagers from the neighborhood.

Learning in the homeland. Ms. Utitia commented that before Leslie came to the United States, she was an average student. Her final report card from her school in Mexico indicated a final grade of 7.5 out of a 10-point grading system. She completed 7 full years of schooling in Mexico. However, similar to Milagro, because of her age and academic records, Leslie was placed back in Grade 7. Leslie's initial screening test showed that she was far below grade level in math. She could complete basic

mathematical functions in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. However, she had difficulty with fractions and algebraic equations, which was a critical issue because math credits were key in determining graduation credits. Although her math scores were low, Leslie could identify a few basic English objects, scoring 54% on the audiolingual test, which assessed students' knowledge of basic English. When I asked Leslie how she learned these words, she stated that she learned them from watching television rather than from formally studying English.

During many of the interviews, Leslie spoke fondly of her previous elementary school in Mexico. She spoke about her friends and teachers. During one of our interviews, she spoke about her history teacher, saying, "Era un maestro bueno" (He was a good teacher). She also said that she liked the schools in Mexico better because they cared about the students. Leslie also related that in her school, she had completed many "proyectos" (projects) in class. Ms. Utitia also had positive things to say about Leslie's school in Mexico, which was only a short walking distance from their home in Mexico. Ms. Utitia explained that things were very different here in the schools. In Mexico, students wore uniforms, the schools were small, and there was a stronger relationship between the parents and the teachers. Here in the United States, uniforms were optional, the schools were large, and Ms. Utitia did not have a strong relationship with Leslie's teachers at West Metro Middle School.

Most of the data used in this study emanated from the conversations, observations, and artifacts from the student participants. Although some students had many similarities, there also many differences among the participants that demonstrated that each participant was truly unique.

Student Participant Summary

The study participants had similarities and differences. The study participants shared the following similarities: They all spoke the same language and came from major metropolitan cities (Mexico City, D.F.; Acapulco, Mexico; Guanajuato, Mexico; and Tegulcigalpa, Honduras). All of the students had formal schooling prior to coming to the United States. All of the participants lived with both parents.

Commonalities included that they were all Spanish-speaking middle school students, attended the same home school, and had been in the country less than 6 months. However, they also represented various ages, grade levels, native countries, amount and forms of previous schooling, first-language literacy levels, and family backgrounds. Both female participants preferred to speak in English for their interviews, and they actually refused to speak in Spanish. Both male students preferred to speak in Spanish, and they actually refused to speak in English for the interviews. Both females were 13 years old and in Grade 7. José and Cristián were 12 years old and in Grade 6. José, Cristián, and Leslie were from Mexico and Milagro was from Honduras. Three participants (Cristián, Leslie, and Milagro) had siblings; José had no siblings. Milagro's and Leslie's families lived in single-family homes, whereas the families of José and Cristián lived in one of the many apartments complexes that fed into MIS. These commonalities and differences, which proved to be key factors in their acculturation to their new school environment and impacted their acclimation and learning, will be further analyzed and discussed in chapter 4. Table 3 summarizes the participants' backgrounds.

Table 3. Student Participants' Background Information

Student Participant Summary				
Name	Age/Grade	Native Country	Where I'm From Previous Schooling	Family
José	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 years old • Grade 6 	Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 years of previous schooling – retained in 2nd grade • “Average” student (as described in school records) • No formal study of English prior to coming to U. S. – learned from TV • Attended public school • “Entering” stage of ELP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived with both parents • No siblings • Period of family separation • Lived in apartment
Cristián	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 years old • Grade 6 	Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 years of previous schooling • “Excellent” student • No formal study of English prior to coming to U. S. – learned from TV and family • Attended public school • “Entering” stage of ELP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived with both parents • Oldest of 2 children – 9 year old sister • No family separation • Lived in apartment
Milagro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 years old • Grade 7 	Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6½ years of previous schooling • “Good” and “excellent” student • Formally studied English prior to coming to U.S. • Attended private school • “Developing” stage of ELP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived with both parents • Youngest in family – 18 year old brother and 24 year old sister • No family separation • Lived in single family home
Leslie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 years old • Grade 7 	Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6½ years of previous schooling • “Average student” • No formal study of English prior to coming to U. S. – learned from TV • Attended public school • “Entering” stage of ELP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived with both parents • Third of 4 sisters – 21, 19, and 4 years old • No family separation • Lived in single family home

Parent Participants

Although José, Cristián, Leslie, and Milagro provided most of the data, their mothers, as secondary participants, also provided much data in the taped interviews to help me to better understand their children's perceptions of school, expectations from

school, and attitudes toward school. Therefore, it was necessary to provide background on each of the mothers.

All of the mothers had various forms of participation in school activities. All mothers attended parent conferences at both West Metro Middle School and MIS or, as in the case of Milagro, sent a family representative. All mothers ensured that their children were enrolled in at least one after-school tutorial program or, as in the case of Milagro, enrolled in two after-school tutorial programs. In addition, all of the mothers expressed a desire to learn English, but because of their work schedules and transportation limitations, only one parent was able to take advantage of the free English classes offered by MIS.

Ms. Alvarez (José's mother), was always very polite when we spoke. She cleaned houses during the day and with her husband with day labor opportunities on the weekends. Although it was difficult for Ms. Alvarez to attend all scheduled parent conferences, she always took time to speak with me on the phone about José. During one such conversation, she was on her way to work using public transportation. Because she could not hear me through the telephone clearly, she got off the bus to wait for the next one so that we could continue our conversation about José's progress. Ms. Alvarez seemed to be focused not only on working and making a living but also on José's academic progress as well.

Although Ms. Morales (Cristián's mother) had been a teacher in Mexico, she was a stay-at-home mother in the United States. During one of our conversations, she had inquired about employment and the process to become a teacher in the United States. However, she commented that she would begin to pursue this after she had learned

enough English to feel comfortable enough to work in an English-only environment. Ms. Morales' life revolved around her children and their academic progress.

As a traveling manager for a sporting goods company, Ms. Ventura (Milagro's mother) often worked out of town. While traveling, Ms. Ventura kept in touch, often several times throughout the day, with Milagro via a cell phone she had provided her. Even though Ms. Ventura traveled frequently, she ensured that Milagro was attending school, completing her assignments, and attending after-school tutorial. She also ensured that when she could not attend parent conferences, another family member attended for her. In Milagro's mother's absence, I spoke with her older brother and her uncle about Milagro's academic progress. During my conversations with Ms. Ventura, Milagro's brother, and Milagro's uncle, it was evident that they had high expectations for Milagro, even though she traveled extensively with her employment.

Ms. Utitia (Leslie's mother) worked in a factory during the weekdays and cleaned houses on the weekends. However, this schedule did not prevent her from taking an active role in Leslie's education. After working at a factory during the day, Ms. Utitia attended English classes twice a week at MIS. She ensured that Leslie brought her homework from West Metro Middle School so that she could receive help. Ms. Utitia also brought Leslie's 4-year-old sister so that she could participate in the classes for younger students during the after-school tutorial program. As she often voiced during our conversations, Ms. Utitia wanted to ensure that her children had every opportunity to learn English and succeed academically (see Table 4).

Table 4. Parent Participants' Background Information

Name	Native Country	Involvement in School Activities	Primary Occupation in United States
Ms. Alvarez	Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended parent conferences • Ensured that José was enrolled in after-school tutorial at West Metro Middle School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked as a House Cleaner during week • Worked with several kinds of day labor on weekends
Ms. Morales	Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended parent conferences • Ensured that Cristián attended after-school tutorial at West Metro Middle School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homemaker
Ms. Ventura	Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended parent conferences (or sent a family representative) • Ensured that Milagro was enrolled in after-school tutorial at West Metro Middle School • Ensured that Milagro attended after-school tutorial while her brother attended English classes at MIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traveling manager with sporting goods company
Ms. Utitia	Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended parent conferences • Participated in English classes at MIS • Ensured that Leslie attended after-school tutorial at MIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in factory during week and cleaned houses on weekends

Data Sources

Qualitative researchers often use two classic modes of data collection (Creswell, 2006; Wolcott, 1994): interviews and participant observations. During this study, I utilized these three modes, along with journaling and the collection of field notes. Data were collected over 4 months. I employed multiple data collection methods: participant and parent interviews, classroom observations/field notes, researcher journal, and print-based artifact collection. I documented the research process by taking field notes and occasional audiotapes throughout all the data collection phases.

Interviewing was an important component of the data collection process. It allowed me to answer several of my guiding research questions. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described interviewing as a “conversational art” (p. 633) in which the interviewer asks questions and then listens as the interviewee “constructs a dialogue” (p. 633). Through interviewing, I learned how the participants situated themselves in the education process and what coping strategies they used to flourish in the mainstream schooling. The introductory interviews with the participants, parents, and teachers allowed me to gather background data, become acquainted and build rapport with the students, and ease them into the role of interviewee (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). In order to reflect critically on ELs’ perceptions of school, expectations from school, and attitudes toward school, it was important that I include their voices.

The interviews provided information on the participants’ personal histories, cultural knowledge, and beliefs. A list of student, parent, and teacher questions was used for these interviews (see Appendix F). The data were gathered during formal and informal interview sessions (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b). I also audiotaped each interview session and then transcribed it to develop important themes and concepts. Both the English and Spanish portions of the interviews were transcribed. Because the study participants were still at the entering level (WIDA, 2007) of English language development, at times, their responses were short. Their limited English prevented them from fully expressing all of their comments in English. However, their responses, combined with my continuous observation, allowed me to make the various conclusions presented in this study.

My initial challenge was to formulate the interview questions based on existing research investigating EL newcomers' acculturation and attitudes. Studies by DeStigter (2001), Fu (1995), Miller (2000), and Valdés (2001) helped to inform many of the initial interview questions that I asked José, Cristián, Milagro, Leslie, and their parents to elicit their perceptions, expectations, and attitudes toward their new school. Although each interview began with a set of structured questions designed to initiate dialogue, our conversations often included much more. During many interviews, the participants' dialogues about other topics added to the data gleaned from the initial structured interview questions.

A total of 16 student interviews (each student participated in 4 interviews) and 8 parent interviews (each parent participated in 2 interviews) were conducted. Because the 4 students were the focus of the study, it was important to provide them with multiple opportunities to dialogue about their experiences. Because much of their prior knowledge emanated from family and community experiences, the perspectives of the participants' parents also were crucial (Woods, Boyle, & Hubbard, 1999). Both fathers and mothers were invited to participate, but only the mothers chose to do so. The fathers of the participants declined to participate in the study for various reasons, including work, not enough time, or discomfort. Two interviews (one interview at the beginning of the study and another at the conclusion) were conducted with the mothers of each participant. To validate and respect the participants' culture and language, I conducted most student interviews and all parent interviews in Spanish with the assistance of a native Spanish-speaking interpreter. Two participants preferred to speak in English. I transcribed each interview. To ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions, the participants reviewed a

printed copy of the transcription of each interview. Adjustments were made to the transcriptions when the participants requested any necessary changes or clarified their responses.

Observation was another method used to collect data from the participants. As I observed the ELs in their learning environments, I recorded situations as they happened, and thus captured the meanings of these events at the time for the participants. Observing the participants allowed me to see how they situated themselves in the new culture. I also began to see the coping strategies that they used in my classroom and the mainstream classroom. While observing the participants, I used field notes and audiotapes to record any and everything that occurred during the observations. The data included a depiction of the physical setting, participant behaviors, on-going activities in the setting, participant interactions, and emotions that were manifested during the observation periods (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a).

I also kept a journal of my personal thoughts and comments during this study. Print-based artifacts, such as drawings and work samples, also were collected throughout the study. Collecting these data provided further insight into the Spanish-speaking middle school ELs' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes toward education as they became more proficient in English. These artifacts included examples of student work and samples from the transcribed notes, as well as drawings that captured the students' attitudes toward learning and the learning environment. These artifacts were used as evidence to support propositions and substantiate my conclusions. They corroborated my observations and interviews, and they made my findings more trustworthy. They also gave me personal information about the participants that was not gathered during the

interviews (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b). After collecting several forms of data (interviews, artifacts, and observations), I assembled them all to form a description of the relationships, recurring patterns of behaviors, and beliefs so that I could construct a full portrait of the newcomer student group (LeCompte & Schensul).

Collecting Data

Although I chose to research phenomena involving my own students, I had to ensure that my research and data collection did not interfere with instruction time. I had to create a comprehensive plan to collect my data (audio-recorded interviews, field notes, researcher journal, and print artifacts). I scheduled student interviews during the early morning before all students arrived, during their lunchtime, or in the case of Milagro and Leslie, in the afternoon before after school tutorials.

As the primary teacher in the classroom, I could not stop instruction to write field notes or write in my researcher journal. I collected field notes while the students worked with Ms. Abdallah, my teacher assistant; worked in small-group projects; and socialized during lunch. When the students returned to their West Metro Middle School, I used the time to reflect on the day's events and add any other field notes collected during the day. I also used time at the end of the day to write in my researcher journal.

Organizing and Classifying the Data

I organized and classified the data using the constant comparative method (Hutchinson, 1988). After each interview and observation, I compared what I had observed, heard, and noted to my research questions. I then created data categories. I attempted to saturate these categories by looking for more data that represented these various categories. I continued to examine the data until no new themes emerged

(Creswell, 2006). Before beginning the data analysis, I recorded field notes, observations, and journal notes. I also transcribed the recorded interviews each week. I conducted member checks to allow the participants to review the transcriptions relevant to them. I then made adjustments to each transcription based on that participant's feedback. While I recorded the data, I created codes for the different categories that were generated from the data and made notes of these various themes (e.g., learners moving from nonparticipation toward participation, learners situating themselves in their new learning environment, parent expectations, etc.). I read each participant's answers several times in an effort to identify themes and patterns. Table 5 illustrates the initial codes that I developed to analyze the data for each study participant.

Table 5. Coding Categories and Data Evidence

Themes	Category		Code (highlighter color)	Data supporting themes from participants' and parents' interviews
Perceptions, expectations, and attitudes	Participants' perceptions about school (PCP)		PCP (yellow)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments about their previous schools Descriptions of past/current teachers
	Where are we going? – Participants' expectations from their new schools (EXP)		EXP (pink)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments describing why learning English is important Descriptions of future educational goals
	Newcomers' attitudes toward their learning environments		AT (purple)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments and descriptions of former and current schools Comments regarding participants' feelings toward school, teachers, peers, etc. Participation in afterschool tutorials
Language learning conceptualized in the classroom	Moving from non-participation toward participation -- Learning English (LE)		LE (red)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptions/comments of how they participate or not in class
	Learning to "so" school – Situating self in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coping strategies (CS) 	CS (orange)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments/descriptions of strategies used to understand English-only lessons
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong sense of Community (SSC) 	SSC (gray)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments/descriptions of relationships with other Spanish-speaking peers and community members
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Situating self in school -- Learning school routines (SSS) 	SSS (green)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments/descriptions of new routines learned in school Descriptions of various school situations or events
Other findings	Parents' interest in education (PIE)		PIE (blue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments/description child's school, higher education, future aspirations, career goals
	Interacting with the teacher – No questions in class (NQC)		NQC (brown)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments on why participants do not ask questions

After multiple readings, I created open codes for all of the interview transcripts, field notes, and journal entries. I color coded each research question and each additional

category that the data revealed. I searched for evidence to support or confirm each question and category within the data. As I found supporting evidence for these broader themes that were created during open coding, subthemes began to emerge, and connections between some themes became more apparent. I then created pattern coding so that I could see and make connections across different themes and categories to create a holistic picture of the data (Creswell, 2006). At times, these connections required that I collapse some themes into broader themes. As I continued analyzing the data for new themes, I reviewed the literature for clarification and discussion of these themes.

Analyzing and Interpreting the Data

Making sense of the data collected about these EL newcomers' experiences was an integral part of the study (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a). This included three steps: (a) analyzing the data, that is, creating "chunks" of data that I discovered as the researcher; (b) interpreting the data, that is, answering the guiding research questions; and (c) reflecting on the theoretical underpinnings of this research, namely, the theories of sociocultural, SLA, and investment and identity.

As I analyzed the data, I categorized, synthesized, and searched for patterns (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). I searched for more themes, subthemes, and supporting data, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4. I then found evidence that supported my propositions and substantiated my conclusion. I highlighted these phrases or comments on a hard copy of the transcripts. As I highlighted these phrases and comments, I cut and pasted these comments and phrases in the appropriate section of various wall charts, which created a visual image of various themes and the connections among the various themes.

Interpreting the data was the second step of the process (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a). I attached meaning and significance to the patterns, themes, and connections that I had identified during the analysis of the data collected about EL newcomers and their experiences. I explained why these various patterns existed and what implications these patterns had for me in my role as the researcher and for the participants. LeCompte and Schensul suggested questions that I asked myself during the interpretation phase:

- Why were the students performing certain acts? This question allowed me to look beyond superficial actions and deeper to find meaning behind certain actions or inactions.
- What else do I need to know? This question prompted me to probe deeper into data and interviews other important findings.
- What new things/insights am I learning? This question prompted me to reflect on new findings and how these findings can affect change in ESOL classrooms for a more appropriate education for Spanish-speaking middle school ELs. (pp. 5-6)

I used the research questions to guide my initial analysis and interpretation. I analyzed and began an initial interpretation during the study rather than perform a one-time analysis and interpretation at the end of the study. My data analysis and interpretation occurred in three stages, namely, while in the field, immediately after leaving the field, and some time/distance away from the field. Throughout the data collection process, I analyzed and interpreted data “until the final page of the last report is written” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a, p. 6).

I first completed an infield analysis and interpretation that involved inscribing, describing, and transcribing. During the inscription, I made mental notes prior to writing notes. This involved “learning to notice what is important to other people and what one has not been trained to see” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a, p. 14) before writing notes. My “mental text” (LeCompte & Schensul, p. 14) was influenced by the research questions.

In my descriptions, I made detailed notes in my field notes and logs. These thick descriptions (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999b) of the events, behaviors, conversations/dialogues, activities, interpretations, and explanations helped to create a portrayal of the “soul and heart” of the newcomer students’ environments (p. 18). These descriptions also included my reflections and new questions to be answered during the following weeks of observation.

The transcriptions of the interviews began early in the data collection process. It involved creating a word-for-word text transcription of the audiotaped sessions. The transcriptions also included writing down verbatim participant responses; taking dictation; recording the songs, stories, chants, and so on, of the participants, teachers, or parents; or keeping a running record of everything that an individual said during the data collection period (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a).

After the infield analysis (inscription, description, and transcription), I continued to organize and analyze the data by using codes to categorize them (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a). The codes represented groups of similar ideas or phenomena. After establishing categories for the codes, I searched through the transcriptions for the codes and highlighted examples of each category using colored highlighter markers. Although coding did not divulge everything about a given situation, it allowed me to make “rough descriptions” of my participants by showing how many people fell into each category of a specific code (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a, p. 66). Coding allowed me to learn and present in a compressed format a great deal of information about the participants and their parents (see Table 6).

Table 6. Data Collection and Analysis Summary

Summary of Data Collection/Organization/Classification/and Analysis (Ongoing data analysis)			
Data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct and transcribe interviews ▪ Record observations ▪ Collect print based artifacts ▪ Infield analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inscribing – making detailed notes prior to writing things down ○ Describing – detailed written notes and logs of behaviors, conversations, etc. ○ Transcribing -- creating word for word text from audio 	Organizing data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Constant comparative method ▪ Themes developed ▪ Member checks 	Classifying data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Open coding ▪ Research questions and themes color coded ▪ Patterns coded 	Data analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data categorized ▪ Data synthesized ▪ Searched for more patterns ▪ Triangulated data

Trustworthiness of the Data

The reliability of the collected data is critical for any research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined reliability as the consistency of observations, labeling, and interpretations. It also affects the potential for the replication, extension, and generalizability of the study. Lincoln and Guba identified four critical components of qualitative research to ensure the trustworthiness of the collected data: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Although Lincoln and Guba (1985) offered these four components by which data could be measured, in this study, I also drew upon my own 12-year experience as an ESOL teacher and my 7 years of study and research in the field of language learning to measure the reliability of the data. This combination of experience, study, and scholarly research provided me with a unique pair of lens through which I could observe, describe,

and analyze participants and data in this study and thus present the data in a way that best presents my findings.

I consider my data reliable because I consistently observed, labeled and interpreted my data. Adhering to a schedule and time line provided the structure to ensure consistent observations. Collecting field notes and keeping a researcher's journal allowed me to provide labels for observable facts and allowed me to make a record of these facts. Also, the thick and rich detailed description in this dissertation will facilitate the replication, extension, and generalizability of the study.

To ensure credibility in this study, I collected, analyzed, and reflected on multiple sources of data (interviews, observations, print-based artifacts, field notes, and my researcher journal). As I observed, questioned, and conversed with the participants in a variety of contexts throughout the day to identify and describe observable facts related to newcomers' perceptions, expectations, attitudes, and investments, I listened and looked for similar themes and patterns throughout the various data sources. I also afforded the participants the opportunities to read the transcriptions of their interviews and verify that I had accurately described their experiences as EL newcomers.

It is my hope that the readers of this study not only will see newcomers in a different way but also approach future research with this population in a different way, taking away new ideas with which to learn from newcomer ELs. I have embedded many traits in this study from which the reader may learn how to study this unique group of learners.

Writing the Results

After organizing, analyzing, and interpreting the collected data, I was ready to begin writing the result of this study, which involved integrating and linking the existing theories, the research questions, and the collected data to explain the phenomena that I observed. As the “translator” and “interpreter” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 153) in this study, I tried to present the study in the most fair and accurate method. Although I endeavored to present participants’ voices as accurately as possible, I realized that the Spanish-speaking middle school ELs participants were the only authentic chroniclers of their own experiences (Delpit, 1988) because they, not I, had lived them. I sought to understand the participants’ world and then interpreted the text of the many live events into a meaningful story for others. I drew upon my own experiences, knowledge, theoretical dispositions, and collected data to present the participants’ understanding of their world (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). However, I acknowledge that I chose the language that was used and that it presented the phenomena from my lens and perspectives, not those of the study participants.

Before I began to write the results, I reviewed the research questions. This provided critical clues and directions to explain parts of the study (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a). I then read my literature review again to make connections between my findings and the existing literature. After reviewing the research questions and the literature review, I examined closely my propositions related to my research questions and began to describe the connections and evidence to support these propositions. Chapters 4 and 5 describe these propositions and connections in more detail.

Summary

The goal of any educational research should be to impact instruction and achievement in the classroom. This was the goal of my study, which was undertaken to provide insight into the phenomena surrounding Spanish-speaking EL newcomers' acculturation, thus informing instruction and impacting student achievement. The students who returned the signed parental consent forms participated in interviews. Four students, 2 males and 2 females, as well as their mothers, participated in the study. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. All data (interviews, field notes, research journal, and print artifacts) were coded while implementing the constant comparative method. These data were then analyzed and interpreted to understand the various perceptions, expectations, and attitudes of Spanish-speaking middle school newcomer ELs.

CHAPTER 4

Results

As an ESOL teacher, I took great interest in the academic success of ELs. My philosophical beliefs in language learning and my observations of ELs' academic successes and failures prompted this investigation to learn more about how Spanish-speaking middle school EL newcomers' acculturated to their new schools and how this process affected their perceptions of school, expectations from school, and attitudes toward school. Researchers (Akos, 2002; Hirsch & DeBois, 1992; Muuss, 1996) have long argued that middle school is a critical time for all students who have transitioned from elementary to middle school while experiencing physical changes. In addition to this already stressful transition, EL newcomers may experience difficulties associated with leaving their native countries to begin school in the United States, a linguistically and culturally different environment. The EL newcomers who participated in this study had transitioned not only from one country to another but also from elementary school, "la escuela primaria," to middle school.

Although a large body of research has focused on how elementary, high school, and adult EL newcomers adjust to new school environments, there is a void in the literature concerning middle school students' acculturation. Few studies have focused specifically on the experiences of newcomer middle-school Spanish-speaking newcomer ELs. As I began to think about my class for EL newcomers and their process of learning English, I was curious about what happened during these initial stages of this transition

period for Spanish-speaking middle school newcomers. I was interested in identifying what contributes to students' ability either to thrive in their new school setting or succumb to the tremendous pressures associated with this transition. I also wondered about the factors that contributed to students' decision to complete high school.

The intent of this study was to learn about and document the various phenomena associated with Spanish-speaking middle-school newcomer ELs becoming acculturated to their learning environment. Because the acculturation process has critical consequences for EL newcomers, I chose to examine this process. I was particularly interested in Spanish-speaking EL newcomers because of the alarming high-school dropout rate among this group. Compared to other ethnic groups, Spanish-speaking students, specifically those students born outside of the United States, have a high dropout rate. My desire to inform practice and impact students' success in school prompted this study.

In this chapter, I present my findings related to my research questions:

1. What are Spanish-speaking newcomer students' perceptions of, expectations from, and attitudes toward school?
2. How are Spanish-speaking newcomers situating themselves in the education process?
3. What coping strategies do Spanish-speaking newcomer middle school students use to survive in the mainstream schooling environment?
4. What are the changes in Spanish-speaking newcomer students' perspectives and attitudes about education as they learn English?

Four key findings emerged in the data: The participants and their parents had clear perceptions, expectations, and attitudes about school; classroom communities had an impact on learning; and the participants conceptualized language learning in the classroom in particular ways.

Students and Parents Had Clear Perceptions, Expectations, and Attitudes about School

The participants' preexisting perceptions about school played a powerful role in their current perceptions, expectations, and attitudes toward their new school environment. As Savignon and Wang (2003) argued, "Learner views of learning cannot be ignored, in particular, when there is a mismatch between teacher beliefs and learner beliefs" (p. 225). In this section, I discuss participants' perceptions about school, their expectations from their new school, and their attitudes toward their new learning environments.

Perceptions about School

Earlier in this writing, ELs' perceptions were defined as their interpretations of stimuli that may be influenced by their mental/emotional state, experience, knowledge, motivations, and other factors (Slavin, 1988). In this study, ELs' perceptions referred to their interpretation and understanding of school and the whole education process, their interpretations of the learning environments, including their previous schools in their homelands and their new schools in the United States. During my initial interviews with the participants, I asked them to talk about their previous schools using the prompt, "Tell me about your school in your home country." This prompt allowed each participant to relax and become accustomed to being interviewed while giving them an opportunity to speak about their previous school. Across the interviews, I learned about their initial

perceptions about school and the relationship between these perceptions of their former schools and their perceptions of their new school. These perceptions were evidenced by their comments about their previous schools, past or current teachers, and various school experiences from their previous schools and their new U.S. schools. In this section, I present my discussion of participants' positive perceptions about school and their perceptions that participation in the education processes was necessary for success.

Participants Have Positive Perceptions About School Overall, the participants had very positive perceptions about their previous school and their new school. Their positive perceptions were demonstrated by their attitude in the classroom, their mothers' comments about participants' perceptions about school, and their conversations about their previous schools in Mexico and Honduras.

During my interviews and observations, I noticed that José, Cristián, Leslie, and Milagro often were very excited about being in class and school in general. During the first interview, when I asked them to talk about their previous schools in their own country, they immediately began to smile. José said, "I liked it a lot because they used to give us homework." Cristián commented that he liked his Mexican school because they played soccer and went swimming. Leslie talked about her favorite teacher, Mr. M. as being "a good teacher." Milagro described her teachers as being "Good!" as she held her hand to her heart.

Each mother also had positive comments about her child's school experiences in their home country. All mothers described their children as good students in their previous schools. They also spoke highly of the teachers and schools in Mexico and Honduras. Cristián's mother commented, "He was happy to go to school." Leslie's

mother stated that Leslie “really liked school, although the relationships with the teachers were different. She enjoyed school.” When Milagro’s mother was asked if Milagro enjoyed school, she stated, “Oh! Very much so. Very much so.” As I observed participants in the classroom, I noticed that they generally were happy in school and eagerly participated in classroom activities.

Cristián, José, Milagro, and Leslie had positive school memories and experiences from Mexico and Honduras. One of my interview questions invited participants to talk about a time when school was really good for them. Without hesitation, the participants easily spoke about their previous schools, and provided details about their teachers, classrooms, and friends. José spoke of the garden his class planted at his school, describing it as a “nice neighborhood school.” José even sketched a picture depicting his previous school, which included the different “salones” (classrooms), “baños” (bathrooms), and a “cancha” (a concrete court or area where students could play ball). Figure 4 shows José’s drawing of his school.

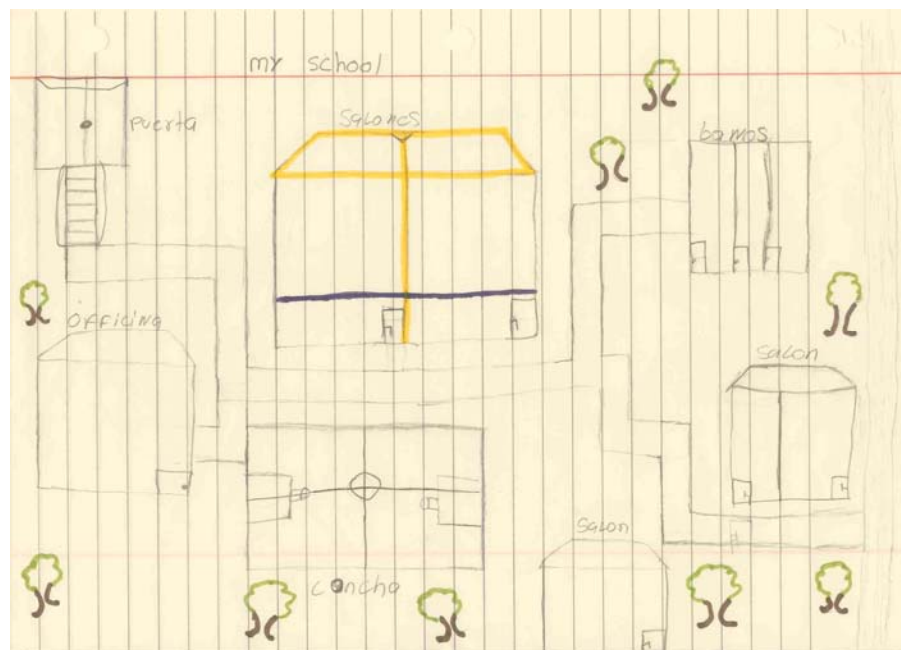


Figure 4. José's illustration of his school in Mexico.

Cristián spoke about his school in Mexico: field trips, homework, and sports. When asked about his favorite part of school, Cristián enjoyed that his teachers “would take [them] out to play football or soccer” and “swimming.” Leslie related positive experiences about her school, where she had been a student for 6 years, in Mexico. She told me about one of her favorite teachers, Mr. M., whom she considered to be “un maestro bueno” (a good teacher). She seemed to have a positive perception, in general, about school. Similar to the other 3 participants, Milagro related positive experiences about her school in Honduras. Milagro spoke extensively about her school and her teachers. She described her classmates as “crazy and fun people.” She described her former teachers as “good teachers.”

During one of our informal conversations, I asked my participants to describe a time when school was “not so good” for them. José, Milagro, and Leslie had difficulty answering this question. They seemed to have difficulty thinking of a bad experience related to school. José merely smiled and said, “No,” as if to indicate that he had not had any bad experiences, while Milagro and Leslie both commented that everything at their previous schools was always good. Cristián was the only participant who related a negative experience about school, which he later described during one of our formal interviews, where a student had mistakenly hit the teacher with a stick during a baseball game, which made the class upset with the student.

I also asked participants to describe how school was for them now. All of the participants, except José, considered themselves to be “buen estudiantes” (good students). Rarely did José describe himself as a good student. Although I asked several times

specifically about differences in his learning experiences, José always dwelled on the physical differences between the schools, never elaborating on differences in classroom learning environments, classroom dynamics, teachers, or students. When asked if school was easy for him, José responded, “Well, it’s not easy for me. It’s difficult, hard. But, it’s because of the English. So, I keep trying hard to learn more English. And at home, they always tell me to keep trying.” Even though he struggled academically, José felt that U.S. schools were somewhat similar to what he had thought they would be. He and his family knew that it would not be easy for him. He would have to study hard in school to learn English.

Three of the participants (José, Cristián, and Leslie) had positive comments about West Metro Middle School. Jose commented, “At West Metro, it is a very nice school. Very beautiful.” When asked if school was difficult for him, Cristián commented, “It used to be little bit, but not that much anymore.” He also stated, “Well, every day I would know everything what the teacher would tell us to do.” Leslie also described herself as a good student and her classes as “good.” Milagro described West Metro Middle School as a “Good” school partly because of her favorite class, technology.

As the participants discussed their perceptions about their new school, they described both the learning community within the school and the physical structure of the school. When asked what they thought U.S. schools would be like, they talked extensively about the physical structure. José responded, “I thought they would be nicer and bigger [than the schools in Mexico]. I thought it was going to be a big school with lots of children. A very pretty school, big.”

Cristián also thought that the schools would be small and more similar to his neighborhood school in Mexico. However, he discovered that his U.S. school was very large compared to his small school in Mexico. He spoke about the differences between his school in the United States and his school in Mexico, “I thought the schools would be small like in Mexico. I think they are prettier and bigger.” His illustrations of his small school in Mexico showed the immense difference between it and his new large (900+ student population) multiwinged and multileveled middle school in the United States. However, when specifically asked about learning in the classroom, Cristián stated that the only difference was that people speak English in his new environment and Spanish in his old school. Throughout the study, Cristián continually referred to West Metro Middle School as “bonita” (pretty or nice).

Unlike the other participants, Leslie did not comment on the physical structure of the school. Rather, she commented on the learning environment of her new school. Leslie thought that in her new school, “the teachers would be angry. Classes [would be] aburridas (boring). School would be difficult and hard.”

Milagro commented on the learning environment, classroom, and the physical structure of the school. Regarding her previous perceptions of what U.S. schools would be like, Milagro stated, “I think . . . when I come to this school . . . yes . . . I think it scary because I said to my Mom. I have many friends, many teachers [in Honduras]. I imagine it hard.” Before coming to the United States, Milagro thought that school would be difficult for her because her friends and teachers were left behind in Honduras. Regarding the physical structure of the school, she quickly discovered that the school would be very different from her previous school. During our conversation, she stated:

- M: Oh my God! It was big. All the school that was big!
 T: Your school in Honduras, was it small?
 M: Yes. It was like, it was like this school [referring to MIS], really small.
 T: Like this school, really small, with 2 halls?
 M: No, I mean only 3 halls. No wait. Four halls.
 T: Four halls?
 M: Yes.
 T: Your school where you are going now, how big is it?
 M: I don't know how to tell you because it was big!
 T: Cause it was a new school isn't it?
 M: Yes. It has big 3 floor! (Milagro struggles to find the words in English.)
 T: Three floors?
 M: Yes!

Note. M= Milagro, T=Teacher/Researcher

Similar to the other participants, Milagro thought that the physical structure of the school would be vastly different from the multilevel structure she found in the United States. She thought that U.S. schools would be similar to her school in Honduras. Milagro's enthusiasm over the immense size of West Metro Middle School was a hint of the opportunities that Milagro hoped to participate in while she was enrolled in the school.

Participants' positive perceptions about their previous school and learning were bridged to their new learning environments so that they could adapt and see their significance in this larger setting in their new learning environment. Milagro's, Leslie's, and Cristián's school records indicated that they excelled academically in their previous schools. Their academic successes may have influenced their positive perceptions about their new school. However, according to their comments presented earlier, whether referring to the physical structure or the dynamics in the classroom, all participants seemed to have positive perceptions of their previous and current schools. Their initial interview responses, their interactions in the classroom, and comments by their parents

evidenced that the participants had positive perceptions of their new U.S. school, which are important because learner perceptions affect their learning.

Learners See Participation in Education Processes Necessary for Success

Many people believe that education, particularly obtaining a high school diploma, is a critical component for success. Completing high school is an even more critical issue for ELs and minority students (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Fry, 2003a, 2003b). Data have shown that during the 2007-2008 school year, 43% of Spanish-speaking students in Georgia's public schools failed to complete high school (GDOE, 2008). However, because of these statistics, many of my teaching colleagues over the years have suggested that Spanish-speaking ELs may not value education or see it as necessary. Contrary to these beliefs, the participants in this study, as expressed through their interviews on perceptions, demonstrated that they valued education and viewed it as important for success.

Although the aforementioned dropout statistics for Georgia's Spanish-speaking students were presented, no solutions were offered to resolve the issue. The absence of solutions underscores the necessity for educators to understand the underlying factors which may encourage students to stay in school (Bridgeland et al., 2006) What was more critical and what was examined thoroughly were the factors that informed their understanding of the expectations they would need to fulfill in order to be successful in school. In this research, my data revealed that school attendance, classroom engagement, and parent expectations demonstrated that education was necessary for participants.

Because students must be in school to participate in the language learning process, and since there is a correlation between high school graduation and daily

attendance (Allensworth & Easton, 2007; Heppen & Therriault, 2008; Neild & Balfanz, 2006), I documented the participants' absenteeism rate across the 13 weeks they were enrolled at MIS. From my experience, I learned that newcomers typically have high number of absences (four or more based on MIS attendance policy) during a semester. There are several reasons for these absences. The parents of newcomers must make several doctor's appointments to ensure that the right vaccinations are given prior to and/or during entry into the school. Students often become ill after receiving these immunizations. Adjusting to new environments and being stressed after moving and leaving their friends, made many students physically ill. In addition, many newcomers assist their parents by acting as interpreters in negotiating the daily affairs of life, a situation that sometimes requires that they miss school. Regardless of the reasons, many ELs have a high absenteeism rate during their first few months of school in the United States. However, my attendance records indicated that study participants regularly attended school during the four-month data collection period. Table 7 shows the number of days when the participants were absent or tardy during the data collection period (January-April):

Table 7. Participants' Absences and Tardies

Participant	No. of days absent out of 80	No. of days tardy out of 80
Cristián Morales	1	2
José Alvarez	3	0
Milagro Ventura	1	0
Leslie Utitia	2	0

To document the reasons for absences, MIS requires that students bring a note explaining their absence signed by their parents or guardians. Most of participants' absences were because of appointments at the clinic to update their immunizations. On one occasion, Cristián's mother called the school and sent a note to explain his absence. When the

participants returned to school after an absence, they always brought a hand-written note (which usually had to be translated) from their mothers. Because school attendance is one of the most powerful indicators used to determine success in school, the expectation is that if students attend school they will successfully complete high school (Allensworth & Easton, 2007; Heppen & Therriault, 2008; Neild & Balfanz, 2006). The fact that the participants regularly attended school suggested that they viewed daily attendance as part of the requirements to successfully complete high school.

During my informal conversations with the participants and their mothers, I learned that three of the mothers (Ms. Morales, Ms. Ventura, and Ms. Utitia) had completed high school and that two mothers (Ms. Morales and Ms. Ventura) had completed college. Ms. Morales had been an elementary school teacher in Mexico, and Ms. Ventura had worked as a sales representative for a major sporting goods company. Secondary education had been a requirement for their employment. Their completion of secondary education demonstrated that Ms. Morales and Ms. Ventura also viewed education as necessary for success. Ms. Morales commented about Cristián, “We would like for him to continue and study as much as he can because we have been told that he can do it and that’s what we want him to continue as much as he can.” Ms. Utitia stated that “Leslie wants to learn English and go to college. Her sister is in college now in Mexico.” Ms. Alvarez added about José, “It’s good that he’s learning English so that he can make a living, I always tell him. Because here it is important to know a lot of English.” These comments suggested that the participants and their mothers valued education and considered learning in school as necessary for successfully completed high school.

Slavin (1988) defined learners' perceptions as their interpretation of stimuli that may be based on their mental or emotional framework, experience, knowledge, motivations, and other factors of their learning environments. My analysis of the interviews, field notes, and research journal revealed that José, Cristián, Milagro, and Leslie's record of attendance indicated a positive perception about school and the learning environment and that participation in the education process was necessary.

Participants' Expectations From and Attitudes toward Their New School

EL newcomers enter new learning environments with diverse expectations. Biddle (1986) described learners' expectations as the beliefs they hold about an existing object. During the data collection process, I learned that the participants' beliefs about school, what they hoped to gain or learn from, and their anticipations from school varied among them. Cristián, José, Milagro, and Leslie had clear goals and expectations from the U.S. educational system, as evidenced by their comments describing why learning English is important and their future educational goals. The children and their mothers expected them to learn English; excel in school; and receive an education that would prepare them for the workforce, secondary education, or everyday life.

Learning English. In 1996, through a legislative vote, Georgia was classified as an English-only state:

The official language shall be the language used for each public record, as defined in Code Section 50-18-70, and each public meeting, as defined in Code Section 50-14-1, and for official Acts of the State of Georgia, including those governmental documents, records, meetings, actions, or policies which are enforceable with the full weight and authority of the State of Georgia. (Georgia Laws, 1996, pp. 1631-1632)

The passage of this mandate has had far-reaching implications for the residents of Georgia and all newcomers who want to participate in the various facets of education and

society within the state. Mothers participating in this study were obligated to accept this mandate and chose to become a part of this English-only society because they desired for their children to participate in the public educational system and accepted the need for their children to learn English as one of the basic tenets of it. Their decision to immigrate to the United States was based on their desire for their children to have a better life.

During my interview with Ms. Utitia, she stated, “I looked forward to Leslie being in school here in the U.S. That is why we came here . . . I want her to learn English.” Ms. Alvarez stressed, “I hope he [Jose] will learn English and do well in school. It is important that he learns English.” In the first interview, Ms. Alvarez mentioned four times the importance that José learns English. Ms. Morales noted in the first interview that Cristián “has a lot of interest toward learning English.” The mothers felt that learning English was the beginning of the realization of this dream of becoming part of American society. This desire for a better life had filtered down to their children. The participants’ mothers had a strong desire for their children to learn English so that they could become full participants in this English-only society.

As I analyzed the data, I learned that all of the participants had the goal of learning English and that they expected their classes to teach them English. Although the participants communicated with their friends in Spanish, they expected to learn English from their teachers and the classroom setting. During the interviews, I asked questions about whether they liked school, and I asked for descriptions of what they were learning. During formal and informal conversations, I listened to the participants’ comments why learning English is important and their descriptions of their future educational goals. I

also analyzed the students' and mothers' participation in after-school tutorials and English classes.

José felt that it was imperative that he learn English. When asked whether he liked school in the United States, he responded, "Well, from the school here, I like learning English to be able to learn English to be able to help my family." When asked whether school is easy for him, José shook his head and stated that it is not easy for him because of the language differences. Recognizing this fact, in the second interview, he stated, "So, I keep trying to learn more English and at home they always tell me to keep trying." In his third interview, when asked what things are important to him in life, he responded, "Well, to learn English and to put forth effort in my classes, math, science, and the other courses."

By the third interview, it was evident that José was progressing in his English language development. When José addressed me in class, he tried to speak in English, he had begun to eat lunch with other MIS students who were not Spanish speakers, and his English responses to class assignments had increased. Although I continued to use an interpreter, José seemed to understand the question before the interpreter could complete her statement. Unlike the initial interviews, José had immediate responses to my interview questions. In her first interview, Ms. Alvarez also commented that it was important for José to learn English. She stated, "I hope that he will learn English and do well in school. It is important that he learns English." In the second interview, Ms. Alvarez explained why it was important for José to learn English, commenting that "he is learning because he wants to work. So, in school, he learning to speak English . . . It's

good that he is learning so that he can make a living. I always tell him. Because here it is important to know a lot of English.”

Aside from his comments during the interviews, José also demonstrated through his daily actions in the classroom and his class assignments that learning English was a priority for him. José was enrolled in a voluntary after school tutorial program at West Metro Middle School, which provided additional English instruction each day. The program focused on developing students’ math vocabulary and computation skills for the annual state mandated standardized test. Twice weekly, José remained afterschool to participate in these classes. Although both of his parents worked, they ensured that José participated in this program to assist him in developing his English language proficiency.

For José, learning English was important because he saw himself as the link to the English-speaking world for his parents since he had already begun to use his English vocabulary to assist his parents negotiate the daily affairs of life. José felt as if he could navigate the English-speaking world for his parents. It also was important for José to learn English so that he could communicate with his newly found English-speaking friends in his new learning environment.

Like José, Cristián also felt that it is essential to learn English. In his third interview, when asked if he uses his English skills outside of school, he responded:

- C: When my sister has homework, I help her.
 T: Is there any other way you are using what you are learning in school?
 C: Yes, when I talk with my cousins
 T: Your cousins speak English?
 C: Yes, since they were very young
Note. C= Cristián, T=Teacher/Researcher

Ms. Morales, Cristián’s mother, revealed that even before immigrating to the United States, Cristián was concerned about learning English. She stated, “He used to ask me

questions like ‘How do you say that word in English?’ But now that we’re here, he has a lot of interest toward English. He reads the books that we have and he has a lot of interest in learning English.” Also, Cristián’s desire to speak English was evident in the classroom at MIS. Daily, Cristián tried to communicate in English with his Somali, Burmese, and Arabic-speaking classmates. In my field notes of January 22, 2007, I wrote, “Cristián can manage most of his work by himself now. He frequently tries to talk to his Somali-speaking classmates. He even tries to help them when needed. He doesn’t rely on his Spanish-speaking friends as much now.” In my field notes of February 12, 2007, I wrote, “After the discussion, students were to illustrate the desert. Cristián worked with his Burmese-speaking friend. They talked, laughed, and worked for the remainder of the period.” Often, if Cristián did not know the English word to describe what he needed to convey and his Spanish-speaking friends did not know the English word, Cristián used the picture dictionary to point to whatever picture or thought he is trying to convey. Similar to José’s parents, Ms. Morales could not attend the English classes. However, Ms. Morales did ensure that Cristián was enrolled in the afterschool tutorial program at West Metro Middle School.

Because Cristián enjoyed talking and interacting with others, learning to speak English was critical for him. Learning to speak English would allow Cristián to become a part of the community in which his “American cousins” and peers existed. Without this knowledge, Cristián could not participate in conversations and build relationships. Without this link to the English-speaking world, Cristián was unable to talk, play, and learn from other English-speaking family and friends, which was so important to him.

Prior to coming to the United States, Milagro had studied English in Honduras, which provided a foundation for her to continue her desire to develop her English language skills. Not only had Milagro begun to learn English, she also expected to use her new language skills. Although interpreters were available, Milagro insisted on conversing in English during the interviews. After one question in our second interview, Milagro thought longer than usual to respond, so I began to ask the question in Spanish. Before I could complete the sentence, Milagro interrupted and began to respond in English. During that interview, I asked Milagro to talk about something she worried about. She revealed that she was worried, “when I get things [class assignment in English] I don’t understand.” This statement showed Milagro’s concern with learning to understand English. It was troublesome to her when she received class assignments in English that she did not understand. Milagro had expected to learn enough English so that she could at the very least understand her class assignments. When asked in the third interview about things that were important to her, Milagro responded, “Making good grades and learning English.” Not understanding class assignments or homework assignments bothered Milagro. The fact that Milagro had studied English in Honduras, refused to use an interpreter during the interviews, and worried when she did not understand class assignments suggested that Milagro felt that it was important to learn and use her new English language as often as possible. Ms. Ventura also felt that learning English was important. She had required that Milagro study basic English classes before coming to the United States. During the first interview, Ms. Ventura stated about Milagro, “Well she wants to have good profession in this country. And she is learning so

that she can get that.” Ms. Ventura enrolled Milagro in the after-school tutorial classes at MIS so that she could develop her English language proficiency.

For Milagro, learning to speak English meant academic success, which was critical for her. Milagro felt that if she learned and used her English-speaking skills while completing her academic assignments, she would be a “good” or “excellent” student as she was in Honduras. Although Milagro had English-speaking friends, her impetus to learn English was not so that she could communicate with them. Milagro was focused on the academic success she could experience if she learned English.

Similar to the other participants, Leslie expected to learn English from school, and as was the case with Milagro, Leslie insisted on speaking in English during most of her audiotaped interviews. Although our conversations included both English and Spanish, the majority of the conversations were in English. During our second interview, Leslie commented that it bothered her when “my friends say, ‘You no speak English.’” Because of this peer pressure, Leslie was determined to learn English. She also revealed that she is worried about her homework because often she does not understand because of the English. In her interview she stated, “It is hard because I don’t understand . . . It is very difficult.”

During my conversations with Ms. Utitia (Leslie’s mother), she expressed that Leslie was very enthusiastic about learning English, stating, “Leslie wants to learn English and to go to college.” During the second interview, Ms. Utitia reflected on Leslie’s progress over the past few months. She felt that Leslie was learning more English and was doing well in school.

Leslie's desire to learn English was also evident in her school assignments. When I worked one-on-one with Leslie, she insisted on speaking in English, rarely asking for a Spanish interpretation. As the months progressed, she preferred to work independently, trying to complete assignments on her own before asking me for help. When she did ask for help, it was always after she had first asked her friends and they could not understand the concept together. I also noticed that Leslie rarely used a Spanish-English dictionary. Whenever I worked with Leslie, I always first asked her to explain the assignment's directions to me so I could determine if she understood what to do. I then asked her to explain what she did not understand. If an English word was causing confusion, I always asked Leslie to find the word in the dictionary, which usually provided the clue that Leslie needed to understand the assignment. Although I understood the risks involved with students using bilingual dictionaries without knowing the context of all definitions, I still wanted Leslie to understand that the dictionary could be a valuable resource for her when she worked independently.

For Leslie, learning English was a way to assure academic success. Similar to Milagro, Leslie felt that if she learned and used her English speaking skills while completing her academic assignments, she would be a "good" or an "excellent" student. Communicating with her friends was not Leslie's reason for learning English because all of her close friends spoke Spanish. However, the language of the instruction, particularly at West Metro Middle School, was English. Leslie's desire to learn English was to provide the necessary foundation so that she could succeed academically.

Learning to speak English was an expectation of both student participants and their mothers, as was evidenced by their interviews and behaviors. Understanding this

expectation allowed me to see that even though the participants had recently arrived in this country, they had established at least one clear learning goal: learning English. As a teacher, I gained a deeper understanding of what prompted my students to regularly attend school, complete homework assignments, and struggle to understand lessons. This data suggested that teachers should begin immediately using appropriate strategies and techniques to increase ELs' English language learning, especially in content area classes. Participants wanted to learn, expected to learn, and began to learn because of their already established goals.

The participants' desire to learn English involved their ability to negotiate their surroundings, both in school and out of school, in four distinct areas: dependence, to help their family, to communicate with friends and within the environment, and peer pressure. Cristián's knowledge and use of English helped him to negotiate his ability to be independent. As a student, he knew he could succeed as his English-speaking friends had done. He also needed English to negotiate the outside world for his parents. Like, Cristián, José also needed to learn English to help his family negotiate their environment, and to communicate with his non-Spanish speaking friends. Milagro's need for English enabled her to negotiate the demands of school through language use. Her teachers spoke in English, so she needed to speak English to understand and communicate in this learning environment. Leslie's desire to learn English allowed her to negotiate the tenuous relationships with her friends. She believed that speaking English, a pressure put on by her peers, would enable her to maintain these valued friendships. Their learning of English enabled these participants to negotiate these varied environments both in and out of school.

Excelling in school. When the participants initially registered for school in the United States, their parents provided copies of the transcripts of their grades from their schools in Mexico and Honduras. Because first language literacy and school readiness skills transfer from one language to another (Ellis, 2002; WIDA 2007), the participants' transcripts provided a glimpse of their potential academic achievement in their new schools in the United States. These data, along with information from the interviews, artifacts, and journal and field notes, demonstrated that the participants expected to excel in school as they had done in their previous schools in their native countries of Mexico and Honduras.

During the interviews, the participants described grades (from West Metro Middle School and MIS) in terms of A, B, C, D, or F. According to the Metro School System's grading policy, students earned an A, B, C, D, or F, depending on an average of their homework, class participation, and exam scores. Students with an average grade of 90 to 100 received a letter grade of "A." Students with an average grade of 80 to 89 received a letter grade of "B." Students with an average grade of 70 to 79 received a letter grade of "C." Students with an average grade of 60 to 69 received a letter grade of "D." Students with an average grade of 59 or below received a letter grade of "F."

Although this was Metro School System's grading policy, the focus of the MIS Intensive English Program was to ensure that the students had learned enough academic vocabulary to succeed in the mainstream classroom. The Metro School System allowed EL newcomers to receive grades of "Satisfactory Progress" or "Unsatisfactory Progress" for their first 2 years of enrollment. Beginning with the 3rd year, they could begin receiving grades based on the above numeric and letter system. Although this was a

practice encouraged but not required by county level administrators, West Metro Middle School officials chose to use the system's numeric and letter grading policy with newcomers.

However, during my years of teaching EL newcomers, I learned that immediately grading students, such as placing a failing grade on an assignment or filling a paper with X's, may not contribute toward learners becoming invested in the classroom community (Norton, 2001). I found that it was often traumatizing for EL newcomers to receive a "C," a "D," or an "F" when they were "A" students in their previous schools. When evaluating my EL newcomers' work, I tried to highlight their abilities, using checks for the correct answers on their papers. I used their incorrect answers as a guide for planning future lessons.

I wanted my students to feel a sense of accomplishment when they completed their assignments. I wanted them to feel that they could learn English and be successful in an English speaking classroom. As their teacher, it was more important to me that during this critical newcomer stage (Beginning or Entering; WIDA, 2007) for learners to focus more on learning the necessary English vocabulary, techniques, and strategies to survive in the mainstream classroom than on numeric or letter grades for their report cards. Unlike most of my colleagues, I did not have a large poster of Metro School System's grading scale posted at the front of my classroom for students to view every day.

According to his own description and as was described in his school records, Cristián was in the "A" (or top) group of his Grade 5 class in Mexico. Cristián was expected to maintain this same level of performance at MIS and West Metro Middle School, an expectation that his mother, Ms. Morales, vocalized this during both of our

audio-taped interviews. During our first interview she stated, “All I want is for him to do well in school. He used to be a good student in school.” During our final interview, Ms. Morales reemphasized her high expectations for Cristián. When asked about the grades that she expected Cristián to make, she said, “Well, I’m talking to him. I’m telling him that he should get good grades. He should study. He should keep up the good work. And I’m telling him to bring home 80 or 90.” Ms. Morales’ desire for Cristián to earn “80” or “90” (which meant receiving a “B” or an “A”) meant that she expected for him to be in the top group of his class here in the United States, as he was in Mexico. For Ms. Morales, earning “Bs” or “As” signified academic excellence.

It was evident that Cristián had adopted these same expectations and tried very hard in school. Often, before turning in assignments, Cristián solicited the help of his classmates to ensure that he had all of the correct answers for questions. He often asked for help from his Somali friend, who had a higher English language proficiency level. Even with group activities, Cristián had the same high expectations. After one class science lesson, students had been divided and heterogeneously grouped to complete a “Butterfly Life Cycle” poster and diagram. One of Cristián’s group members had not followed directions, which upset Cristián so much that he began to cry. Cristián refused to continue working with the group because the student had drawn the wrong picture to represent the butterfly’s pupa stage.

Because Cristián wanted his group’s project to be perfect and because he was very concerned about his daily grades, Cristián completed and submitted another copy of the project that he finished separately and independently as a homework assignment. Cristián’s reaction to this situation reinforced that fact that Cristián wanted to excel in

school. Cristián was an “excellent” student in Mexico and both his and his mother’s expectation was the same for him at his West Metro Middle School in the United States.

Similar to Cristián, Milagro excelled in school in Honduras and was expected to continue excelling in the United States. According to her school records, Milagro was in the top classes in Honduras and had high grades. During our second interview, Milagro discussed the “60” she had received in her Health and Physical Education class.

However, during the member check of this transcribed interview, Milagro realized that she had revealed that she had earned a low grade in this class. She was so upset by this low grade that when she member checked her transcribed conversation about this grade, she crossed out this portion because she did not want her mother to see it. Twice in her member checking of the second interview, Milagro changed the “60” to an “80” during her reading. She also crossed out her explanation of why she earned a “60,” because she did not want to dress out for physical education because it was too cold for Milagro. Milagro was still adjusting to the weather differences between Honduras, where the temperature was warm most of the time, and here in the United States, where the temperature could vary between 25 and 97 degrees (Fahrenheit). Figure 5 indicates Milagro’s member checking.

Milagro Ventura Interview #2		Milagro Ventura Interview #2	
M = Milagro T = Teacher		M = Milagro T = Teacher	
1	T: You can tell me in English or Spanish.		T: You can tell me in English or Spanish.
2	M: You can tell to me the questions in Spanish.		M: You can tell to me the questions in Spanish.
3	T: Well, if I ask you in English, and you feel more comfortable telling me the stories in		T: Well, if I ask you in English, and you feel more comfortable telling me the stories in
4	Spanish you can do that because I can understand your Spanish.		Spanish you can do that because I can understand your Spanish.
5	M: Okay. So, I can tell you in Spanish.		M: Okay. So, I can tell you in Spanish.
6	T: Ready?		T: Ready?
7	M: Yeah.		M: Yeah Yes
8	T: Okay. So, this is the second interview.		T: Okay. So, this is the second interview.
9	M: I'm scared.		M: I'm scared.
10	T: Scared of what? You talk to me all the time. How's school going for you?		T: Scared of what? You talk to me all the time. How's school going for you?
11	M: Now?		M: Now?
12	T: Yes.		T: Yes.
13	M: Now? At West Metro Middle School?		M: Now? At West Metro Middle School?
14	T: How are your classes?		T: How are your classes?
15	M: (Nods head saying yes.)		M: Everything going okay? Good
16	T: Everything going okay? Have you gotten your report card for the semester?		T: Everything going okay? Have you gotten your report card for the semester?
17	M: Yeah.		M: Yeah.
18	T: How were your grades?		T: How were your grades?
19	M: So-so.		M: So-so.
20	T: So-so?		T: So-so?
21	M: Yeah. I got 60.		M: Yeah. I got 60. Yes I have 80.
22	T: What class was that?		T: What class was that?
23	M: P.E.		T: P.E.
24	T: P.E.?		T: P.E.?
25	M: Yeah because I don't dress out never. They say, they say, "go outside" and they go		M: Yeah because I don't dress out never. They say, they say, "go outside" and they go
26	outside. So they have to put on shorts. It's so cold outside. Now, my mom call them and		outside. So they have to put on shorts. It's so cold outside. Now, my mom call them and
27	tell them that I don't have to go outside, cause it's cold. Then they say she need to dress		tell them that I don't have to go outside, cause it's cold. Then they say she need to dress
28	out. And the coach say, "she never dress out, never, never. That's why she got 60." Then		out. And the coach say, "she never dress out, never, never. That's why she got 60." Then

Figure 5. Milagro's member check.

Because Milagro's grade of "60" meant that she would receive a "D" on her report card, Milagro wanted to change her grade on the transcript so that if her mother read the transcript, she would not know that Milagro had not been dressing out for the class and had earned such a low grade.

I learned more about Milagro's expectation to excel in school, and when I asked her to tell me about something that made her happy Milagro spoke about the grades or scores that she received in her classes. She stated, "When I got a 100 . . . , when I got a 100 or stuff like that, I'm happy." Since a grade of 100 meant that students had earned "A's," Milagro wanted to earn "A's" because this signified academic success or excellence in school. According to records from her previous school in Honduras, Milagro was described an "Excellent" student. Milagro was determined to excel academically here in the United States as she had in her school in Honduras.

Milagro was not only concerned with having good grades on her report card, she was also concerned with her grammar. She almost always used her Spanish/English dictionary when she completed her class assignments. When participating in the member check, she also corrected all what she perceived to be grammatical mistakes she had made during our audiotaped interviews. Figure 5 showed where Milagro crossed out "Yeah" and wrote "Yes." Where I made a note that she nodded her head to indicate her response to my question, "How are your classes?" Milagro crossed out my note and wrote "Good." When I asked about her grades, during the audiotaped interview Milagro responded, "Yeah I got 60." Figure 5 also showed that during this member check, Milagro crossed this statement out and wrote, "Yes, I have 80" changing both the

grammar and the grade, which underscored her desire to show that she was making good grades and successfully learning English.

Milagro's mother also expected Milagro to excel in school, describing her as an "excellent" student. Milagro wanted to earn only "As" and "Bs." She did not want her mother to know that she had not been an "excellent" student in her Health and Physical Education class. In addition, Milagro did not want to be viewed as a student who used incorrect grammar.

By changing the grammar and language from a more casual speech, which she used most days, to a more formal speech and grammar pattern, Milagro demonstrated that she wanted to be viewed as an "excellent" student who used only grammatically correct speech and language. Milagro was beginning to progress beyond the Beginning stage toward the Developing stage (WIDA, 2007) of English language acquisition, where ELs begin to use written language with phonological, syntactical, and grammatical skills. Milagro was also progressing beyond the Basic Interpersonal Conversation Skills (BICS) stage (Cummins, 2007), where ELs learn basic vocabulary and conversation skills, and toward learning the discrete language skills where ELs become aware of the phonological, syntactical, and grammatical skills of the language.

The transcripts from her former school described Leslie as an "average" student. However, similar to Milagro, she was determined to excel in her classes at MIS and West Metro Middle school. During the second interview, she said, "I am happy with my work when I make 100 on my paper – when my teacher says, 'Oh Leslie, very good!'" Leslie also described herself as a hard working student stating that she, "work and work (gesturing with her fingers a continuous circle motion)" in her favorite class, math.

Although she saw herself as a hardworking student, she worried about homework because she had difficulty understanding many of her homework assignments from her teachers at West Metro Middle School. She stated about her homework, “I do not understand.” Like Milagro, Leslie was concerned about her work and made grammatical corrections to her transcribed interviews (see Figure 6) in her member-checking.

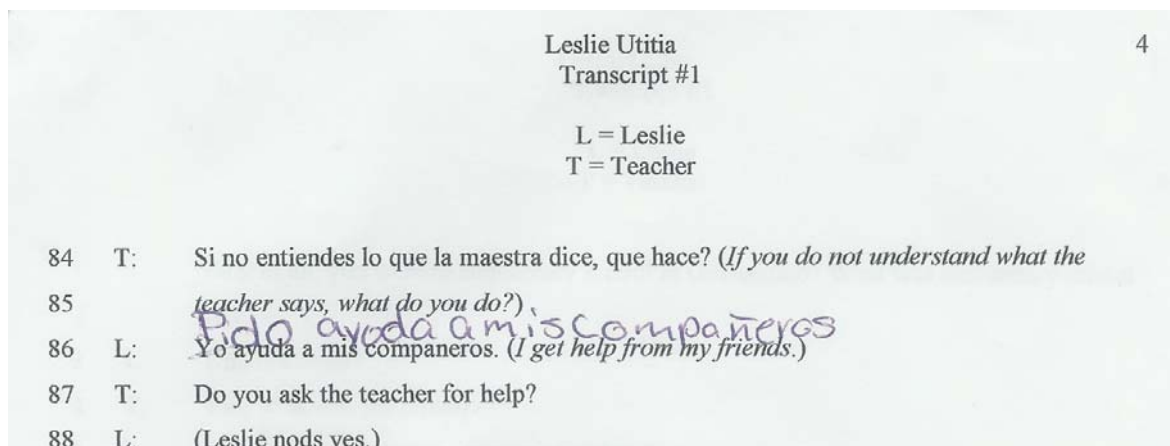


Figure 6. Leslie's member check.

In the transcript, I incorrectly transcribed Leslie's interview response. Instead of the statement “Yo ayuda a mis compañeros” (which roughly translates to “I help my friends”), the transcript should have read, “Yo pido ayuda a mis compañeros” (which translates to “I ask my friends for help”). Leslie's attention to the detail of this transcript suggested that she wanted her thoughts and speech to be presented in the best possible light, and her experiences to be represented accurately: She was in need of help from her friends rather than giving help to them. Leslie wanted me to see that she could speak, read, and write academic Spanish, which implied that she wanted to excel in school.

Ms. Utitia also expected Leslie to excel in school. Leslie participated in the afterschool tutorial program at MIS so that she could receive help completing her school assignments. During our last formal interview, Ms. Utitia stated that for Leslie, “some

subjects used to be below 75. And for one subject, the high is 85. So considering the fact that she started very low because of work, she has actually done better.”

Both Leslie and Milagro had made specific statements about how they were happy when they received high grades (80s, 90s, or 100) or when they received praise. Milagro stated that “When I got a 100 . . . , when I got a 100 or stuff like that, I’m happy.” Leslie stated that may be interpreted as Milagro’s and Leslie’s desire to please their teachers since in their first interviews, both participants had spoken fondly of their teachers and schools in Mexico and Honduras, and Milagro held her hand to her heart as she described one of her teachers and Leslie described one of her teachers as “very good.”

However, Milagro and Leslie may have wanted to receive high grades and praise for other reasons. Pleasing their parents and extended family was important to both Milagro and Leslie. They knew that their parents expected them to excel in school. During one conference with Milagro’s uncle, he related to me the importance of Milagro studying in school, commenting, “It made us very proud.” After many of Leslie’s after-school tutorial sessions, her mother inquired whether Leslie had completed her homework from West Metro Middle School.

In addition to pleasing their families, both Milagro and Leslie knew the value of what high grades and praise represented. They knew that success in middle and high school eventually translated to success in the university, which they both were expected to attend. Milagro’s mother had attended university, and her brother was enrolled in a local community college.

Milagro and Leslie also understood the link between academic excellence and economic power. Milagro's mother was an example of the power of an education. Leslie's mother constantly instilled in her the reason they came to this country; Leslie could learn English, which would give her more work opportunities and help her to have a better life. As their teacher, I also provided an example of the power of academic success. My students often asked me how I learned to speak Spanish. My response was always the same, "I listened to my teacher and studied a lot." My ability to understand and speak Spanish with a certain degree of fluency allowed me to perform my job assignment at MIS, which symbolized economic power to my students. My students also perceived teachers to be "rich" because all the faculty and staff from MIS and Metro Middle School owned automobiles. Milagro's mother was the only participant with a car. All other participants relied on public transportation. The fact that I worked and had an automobile may have contributed to the perception that academic success equated to economic success.

Although José's school records indicated that he had some academic difficulties in his previous school, he still expected to excel in his studies in the United States. During the second interview, I asked José to describe himself in his class at West Metro Middle school. He said that he was "trying very hard to learn." When asked if school was easy for him, he acknowledged, "Well, it's not easy for me. It's difficult and hard. But, it's because of the English. So, I keep trying to learn more English. And at home they always tell me to keep trying." José's mother also acknowledged that José had much to learn, stating, "He is learning because he wants to work. So, in school, he is learning to speak English. There are so many things that he doesn't know in English." Yet, Ms.

Alvarez still expected José to excel in school. She participated in parent conferences, had enrolled him in an afterschool tutorial program, and consistently encouraged him to learn as much English as possible.

Excelling in school was one of several ways that the participants demonstrated that they had set expectations from school. Participants wanted to achieve high grades on their report cards. They wanted to please their teachers. Some participants desired to attend college or a university. Also, participants wanted to be economically successful. The participants and their parents realized that all of these goals were possible if they excelled in school.

Preparing for life after school. Along with expecting to learn English and excel in school, the participants also expected school to prepare them for success in the workforce, secondary education, or their future ability to help their families. Although each participant had different reasons for attending school, they all expected their classes to prepare them for life beyond school.

Gaining the skills to help him negotiate the daily affairs of life for his family seemed to be a goal for José. During my interview with Ms. Alvarez, she stressed the importance of José's learning English because family members relied on his English-speaking abilities when they shopped, used public transportation, or conducted any business with English-speaking people. José functioned as a "language broker" for his Spanish-speaking family (Tse & McQuillan, 1996, p. 2). As a language broker, José mediated conversations between the English-speaking world and his Spanish-speaking family. Throughout the interviews, José communicated the need to learn English. José described how he helped his family with his newly acquired language skills, noting that

“when we go to a store to buy things, since they don’t know English, with my little English I help out there . . . They tell me that I already know a little English and that I can help them.” Even at such a young age, José, like so many other Spanish-speaking students, envisioned himself as mediator of communication between the English-speaking world and his Spanish-speaking family.

José’s goal was to gain life skills and prepare him for work, whereas Cristián, Leslie, and Milagro seemed more focused on learning that would prepare them for college. When I asked Ms. Morales, Cristián’s mother, whether she expected Cristián to finish high school or go to college, she explained, “We would like for him to continue and study as much as he can because we have been told that he can do it and that’s what we want him to continue as much as he can.” Ms. Morales was a college graduate, and she expected Cristián to do the same by using his education in middle and high school to prepare him for this.

Although Leslie had not verbally stated what her expectations were from school, her actions demonstrated them; she worked diligently in all her classes. For example, Leslie always came to school prepared with her books, paper, utensils, and completed homework prepared to do in class discussions and activities. She worked hard to complete all of her class assignments. Ms. Utitia commented that Leslie spent 2 to 3 hours studying and completing her school work every day. Leslie continued these same work habits when she returned to West Metro Middle School. On the several occasions I saw Leslie when I visited West Metro Middle School, she was always in the media center reading or working on a class assignment. Leslie’s two older sisters had completed high school and had begun their university studies in Mexico. Leslie’s mother expected the

same of her. Throughout our conversations, Leslie's mother explained why she came to this country, noting that "I looked forward to Leslie being in school here in the U.S. That is why we came here. I want her to have a better life than I did. So, I want her to learn English in school here." Ms. Utitia expected the educational system in the United States to give Leslie the foundation she needed to attend an English-speaking university. Ms. Utitia expected Leslie to not only learn English but also to learn the content she needed for advanced education.

When asked about what grades she expected Leslie to receive for the semester, Leslie's mother stated:

Well, for this last semester, she is doing much better. Before it was, considering the fact that she was really low, she's bringing them up really good. Some subjects use to be below 75. And for one subject, the high is 85. So, considering the fact that she started very low because of work, I heard that she was a little bit more attached to school and assignments. She has actually done much better.

The family came to the United States so that Leslie and her sister could have a better education and learn English. Her mother tearfully explained that even though Leslie did not understand that at the moment, she hoped that Leslie would understand it in the future.

It was expected that school would prepare Leslie for her secondary education. Ms. Utitia expected school to prepare Leslie for college after high school. This foundation was to serve as the stepping-stone for her academic career in college. This was critical because in the state where the study took place, high school graduates could receive a state-funded scholarship if their grades met the required criteria. This financial incentive for academic success could have been one of the reasons Leslie and her mother to expect the school to prepare Leslie for her advanced education in college.

Milagro had expectations similar to Cristián and Leslie, one of which was to prepare for university. Milagro enjoyed school, and her grades reflected this. She shared her six-week report card with me. She had earned two As, three Bs, and one C. Milagro was very excited about her grades, saying that her mother was happy about the As and Bs in her subjects. She also said that for the next semester, she would do better in her Health and Physical Education class, where she received a “C.” Like her older siblings, Milagro was expected to maintain good grades in school so that she could attend university. On one occasion, I spoke with her uncle, who communicated the same expectations. During one of our Career Week activities, I learned that Milagro wanted to attend one of the local universities to become a veterinarian. During my initial interview with Ms. Ventura, she stated that she expected schools in the United States to be better than her schools in Honduras. She also stated that her expectation for Milagro was to “hacer mejor” (do better). She also expected Milagro’s grades to improve over the year.

Differences in socioeconomic factors could explain the different expectations for the participants. When I examined their lunch records, Milagro, Leslie, and Cristián paid daily for their lunches, either full price (\$1.75) or a reduced price (.50). Because the cost for lunch was based on the students’ family income, José received a free lunch each day. According to the Metro School System lunch program, students (from a family of 4) who received free lunch had a total household income of less than \$12,000. This meant that José’s family earned less than \$12,000 a year, which had to cover rent, food, clothing, and other daily essentials. This added another perspective to explain why José was more concerned about learning English to negotiate the daily affairs of life. He had been more

concerned about how he could help his family financially in the short term rather than be concerned about his long-term goal of attending college or university.

The participants' futures seemed to hinge on the education that they were receiving at the moment. Their futures may have included college or immediate entry into the workforce. Whichever route each participant and the parents had chosen, it was evident that the participants expected school to prepare them. The participants expected to learn English; expected to excel academically as they had in their home countries; and expected the school to prepare them for advanced education, the workforce, or ways to negotiate the daily affairs of life.

Biddle (1979, 1986) and Valdés (1998) argued that learners entered new learning environments with their own set of expectations, which they developed based on their prior knowledge or their future goals. Prior to immigrating to the United States, José, Cristián, Milagro, and Leslie had developed a sense of what they expected to learn from their education in this country, which was the ability to communicate in English.

In this study, I learned about the participants' various expectations. They expected to learn English and use their newly developed English skills, as demonstrated by Milagro and Leslie. The participants expected to excel in school, as was demonstrated with José's, Cristián's, Milagro's, and Leslie's comments during the interviews. They also expected school to prepare them for life in secondary education, the workforce, or in negotiating the daily affairs of life, as was demonstrated by the participants' comments. These expectations, hopes, and anticipations reflected the participants' desire to have full participation in the learning processes in their new schools.

Newcomers eager to participate in the educational process. Chapter 2 provided a discussion of newcomer ELs' attitudes, which were defined as newcomers' "learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6), which in this discussion referred to newcomers' feelings or viewpoints toward their new schools and learning environments. The attitudes of the participants toward the target language were evidenced by their eager participation in the educational process and their comments about their current and former schools. The data revealed that the participants had positive attitudes toward their new learning environments.

Along with the normal school day, Metro School System offered other voluntary opportunities for EL newcomers to participate in the educational process. Although the participants attended school during the regular school day, they had other opportunities to receive additional language support. During the timeframe of this study, various learning opportunities were made available to the participants. Both MIS and West Metro Middle School offered after-school tutorials. The MIS after-school program met twice weekly (Tuesdays and Thursdays) and focused on enhancing students' academic vocabulary and assisting with homework. The after-school program at West Metro Middle School met twice weekly (Mondays and Wednesdays) and focused on building skills for the state-mandated norm-referenced test that is administered each spring. At the end of the school year, Metro School System also offered a free ESOL Summer School Program for all students enrolled in the ESOL program.

All of the study participants attended at least one after-school tutorial. Cristián, José, and Milagro participated in the after-school tutorial offered by West Metro Middle

School and the ESOL Summer School. Milagro and Leslie participated in the MIS after-school tutorial program because their families were participating in the English for Parents classes, which provided free transportation and snacks for all participants. Because MIS and West Metro's programs met on different days, Milagro participated in both programs.

The ESOL Summer School was a free and voluntary four-week program focused on building newcomer ELs' vocabulary and literacy skills. The program provided transportation services and breakfast for participating students. Cristián, José, and Milagro participated in this program during the month of June. Leslie, however, chose not to attend summer school and spent the summer in Mexico. Table 8 shows the opportunities and the participants who were involved in them.

Table 8. Learning Enrichment Opportunities

Participant	Afterschool tutorial (MIS)	Afterschool tutorial (West Metro Middle School)	ESOL Summer School
Cristián		X	X
José		X	X
Milagro	X	X	X
Leslie	X		(Spent summer in Mexico)

The participants' eagerness to participate in these voluntary supplemental language support programs demonstrated their positive attitudes toward school. Although these after-school tutorial programs meant more instruction and work, these participants attended and participated, in addition to completing their homework from the regular school day. Like Leslie, many students chose to return to their home country for the summer. However, 3 participants chose to participate in an opportunity for continued language learning during the summer. The fact that 3 of the participants voluntarily

participated in ESOL Summer School demonstrated their eagerness to participate in the educational process.

The participants' attitudes were measured by their comments and descriptions of their former and current schools, as well as their feelings toward school, teachers, and peers. All of the participant had various comments and descriptions about their schools that revealed that they had generally positive attitudes or feelings about school. This also suggested that the participants had positive perceptions about school and that they understood the purpose of school and the value of school.

Cristián commented that he liked “everything” about school. His description of his school in Mexico evoked fond memories. When asked about West Metro Middle School, Cristián always commented that things were going fine at school and that he was not feeling frustrated or distressed about school, even though there was a language barrier. When asked whether he would change anything about school, Cristián replied, “I really wouldn’t change anything.” Cristián’s learned attitude reflected that he enjoyed his new school, which could be a predictor of his ultimate success in school (Baker, 1992). Cristián’s learned attitude also could influence the level of English language proficiency he developed (Clément & Gardner, 2001) since the social affective characteristics of learners’ attitudes influenced learning. Cristián’s mother also had a positive attitude toward school. She commented:

I do have a good impression [of U.S. schools] because I have friends that have children and they would tell me how well they were doing in school. That’s why I decided to bring my children over here to go to school because I like their system. I like the way they teach the children.

I have a very good impression because I see that he’s doing well and he’s working hard. It’s very good for me.” During our last conversation, Ms. Morales related, “I’m so happy

he's studying here and with the little studies that he had before, he's doing well, I'm so happy.

Both Cristián and his mother had positive attitudes toward the new school in the United States. Their combined positive attitudes could have had a powerful influence on Cristián's future learning in his new U.S. school (Clément & Gardner, 2001). Cristián's learned attitude or feeling toward his learning environments could have facilitated the language learning process.

While conversing with José, I learned that he enjoyed school in Mexico. He related how his teacher would play games with the class. He also stated that they had a garden in his school. When asked if school was uncomfortable or distressing to him, José replied, "No." He also related that he did not have any problems at school. When asked whether school was uncomfortable or distressing to him, José stated, "It hasn't been too hard because the work that the teacher gives us I finish it." In our last interview, I asked José how school was for him now. He commented, "I feel happy. I feel like I'm trying to do my best at school."

During the initial and final interviews with Ms. Alvarez, she confirmed José's positive attitude toward school. From the first interview, I learned that "José is doing well. His classes are good. All of his grades are good. He's not having any problems at school." Ms. Alvarez also stated, "He likes school very much. He wants to go to school every day. Every day he studies a lot so that he can learn English." She added that she "like[s] it [West Metro Middle School] a lot. Everything is fine. I am very happy." Twelve weeks later, during the second interview, Ms. Alvarez commented that Cristián was "doing good on the work that he turns in. He gets 90 or 100." From the data, I

learned that José had a positive attitude toward school. His mother's comments confirmed his positive attitude toward school.

Milagro described her school in Honduras as a "happy school," where the teachers were caring and helpful toward the students. She described her former elementary and middle schools as "easy" compared to her classes at West Metro Middle School. When asked about her classes here during the fourth interview, Milagro replied, "Well, school is not sooo difficult. I'm doing okay in my classes. I get Bs and some As." She also added, "I like school. It's different. But I like my classes." When asked what she would change about school if she could, she stated, "Hmm. Nothing." During our conversations, Milagro's mother revealed that she felt very comfortable with the schools in the United States. She commented that the schools were "good" or "excellent." In the second interview, Ms. Ventura echoed Milagro's attitude toward school, relating that Milagro "likes school. She learns all day."

Similar to the other participants, Leslie had fond memories of her school in Mexico. She described her former elementary school as "beautiful and fun." However, she described her school here as "boring." During the second interview, I asked Leslie whether school is easy or difficult for her. She replied, "Easy and difficult." She stated that school is easy for her when she understands everything and hard when she does not understand. She also worries about homework because she often does not understand it. By the end of the study, Leslie had grown to like school, describing everything as "good – my class, my teachers, my friends."

As I conversed with Ms. Utitia, I learned that Leslie really enjoyed school in Mexico, so much so that at one point, she wanted to return to Mexico to complete her

schooling. However, by the end of the school year, Leslie had begun to enjoy school at West Metro Middle School. Her mother related, “Leslie likes school. She likes going every day.” During this interview, Ms. Utitia emphasized again why she came to this country, noting, “I look forward to Leslie being in school here in the U.S. That is why we came here. I want her to have a better life than I did. So I want her to learn English in school here.” Although it was a process, both Leslie and Ms. Utitia had begun to develop positive attitudes toward the new school system in the United States.

Newcomers’ attitudes or feelings toward schools can positively or negatively affect their learning (Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991). During this study, Spanish-speaking Middle school EL newcomers’ attitudes toward the target language were evidenced by their eager participation in the educational process and their comments about their current and former schools.

As presented in chapter 2, the participants’ preexisting perceptions about school had a tremendous impact on their current perceptions of, expectations from, and attitudes toward their new school environment. Savignon and Wang (2003) suggested that “learner views of learning cannot be ignored, in particular, when there is a mismatch between teacher beliefs and learner beliefs” (p. 225). The data gathered from the observations and interviews with the sample of Spanish-speaking middle school EL newcomers’ and their mothers revealed several patterns. First, the participants had positive perceptions about school and felt that participation in the education process was necessary for success in life. All participants expressed how much they enjoyed both their previous schools and their new schools in the U.S. Their behaviors suggested that they viewed education as important. Second, they had set expectations, namely, to learn English and excel in

school. Milagro and Leslie strived for “100s,” “As,” and “Bs.” Third, they wished to receive an education that prepared them for life after school or prepared them for ways to negotiate the daily affairs of life. José needed to learn English to help his family. Cristián wanted to learn English to talk with his “American” cousins. Milagro and Leslie desired to learn English so that she could excel in school and attend college. After examining the Spanish-speaking EL newcomers’ perceptions of school, expectations from school, and attitudes toward school, it is critical to analyze how they have begun to adjust to their new school environments.

“Doing” School: Newcomers Adjusting to School

Although all of the participants brought school experiences with them, these experiences were vastly different from what they experienced at West Metro Middle School. Some differences participants experienced included the way the school was organized, the way instruction occurred, and how they conformed to the cultural norms of a given society (Helmer & Eddy, 2003). In this section, I discuss how the participants learned to “do” (Helmer & Eddy, 2003, p. 50) school and understand the unwritten rules in this vastly different environment, how learning was conceptualized in newcomers’ new learning communities, the various strategies used to cope in the classroom, and how newcomers interacted with the teacher.

Learning to “Do” School: Adjusting to the Classroom

Transitioning from primary to middle school is sometimes difficult for learners. When students in the United States begin middle school, they have to learn the basic rules and regulations about lockers, lunch numbers, student numbers, after-school programs, and other activities that may not have existed in elementary school. Similar to native

English-speaking learners, EL newcomers in this study had to make the transition from primary to middle school. They also had to face the stresses and challenges associated with cultural adaptation when they immigrated to the United States from Honduras and Mexico.

The processes involved in “doing school” (Helmer & Eddy, 2003, p. 50) are rarely outlined, taught, or described explicitly for newcomers. Rather, newcomers must learn these processes over time. The data gathered from this study revealed several strategies that the participants used as they learned to “do” school and survive within the academic learning environment. At the same time, these participants created their own identities within the learning community and became invested in this learning community. As I investigated how the participants learned to do school, I found that the data revealed several themes: (a) The participants created and learned how to negotiate their new identities, (b) classroom communities impacted learning within them, and (c) racial tension existed on certain levels at West Metro Middle School.

Newcomers Created and Negotiated Identities

All learners are continuously creating a shared identity by engaging in and contributing to the practices in their communities (Lave & Wenger, 2007). When learners’ developing sense of self is acknowledged and extended through their interactions with their peer and teachers, they are more likely to apply themselves to academic effort and participate actively in instruction (Cummins, 2001). In contrast, when learners’ language, culture, and experiences are ignored or disregarded, they are “immediately starting from a disadvantage” (Cummins, 2001, p. 2). For the Spanish-speaking middle-school EL newcomers in this study, creating and negotiating their

identities in their new learning communities proved to be tranquil and orderly at some times and turbulent and chaotic at other times.

Unfamiliar with the dress codes of U.S. schools, many newcomers began school wearing the same clothes or uniforms that they may have worn in their previous schools in Mexico or Honduras. After being in school a short time, most newcomers began to change their dress to imitate other students their age. However, when José began classes at MIS, he already seemed familiar with the style of dress of most of the students from West Metro Middle School. He did not want to stand out as being different by wearing his traditional uniform from Mexico. Through his artistic hair designs and baggy clothes, José seemed to want to fit in with other students from his school. Not wanting to draw attention to himself, José often worked quietly, observed his surroundings, and rarely spoke out in class. José indicated that at his other school, he associated only with his Spanish-speaking friends from MIS.

As a newcomer, José was not yet comfortable with his new school. He tried to “look” like his peers from West Metro Middle School. José was learning how and where he fit into these communities, establishing his own identity within his new learning communities (Norton, 2002). Because José had not yet fully learned all of the dynamics of his new school communities at West Metro Middle School and the MIS, he attempted to blend in and not look different from his peers, and he associated only with peers with whom he could communicate in Spanish.

At his previous school, Cristián was a good student. As he became a part of the classroom community at the MIS, he seemed to want to continue in that role. His work patterns and his social interactions with other students showed that he wanted to be

accepted by both his teacher and his peers. Cristián consistently completed all assignments and homework. He also had many friends (both Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish speaking) in the classroom. When asked about his classroom community at West Metro Middle School, Cristián indicated that he rarely associated with the students at the school. When he arrived in the afternoon, he went directly to his class.

At the MIS, Cristián had already established his identity within the learning community. He was liked by his peers and teacher; he felt comfortable enough with me and Ms. Abdallah, my trilingual paraprofessional, to openly ask questions if he needed help; he was viewed as hardworking and intelligent by his peers. However, at West Metro Middle School, Cristián still struggled to find his identity as a middle-school teenager within this learning community. He associated only with the students from the MIS that he attended class with at West Metro Middle School. During Cristián's interview, he stated that he never asked his West Metro Middle School teachers' questions. He also stated that the work was sometimes difficult for him at West Metro Middle School. Because Cristián went straight to class when he arrived at West Metro Middle School in the afternoon and lacked this opportunity to interact with his peers at that school, he was at an immediate disadvantage because these opportunities to interact allowed students to develop a sense of self and learn where they fit within a learning community (Cummins 2001, 2002).

At both the MIS and West Metro Middle School, Leslie seemed to be engaged in both learning communities. At the MIS, she participated in class discussions, assignments, and homework. Through her mother, I learned that Leslie was engaged in the learning environment at West Metro Middle School. She also was enrolled in

extracurricular activities, playing on the girls' soccer team. However, at times, she had difficulties with boys in her classes at West Metro Middle School. Through one of her teachers, I learned that she had been "bullying" a male student in her class. Although the teacher considered Leslie's actions to be "bullying," Leslie considered her actions to be "defending" herself. She explained that the male student had been bothering her and her friends, after which they decided to retaliate against the male student so that he would stop bothering them. This situation thus created a problem in the learning community, where Leslie was disciplined for her actions. Similar to Cristián, Leslie was still struggling to negotiate her identity within her classroom communities at West Metro Middle School. Unlike being a member of the MIS learning community, Leslie had not been accepted as a member at West Metro Middle School, that is, the other students had not affirmed Leslie as a member of their already existing community, thus disempowering her and creating conflicts within the community (Cummins, 2001).

Milagro experienced a similar situation. Although she was successful in most of her efforts to create and negotiate her identity in her learning environments, at times, friction in the learning community hampered her efforts. In Honduras, Milagro was a good student, and she had become a member of our class learning community at MIS. Through her classroom actions and demeanor, it was evident that Milagro wanted to continue in that role as a well-liked, diligent, and smart member of the community. However, one incident at West Metro Middle School caused a disruption in her efforts. During one of her classes, she was verbally assaulted by an African-American student and was called names because she asked to use the classroom markers. She had been accepted by her Spanish-speaking friends, but she had not been accepted as part of the

classroom community by some African-American students. This situation caused Milagro to question many of the dynamics in her learning community at West Metro Middle School. During our interview, when she discussed the situation, she wondered why the student was allowed to say, “*Hispanics suck!*” without any reprimand from the teacher. She also commented that she had never experienced situations like this in Honduras. We continued the conversation, with Milagro explaining how this incident affected her:

- T: So, what do your friends do when they hear that [Hispanics suck!]?
M: One friend, he told a bad word in Spanish. And the Black boy, he ask other Hispanic boy and then he go to the Principal. And my friend, they get suspended in ISS [In-School Suspension]. Yeah.
T: Okay. When you see things like that or see thing like that does it interfere with your learning, does it keep you from learning? Does it stop you from learning?
M: Yeah I think cause I’m sad when people say that. (Pauses to open the door.)
T: You said that when people say things like that it keeps you from learning. How so?
M: Hmm?
T: How so when people say things like that? How does it keep you from learning? How do you feel?
M: Sad.
T: What does it do to you in the classroom? Does it stop you from learning?
M: Yeah I think cause I don’t like when Black people say stuff like that, when people say that. Cause when you go to my country they don’t tell that.
T: They don’t say things like that in your country.
M: Uh, uh.
T: Some of my students have been saying that school is uncomfortable for them, that it’s distressing to them. Do you know the word distressing? Is school uncomfortable or distressing for you?
M: Ummm (Makes a so-so hand gesture.)

Note. M= Milagro, T=Teacher/Researcher

Developing a sense of empowerment is an essential component of learners’ ability to negotiate their identity within a learning community (Cummins, 2001). Empowerment results when the learners’ schooling experiences allow them “to participate competently in instruction as a result of having developed a secure sense of identity and the knowledge that their voices will be heard and respected within the classroom” (Cummins,

2001, p. 16). In this situation, Milagro was still striving to achieve a sense of identity in this West Metro Middle School class. Her voice as a Spanish-speaking student had not been heard, respected, or accepted by some students in this classroom. In addition, Milagro was unable to “participate competently” because the stress of the confrontation prevented her from learning, “cause when you go to my country they don’t tell that.”

As the participants’ teacher, I sought to acknowledge and accept them individually. Within my classroom, the students were allowed to use their first language and collaborate with their Spanish-speaking peers. When collaborative group projects were assigned, I tried to pair newly arrived students with peers of the same language background. Within these linguistically homogeneous groups, the students, including the participants, used their first language to complete assignments, which communicated to them that their language and culture were accepted and valued in our learning community at MIS.

Throughout this study, José, Cristián, Leslie, and Milagro were continuously creating a shared identity by engaging in and contributing to the practices in the learning community within my classroom at MIS (Lave & Wenger, 2007). When learners’ developing sense of self is acknowledged and extended through their interactions with their peer and teachers, they are more likely to apply themselves to academic effort and actively participate in instruction (Cummins, 2001). At times, the participants’ sense of self was acknowledged and extended through their interactions with their peers. However, at other times, their language, culture, and experiences were ignored or disregarded, which created an immediate disadvantage for these Spanish-speaking EL middle school newcomers.

Classroom communities' impact on learning. Classroom communities often are established during the first few weeks of school, and EL newcomers sometimes join the class after these classroom communities have been established. These already established communities can facilitate or impede newcomer ELs' learning (Bruner, 1986; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Even though the participants envisioned themselves as part of the learning environment, I found that they struggled to become part of that environment. For example, during our interview, Cristián noted that he really did not associate with other students at his school. When he arrived at West Metro Middle School in the afternoons, he went directly to class. He said that he really did not associate with the other students. José commented that he associated only with Spanish-speaking students at MIS and West Metro Middle School. Milagro struggled to cross the cultural barrier between her and the English-speaking African-American students. She could not comprehend why she was excluded from the already established classroom communities at West Metro Middle School because of her racial and linguistic identities. Because of linguistic and cultural barriers, the participants' only link to the existing classroom communities was through their bilingual peers. Relying on peers for interpretation, translation, or clarification services creates other issues that can impact whether EL newcomers succeed academically.

The interactions between teachers and students as well as among students are more central to student success than any method of teaching literacy or other content areas. The classroom communities within which these interactions occur can either embrace and propel these ELs toward language proficiency or create an atmosphere where learners can become marginalized. As their teacher at MIS, I recognized the

importance of modeling positive interactions for my students, I respected their cultures and languages, and I expected them to respect others' cultures and languages. I initiated positive conversations with my students, and I expected my students to do the same with each other. Daily, I worked to create an atmosphere of trust as my students interacted while learning.

In Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of situated learning, learning takes place from the process of engagement in a community of practice. In this study, classroom community was defined in terms of the three dimensions of trust, interaction, and learning (Rovai, Cristol, & Lucking, 2001). During this study, I learned that the participants developed trusting relationships with other students, particularly Spanish-speaking students. Leslie and her best friend Maria became very good friends while enrolled at MIS, working together, sharing materials, and assisting each other with homework. Milagro spoke often spoke about her Spanish-speaking friends at West Metro Middle School. I saw how the participants regularly interacted with other students during collaborative group class assignments, lunch, and after school as they waited for their buses to return to West Metro Middle School. I also began to learn not only sociocultural English but also content-area vocabulary as I helped them with their homework from West Metro Middle School and as they began to use content-specific vocabulary from lessons that they had been taught. The data also revealed that a disruption in this classroom community negatively impacted the participants' attitudes toward and investment in the learning communities.

Discrimination and racial tension. All of the participants came from small Spanish-speaking schools in Mexico and Honduras, countries where the student

populations were fairly homogeneous in terms of language, race, and/or gender.

However, schools in the United States are diverse in terms of language, race, and gender.

At times, this created tensions within the classrooms for the participants.

Thomas and Collier (1997) identified four components that interact to facilitate or impede language development: sociocultural, academic, cognitive, and linguistic. If one component is developed to the neglect of another, it may be detrimental to students' growth and future success. The academic, cognitive, and linguistic components must be viewed as developmental. For the child, adolescent, and young adult going through the process of formal schooling, development of any one of these three components depends critically on simultaneous development of the other two through both first and second languages.

Sociocultural processes strongly influence students' access to cognitive, academic, and language development in positive and negative ways. It is crucial that educators provide a socioculturally supportive school environment that allows natural language, academic, and cognitive development to flourish in the students' first and second languages. Thomas and Collier (1997) suggested that community or regional social patterns such as prejudice and discrimination expressed toward certain groups or individuals in personal and professional contexts can influence students' achievement in school; societal patterns such as subordinate status of a minority group or acculturation versus assimilation forces also can impact student achievement. This was evident from the data collected from Milagro and Leslie.

Leslie described a civil rights and discrimination lesson in her social studies class that made her sad. As we talked, Leslie said that she thought it was sad that

discrimination exists between “Chinese” and “Black” people and “White people” and “Mexicans.” Our conversation began with:

- T: For today’s interview, I want you to think about some stories something that was funny, something that was made you laugh like ha, ha, ha, ha. Something that made you mad. Or something that made you sad.
- L: I am upset for this. (Shows me a bracelet that has the words “Stop Stereotypes.”)
- T: Why are you upset about that?
- L: Discrimination
- T: Oh, stereotypes. Why are you wearing that?
- L: Porque vimos un movie (We saw a movie) and my teacher say to not discriminate . . . (Leslie almost falls from the chair.) Um, um (Leslie struggles to find the words in English.)
- T: It as a story about discrimination?
- L: Yes with Chinese people and Black people, White people and Mexican people.

Note. L = Leslie, T = Teacher

Leslie’s description of the lesson and its effect on her could have potentially influenced her academic, cognitive, and language development (Thomas & Collier, 1997). She stated that discrimination upsets her, which could have influenced her attitude toward the learning environment and interfered with her learning (Cummins, 2001)

During one interview with Milagro, she told me about an incident involving African-American students and Spanish-speaking students. When I asked her how school was going, she said that everything was fine. However, understanding the power imbalance in our teacher-researcher/student relationship, I probed deeper and asked again about her day and whethershe was upset about something. Only after my second attempt to understand what was bothering Milagro did I learn about the racial tension that existed between Spanish-speaking students and African-American (“Black”) students. Milagro explained that some “Black” students had offended her with derogatory comments about “Hispanics.” When asked about something that made her sad in school, she said:

- M: (long pause) When Black people say Hispanic people suck.

- T: When they say what?
 M: When Black people say Hispanic people suck.
 T: Why do they say that?
 M: I think it's racist.
 T: What do you do when people say things like that?
 M: I leave the room.
 T: You leave the room? Are there a lot of Black people in your class?
 M: The whole people in the classroom is Black. We are, I think, 4 Hispanic people in there.
 T: How does it make you feel when they say things like that?
 M: They look to me.
 T: But how does it make you feel?
 M: Sad.

Note. M = Milagro, T = Teacher

Our conversation continued, with Milagro telling me the entire story. Our conversation then turned to grades and friends at school. I asked Milagro what she talks about with her friends:

- M: We talk about school or the English people. Some of my other friends, they get suspended cause they tell some words in Spanish to Black people cause Black people say, "Hispanics suck! Hispanics suck!" They tell bad things about Hispanic.
 T: So, what do your friends do when they hear that?
 M: One friend, he told a bad word in Spanish. And the Black boy, he ask other Hispanic boy and then he go to the Principal. And my friend, they get suspended in ISS. Yeah.

Note. M = Milagro, T = Teacher

I then asked Milagro how this affected her in classroom:

- T: What does it do to you in the classroom? Does it stop you from learning?
 M: Yeah I think cause I don't like when Black people say stuff like that, when people say that. Cause when you go to my country they don't tell that.

Note. M = Milagro, T = Teacher

During our conversation, Milagro explained that racism in school was a new experience for her. Whereas Leslie's racial tensions were imagined, Milagro's were real. Milagro saw this incident as hate speech, something that should not have existed in the learning community. This situation suggested that human relationships (Cummins, 2001) necessary to forming a positive classroom community did not exist in this situation. The

racial tension between Spanish-speaking and African-American students began to influence Milagro and her learning. As Butler & Gutierrez (2003), Destigter (2001), and Valdés (2001) reported, learners within the classroom community develop their perceptions of language use, bilingualism and academic activities, which may affect academic performance. From Milagro's negative experience, she learned that in some communities, she was not accepted, respected, or valued.

During other informal conversations, I learned that Milagro's previous school was not as diverse as her schools in the United States. She had never experienced outward prejudice before coming to the United States, and she expected the schools to be impartial organizations where students from all cultures could learn together. However, it was evident that existing racial tensions continue to impact newcomers' learning (Thomas & Collier, 1997). As Leslie and Milagro soon learned, living in a globalized society requires that different linguistic groups interact with each other. The greater the power difference between the language learner and the target language, the more complex the interaction becomes (Norton, 2002). At times, this was difficult and challenging for the participants.

Language Learning Conceptualized in the Classroom

Learning should be the goal in any EL classroom. As the ELs participated in the various learning opportunities, I documented several themes and topics. The participants moved from nonparticipation toward participation in the learning community. They also began to invest in their language learning community.

Outsider to insider: Moving from nonparticipation toward participation. Moving toward greater participation in the classroom room is critical for newcomers (Frau-Ramos & Nieto, 1993). As newcomer ELs move along the language development continuum, they progress in their oral language use in the classroom (Cummins, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2001; Krashen, 1982). Even though the participants were at the entry and beginning levels of language development, they could still participate in classroom activities. Even at these early stages of language development, the participants engaged at various levels appropriate for their level of ability in English. As these participants became more proficient in the target language, they also participated more verbally in the classroom activities. During the initial interviews, some participants gave one-word or short answers to the interview questions. However, during the last interview, they gave more elaborate responses.

José. While examining José's attitude toward learning in the United States, I noticed that José was a very quiet student, even in Spanish. Although José was learning English, he was reluctant to communicate English while in class. José was still in the "silent period" (Ellis, 2002, p. 82). Unlike the other participants, José had not formally studied English, and he did not have the language background to feel comfortable communicating in English. Initially, all of his close friends were Spanish speaking.

Because José knew that I understood Spanish, he would try to communicate with me only in Spanish. However, if I knew that José had the vocabulary to say specific words and phrases in English, I made him speak to me in English before I would respond to his request, asking, “How do you say that in English?” after which he would say the English word or phrase. Several times during the semester, I rearranged seating in the classroom so that different language groups within the class would have to interact and use English as their primary language of communication.

During this study, I found that José would use English only when it was imperative for him to do so. This sometimes was the case in the classroom while he was interacting with other students or with me. This also was the case with his family, when José would use English only when it is necessary to help the family negotiate through some situation outside of the Spanish-speaking community where he lives. It seems that José is learning English because of an obligation to the family. During each interview with José, he verbalized his reason for learning English, which was “to help my family.” He feels that it is his obligation to learn enough English to help the family survive in this new country.

Cristián. Unlike José, Cristián is a very outgoing and talkative student. Similar to José, Cristián had not formally studied English in school; however, he regularly watched English television programs in Mexico. He has a native English-speaking family with whom he converses on a regular basis. On his first day in class, Cristián tried to express himself with the English vocabulary that he had. Although most of his friends spoke Spanish as their first language, Cristián regularly socialized with other classmates who spoke other languages. Even when he could not think of the English word to use, he drew

a picture or used hand gestures to relay his point or to converse with other students who did not speak English. Cristián was not hesitant about using the English that he had learned.

Cristián was an active participant in class discussions and regularly asked to read out loud from our reading assignments. He also was very eager to learn more than the content-area English being taught in class. Often, he would ask me to explain the meaning of English phrases that he would hear English-speaking students use. He wanted to make sure that the phrases were appropriate for him to use. He also wanted to know how to use them, often with the different forms of the conjugated verb. For example, many of my students used the term “cool” as an expression to mean that a person or situation was good or acceptable. Cristián had heard this expression numerous times and asked me about its meaning. After I explained the meaning to Cristián, he began to incorporate this expression into his vocabulary, often referring to people or things as “cool.” I began to see that Cristián was learning English to socialize and was beginning to view English not only as a way to develop academic knowledge but also as a way to communicate with his friends.

Leslie. Similar to Cristián, Leslie was an outgoing student. Though Leslie had not formally studied English, she had learned some English from television programs in Mexico and from her older sisters, who were attending a Mexican university. Leslie went through a relatively brief silent period (Ellis, 2002) when she first arrived in the United States, but she quickly began to use her new language skills as she learned them. When speaking to non-Spanish-speaking people, Leslie always spoke in English, unless she could not think of the word in English. Leslie even attempted to communicate with her

Spanish-speaking friends in English. I noticed that Leslie regularly attempted to speak to her best friend in English; she would revert to Spanish only if her friend could not understand the English words.

Leslie actively participated in class discussions. She often volunteered to read aloud or assist others in the class. However, she still insisted on writing in Spanish. She was still developing her English writing skills, even though she had become very proficient with her BICS (Cummins, 2007). Although she was not opposed to learning English, Leslie did not see English as necessary for secondary or university education because she knew that she could attend a university in Mexico that did not require her to use English. Even though Leslie was learning and using her newly acquired language skills, she seemed to be learning English because her family wanted her to learn it.

Milagro. When Milagro began her classes at MIS, she felt quite comfortable speaking some English on her first day. Over time, she insisted on speaking only English. Initially, Milagro gravitated toward her Spanish-speaking peers in the class; however, over time, Milagro began to socialize and communicate in English with students from many different language groups. On one occasion, she created a notebook with various greetings from the different language groups in the class. Several times, I noticed that she would try to read or pronounce the various greetings. Milagro also took the initiative to welcome and assist new students to the class.

Milagro used English when speaking to other Spanish-speaking students. She even preferred to write in English. Milagro participated in class discussions, and she often volunteered to read. She even provided peer tutoring for others in the class. Milagro wanted to use every opportunity to use her newly acquired language skills. Like Cristián,

she often asked the meaning of the English phrases that she heard other students use. Milagro was learning English to succeed not only in her academic classes but also in her new English-speaking community.

When José, Cristián, Milagro, and Leslie came to the United States, their English language proficiency levels were at the entering and beginning levels (WIDA, 2007), which prevented them from fully participating in some aspects of their learning communities. However, as their English language proficiency levels increased, they participated in more conversations with students who spoke English or who were learning to speak English. As the participants began to cross the language barrier, they moved toward more participation in the community, thereby establishing a link to the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Researchers (Lave & Wenger; Norton, 2001) have suggested that learners may choose to participate or not in their learning communities.

The participants' choice to participate in the learning community allowed them to cross the language barrier that they encountered when they first arrived at West Metro Middle School and MIS. Although they still struggled to have full participation in their learning communities at West Metro Middle School, they were moving toward having full participation in the learning community at MIS. With the help of "cultural resources" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 100), such as relative access to bilingual peers, opportunities to participate in the learning community, and access to information, the participants were able to gain access to the existing learning community at MIS.

Newcomers' Investment in an Imagined Community

Norton (1997, 2001) commented extensively on the subject of student motivation, contending that educators should shy away from considering whether

students are “motivated” (Norton, 1997, p. 411) to learn. Rather, Norton (1997) stressed that educators should ask whether students are “invested” (p. 411) in the learning community. Although quiet, shy, and apprehensive when he first arrived, José began to envision himself as a member of the community outside of MIS and West Metro Middle School and desired to participate in this community with his newly acquired English language skills. For José, failing to become a part of the English-speaking world outside of MIS and West Metro Middle School was not an option. During three of our interviews, José said, “I want to learn English so I can help my family.” José could clearly see himself as part of that community, so he worked diligently toward learning English so that he could succeed in his quest.

Similar to José, Cristián envisioned himself a member of the community outside of MIS and Metro Middle School, and he wanted to participate in this community, more specifically with his “American cousins.” Before Cristián arrived, his goal was to learn English so that he could communicate with his English-speaking cousins who lived in the United States. Although Cristián had thought that school would be very difficult, he saw himself as a future English speaker independently reading and studying English books before arriving here in the United States.

Although Milagro thought that American schools would be difficult, she still envisioned herself as part of the English-speaking community before she arrived in the United States. During our first interview, she stated, “I think . . . when I come to this school . . . yes . . . I think it scary because I said to my Mom I have many friends, many teachers [in Honduras]. I imagine it hard.” However, because she had studied English before coming to the United States, Milagro immediately began to use the English

language skills that she had learned in Honduras. Milagro saw herself as a member of the language learning communities at both MIS and West Metro Middle School. It was not until she experienced the confrontation with a student about using a set of classroom markers, which escalated into the racial incident described earlier, that Milagro realized that she had not been accepted by some communities. This incident may have influenced any future desire to become a part of the learning community at West Metro Middle School and could impact her future learning (Savignon & Wang, 2003)

Before coming to the United States, Leslie thought that teachers in American schools “would be angry. Classes aburridas (boring).” It may have seemed that Leslie was invested in her learning communities because she completed class assignments, studied diligently, and earning good grades made her “happy.” However, her mother confided in me that Leslie was very unhappy in the United States and had threatened to run away to Mexico to be with her older sisters. When she first arrived, Leslie had not yet imagined herself to be part of her new learning communities. However, toward the end of the school year, her mother reported that she “no longer has the idea of returning to Mexico.” Ms. Utitia commented that she had promised that she would allow Leslie to spend the summer in Mexico, which seemed to have a tremendous affect on Leslie and prompted her to think about her future in the United States.

Norton (1997) defined investment as the “socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” (p. 411). When learners invest in target language learning practices, they demonstrate their desire for a wider range of identities and an expanded set of

possibilities in the future as members of that target language community, thus investing in a desired identity.

Before José, Milagro, Cristián, and Leslie immigrated to the United States and entered MIS and West Metro Middle School, they had developed thoughts and ideas about their new school communities, thus “creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from” (Wenger, 1998, p. 173) their own experiences. These participants had constructed an image of their place in relation to their new school communities and possibilities for the future. They had created “imagined communities.” While developing their imagined communities, these newcomers drew on their past and current learning experiences as they pondered their future educational opportunities (Dagenais, 2003). This study revealed the various perceptions that the newcomer Spanish-speaking students had about their new school environment.

Surviving the Classroom: Participants’ Coping Strategies

Another aspect of newcomers learning involves developing coping strategies to survive within the new learning environment. Stressful situations are normal occurrences in the daily lives of newcomer students (DeStigter, 2001; Fu, 1995; Valdés, 2001). Newcomer ELs often employ various strategies in these learning situations. From the data collected during this study, I documented several important strategies that these students use in the classroom: peer collaboration, reference materials, and teacher interaction.

Rather than seek assistance from their teachers, the participants often sought help from their friends and classmates. Overwhelmingly, the participants always looked

toward their classmates for assistance whenever they experienced any academic difficulty in the classroom. I asked the students the following question, “What do you do when you do not understand what the teacher says or the classroom assignment?” They replied:

“Another child who speaks English does the translation.” (Cristián)

“If I don’t understand, then I ask one of my classmates to tell me what the teacher had said so that I can do my work.” (José)

“I ask my classmates.” (Leslie)

“I ask my other friends.” (Milagro)

The participants also relied on their friends when they needed any kind of translation with an English speaker. These statements pointed to their need to rely on friends as a coping strategy and demonstrated the importance of peer collaboration. As a classroom teacher, I understood the importance of peer collaboration for EL newcomers and often paired students to complete class assignments because it permitted more student-to-student interaction, allowed students to practice with a peer, and offered more chances to participate with verbalizing and writing text. The teachers at West Metro Middle School implemented peer collaboration as a strategy. During several of my visits, I saw students working with partners to complete assignments.

Although the students had bilingual dictionaries and computer access for online resources, they seldom used these resources. Instead, they used classroom references as a way to learn and comprehend in the classroom. The dictionaries and online resources were used only when they could not talk with their friends or classmates.

Interacting with the Teacher: Questions Anyone?

As I analyzed the data and themes from this study, the participants’ cultural expectations became a key component in the classroom. Cultural expectations are an integral component of the American classroom and are crucial to EL newcomers’

academic success because they must understand the cultural rules that govern oral communication (Chang, 2004; Johnson, 1997). Many EL newcomers may have expectations about the role of public speaking that are different from those of their teachers, which may clash with cultural norms in U.S. classrooms.

In the culture of many U.S. classrooms, fluency and talkativeness are viewed as indicators of learners' intelligence, competence, friendliness, and other positive characteristics (Chang, 2004; Johnson, 1997). However, this may be problematic for EL newcomers who have not developed sufficient English language skills to participate fluently in discussions. They may then be viewed as less than intelligent, competent, or friendly. Often, participation in classroom discussions constitutes a significant portion of the cumulative grades for courses. The grading policy for the MIS District mandates that 40% of cumulative grades be based on class participation. This policy could be problematic for newcomer ELs who may not be able to participate fully in classroom discussions, subsequently placing entry-level newcomer ELs at an automatic disadvantage. In addition, if educators are not familiar with the various forms of participation that these students are capable of, the opportunities for them to have meaningful classroom engagement may be limited (WIDA, 2007). Cristián, José, Milagro, and Leslie had not yet developed sufficient English to fully participate in classroom discussions.

Another classroom expectation dictates that students ask questions when they need clarification about a particular topic (Zanger, 1994). However, my findings suggested that the participants did not ask their teachers any questions, even if the mainstream teachers spoke and understood Spanish. When the participants were asked

whether they had ever spoken with their teachers or asked them questions, they responded:

“A couple of times I ask them. But not very often with some of the words I know how to say.” (José)

“No!” (Cristián)

“I ask my classmates.” (Leslie)

The participants also revealed that they relied heavily on their classmates to clarify information for them. When I asked them what they would do if they did not understand what the teacher said, their responses included the following:

“If I don’t understand, then I ask one of my classmates to tell me what the teacher had said so that I can do my work.” (José)

“Another child who speaks English does the translation.” (Cristián)

“I ask my classmates.” (Leslie)

These responses revealed that the participants were hesitant to ask the teachers questions because they were intimidated or because the language barrier prohibited their participation. During our many informal discussions, I asked José, Cristián, Milagro, and Leslie why they do not ask the teacher questions in class. They either responded, “I don’t know,” or merely smiled and shrugged their shoulders, as if to indicate that they did not know. They also revealed that even if they did ask questions, it was always after class and always with the help of their bilingual peers. However, I observed that when Milagro, Cristián, and Leslie were attending classes at MIS, they often asked questions during classroom discussions. José asked questions individually or in a small group after they had raised their hands and called me over to their desk.

When the participants arrived in the United States, they had to adjust to their new classroom environments and learn the new written and unwritten rules. Within their first few months, these newcomers learned how to “do” school (Helmer & Eddy, 2003),

creating and negotiating their identities, moving from nonparticipation toward participation, and becoming invested in their new learning communities. Because they now attended a more diverse school with students representing different ethnic and linguistic groups, the participants learned how racial tensions among these groups were solved, or not.

Changes in Perceptions, Expectations, Attitudes, and Investments

In chapter 2, there was an extensive discussion about the meaning and significance of learners' perceptions of school (Slavin, 1988); expectations from school (Biddle, 1979, 1986); attitudes toward school (Clément & Gardner, 2001); and investment in the school community (Norton, 2001). The initial interviews and my observations indicated that the participants entered the classroom with already established perceptions about school, expectations from school, and attitudes toward school. When comparing the first and final interviews, I found no major differences between the participants' initial and final perceptions, expectations, and attitudes.

Beginning with the initial interviews and continuing to the final interviews, the participants maintained positive perceptions about school and learning, consistently feeling that an education was necessary for success in the United States. They also had high expectations from school: learn English, excel in school, and learn life skills. The participants also displayed positive attitudes toward their new learning communities, and they were eager to participate in the learning process during their time at MIS.

However, there were changes in the participants' investment (Norton, 2001) in the learning community. When they first arrived in the United States, most were very apprehensive. José did not speak at all, and Milagro and Leslie spoke only with other

native Spanish speakers. Norton (2001) contended that as ELs begin to envision themselves as meaningful participants in the learning community, they become more invested in the learning community and, thus, have greater participation in the various learning processes that were in their new learning communities.

Shattering Stereotypes of Parental Expectations

When designing and implementing any study, researchers anticipate certain outcomes relevant to the proposed research questions and literature. Along with these anticipated outcomes, researchers may find surprises in the data that they may not have anticipated in their original research proposals (Creswell, 2006). As I organized and analyzed the data related to Spanish-speaking EL newcomers' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes about school, I uncovered new themes and findings unrelated to the research questions and relevant literature. Although these themes were discussed previously in depth and supporting data were presented earlier in this chapter, these themes are highlighted again because of their saliency. These themes centered on the various ways in which the participants' mothers shattered existing stereotypes about Spanish-speaking immigrant parents. These themes included the mothers' high expectation for their children in school, their expectation for their children to learn English, and their participation in parent-teacher conferences.

Spanish-speaking immigrants often are defined and reinforced by the stereotypes on television, radio, and the Internet. These stereotypes often suggest that family traditions, language, or the socioeconomic status of families negatively affect EL newcomers' success in school (Gonzalez & Ayala-Alcantar, 2008; Ibarra, 2004; R. Valencia & Black, 2002; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). During our formal interviews,

I asked the mothers about their children's experiences in school in their native countries. Earlier discussions in this chapter provided a glimpse of the participants' previous school experiences. Through our conversations and interviews, the mothers vocalized their expectations for their children.

Unlike the negative stereotypes perpetuated by the media, our conversations and interviews revealed that the participants' mothers were actively involved in their children's education (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995a). However, their involvement fell outside of the American educational system's traditional norms and expectations for parents. The mothers had worked hard to instill respect and appropriate behavior in their children. They also had established high expectations for their children in their current school, set English language learning as a priority, and planned that their children would attend college.

High Expectations in Middle School

Recent NCLB (2002) legislation has continued the focus on high expectations and rigor for middle-school students. Numerous education organizations (WIDA, 2007) have continued to support higher expectations for middle-school students. The participants' mothers had similar high expectations for their children. Although their children were newcomer ELs, their mothers still held high expectations for them.

During our conversations and interviews, Ms. Alvarez, José's mother, related that José had repeated Grade 3 in Mexico. However, he was progressing well in his classes, earning 90s and 100s in his classes at West Metro Middle School. Ms. Alvarez often emphasized to José the importance of an education, and he was expected to do well in school.

Cristián's mother also communicated her high expectations for her son. Ms. Morales related that Cristián had been "un buen estudiante" (a good student) in Mexico and that she expected the same of him in the United States. She stated, "All I want is for him to do well in school. He used to be a good student in school and he used to be in 6th grade over there, which is higher grade than here." She expected Cristián to study hard and make good grades in school.

Ms. Morales was extremely happy that Cristián was continuing with his same study habits in U.S. schools. She commented, "I'm so happy he's studying here and with the little studies that he had before, he's doing well. I'm so happy." Similar to the Alvarez family, the Morales family wanted Cristián to receive a good education. Education was one of the main reasons they immigrated to the United States.

Education also was the main reason the Utitia family left their stable lives in Mexico to come to the United States. Leslie's two older sisters were already attending university in their hometown in Mexico. Leslie was expected to emulate her sisters and continue her education. During our first interview, Ms. Utitia tearfully explained that Leslie's education was the reason that they came to this country, even though Leslie seemed to not understand the sacrifice her parents made in her behalf. Ms. Utitia explained that she wanted Leslie to learn to speak English and continue on to university so that she would have an opportunity for a better life. Ms. Utitia was very interested in Leslie's progress at school. She had attended all of the scheduled parent-teacher conferences. She also kept track of Leslie's daily grades in school. Contrary to the prevalent stereotypes, education was a priority for the Utitia family.

Even before they immigrated to this country, the Ventura family had set high expectations for Milagro. In Honduras, she was enrolled in a private school and was actively engaged in extracurricular activities, including learning English. Ms. Ventura described her daughter as an “excellent” student in her previous school. Both Mr. and Ms. Ventura had university degrees, and Milagro’s sister had completed a university in Honduras. In addition, her brother was planning to attend a local university in the fall. Even though the family moved to this country because of Ms. Ventura’s employment, Milagro was still expected to maintain her grades in school, despite the fact that she was learning English as a second language. On one occasion, I spoke with Milagro’s uncle. He stated that he was “happy” and “proud” that Milagro was doing so well in school. He also stressed the need for Milagro to learn English so that she could continue her education after high school. Education was a priority for the entire Ventura family. This family definitely shattered the stereotype that Latinos are not interested in education.

Analyzing the data from this study revealed several issues: The parents felt that education was a means for their children to obtain a better future, and they had immigrated to the United States so that their children could receive a better education, which would lead to a better future.

Learning English: A Priority for Everyone

The collected data dispelled any misconceptions about Latino families and education. Both the students and their families expressed the belief that learning English and receiving a good education were important. The data suggested that the parents also were interested in their own education. The families of 2 participants were enrolled in

English classes in the evenings. Twice a week, they took a 30-minute bus ride to participate in these 2-hour classes.

Ms. Utitia regularly attended English classes after working all day. She brought her 4-year-old daughter and Leslie so that both of her children could participate in the English enrichment classes. Ms. Utitia revealed that she came to these classes so that she could learn English and develop her computer skills. She was so dedicated to these classes that while she was vacationing in Mexico, she called from Mexico to inform her instructor that she would not be in class one evening.

Milagro's brother was enrolled in English classes, which he attended regularly for a full year. He attended high school classes during the day and English classes in the evenings. He also worked in a restaurant on weekends. During my conversation with Milagro's uncle, he also stressed (in English) that it is important for Milagro to learn English. While speaking with the other parents, I learned that even though they wanted to enroll in the English classes, they could not attend because of their work schedules. Ms. Morales and Ms. Alvarez still made sure that their children were enrolled in after-school test preparation classes at their home school. Although these parents could not participate in these opportunities themselves, they ensured that their children participated in every educational opportunity that was available.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

The parents of the EL newcomers often participated in parent-teacher conferences at the MIS and at West Metro Middle School. Although I regularly called all of my students' parents, the parents of the participants also came to the spring semester parent-teacher conference at our school. The parent liaison from their home school (West Metro

Middle School) also said that these parents had participated in parent-teacher conferences. One parent in particular, Ms. Utitia, regularly visited the school monthly to talk with teachers about her daughter's academic progress.

Parent Participation in Study

As I planned this study, I wanted to include both parents as participants. Although both parents were invited to participate in the study, only the mothers chose to participate in the interviews. For various reasons, the fathers declined to participate in the study. In contrast to research on Spanish-speaking immigrants, my research yielded different images of Spanish-speaking families. Although they may not have been as vocal as the parents involved in high-profile cases such as the Lemon Grove Incident of 1931 (Meier & Gutierrez, 2003), the parents of this study's participants set high expectations for their children. They considered academic success for their children a priority. The parents expect their children to learn English and succeed in school, and learning English also was a priority for the parents themselves.

Research has confirmed that when parents are involved in their children's education, the results are positive (Epstein, 1995, 2001). One such stereotype focuses on Spanish-speaking parents' involvement in their children's education. The parents-don't-care theory maintains that Latino parents "do not care about their children's education" (Thompson, 2007, p. 1) because cultural practices preclude the value of education (Landsman, 2004; Lopez, 2001; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Thompson, Warren, & Carter, 2004). During this study, the mothers assumed an active role in their children's education by ensuring that their children completed homework and participated in after-school tutorials, and by attending parent-teacher conferences. Often,

educators fail to comprehend the underlying reasons parents may not assume the traditional school-related models of parental involvement: work schedules, language barriers, and different cultural norms and expectations of school. Table 9 summarizes the findings of this study.

Table 9. Research Results

Results
<p>Perceptions, Expectations, Attitudes, and Investments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions about school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive perceptions about school and learning ○ Students see participation in the education process -- Necessary for success • Where are we going? Participants' expectations from and attitudes toward their new school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Learning English – Even though communicated with friends socially in Spanish, participants expected to for school/teachers to teach them English. Participants did not expect bilingual education program ○ Excelling in school – Participants expected to excel academically as they had in their home country and previous schools ○ Preparing for life – Participants expected for school to prepare them for advanced/secondary education, work force, or negotiating daily affairs of life ○ Eager participants in educational process
<p>“Doing School”: Newcomers Adjusting to School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to “do” school: Adjusting to the classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Newcomers created and negotiated identities ○ Classroom communities impact learning ○ Discrimination and Racial Tension at School • Language learning conceptualized in the classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outsider to insider – Moving from nonparticipation toward participation -- Initially, participants seemed to be “outsiders looking in”— not full participants in the class community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As participants became more proficient in English, they had a greater share in classroom activities ○ Newcomers' investments in an imagined community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participants saw themselves participants in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current learning environment • Future work programs and higher education institution as college student • Surviving the classroom – Participants' coping strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Peer collaboration: A link to learning • Interacting with the teacher: No questions in class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Although participants did not always understand their teachers' instruction, they were reluctant to ask questions for clarification.
<p>Changes in Perceptions, Expectations, Attitudes, and Investments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No observable differences in participants' initial and final perceptions, expectations, and attitudes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First and fourth interviews showed that participants perceptions, expectations, and attitudes remained the same
<p>Shattering the Stereotype of Parental Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High expectations in middle school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expected for children to make good grades • Learning English – A priority for everyone • Parents attended parent/teacher meetings discuss their child's academic progress • Mothers willingly agreed to participate

Conclusions

In the age of standardized testing, success in school has been filtered down and limited to a passing score on a test. I contend that academic success encompasses much more. Each year, thousands of immigrant students enter middle and high school in the United States, yet many fail to complete their education. These newcomers are expected to learn the new language, culture, and school norms while also learning the academic content in all their classes. This is a daunting task.

My participants had left their former countries and communities to begin life in a new country with new communities. My participants had to form new friendships, learn new cultural norms, and learn how to navigate life in a new city using public transportation while simultaneously learning a new language. However, some students are rising to the challenge. Research has demonstrated that students' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes impact their academic achievement and ultimately determine their decision to remain in the formal educational setting (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

This study clarified several issues relevant to the educational experiences of Spanish-speaking EL middle school newcomers. It provided a detailed background of the participants, focusing on their diverse perceptions, expectations, attitudes, and investments in school. This study revealed that as the participants adjusted to their new environments, they learned how being a member of the community influenced their learning. As the participants adjusted, they also developed various coping strategies that allowed them to have a meaningful share in classroom activities. The findings also identified no observable differences in the participants' initial and final perceptions, expectations, attitudes, and investments during their enrollment at MIS.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Implications

Language learning is not an abstract skill that can be easily transferred from one context to another. It is a social skill that engages the identities of learners in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. (Norton, 2000, p. 137)

As a teacher of EL middle school newcomers, I have been curious about their acculturation process as they begin their education in the United States. My students have learned and thrived in my intensive English newcomer classroom. However, as these same students transition back to their mainstream classes after completing the program, they seem to experience many social and academic difficulties. When talking with some of my former students, I found that their perceptions of school, expectations from school, attitudes toward school, and investments in the learning environment had changed. As an educator, this puzzled me. Why was there such a dramatic change in these students' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes? These changes in my former students, the high dropout rates, and the disproportionately low test scores of the ELs motivated me to examine ELs' ability to become acculturated to and thrive in the U.S. classroom.

I focused on students enrolled in the intensive English newcomer program where I was teaching at the time of the study. Although the students enrolled in the intensive English newcomer program represented a wide variety of languages, cultures, and countries, I was particularly interested in the Spanish-speaking EL newcomers for several reasons. At the time of this study, Spanish-speaking students in Georgia had the highest dropout rate of all ethnic groups. As an intensive English program teacher of newcomers,

I taught middle school students, the majority of whom were native Spanish speakers. In addition, 3 of the 12 middle schools in Georgia that failed to make AYP had high Spanish-speaking student populations and subgroups. These facts and circumstances prompted me to examine Spanish-speaking middle-school EL newcomers' experiences during their first few months as they became acculturated to their new learning environments in the United States.

As students become acculturated to their new schools, they are required to learn not only the academic language of school but also the social aspects of their new learning environment. Although most classroom lessons are delivered in a one-size-fits-all fashion, newcomers' perceptions, expectations, attitudes and investments play a crucial role in their ability to become acculturated to and thrive in their learning environments, much as they had done while enrolled at the MIS.

During the time of this study, the political climate toward Spanish-speaking immigrants in Georgia was less than favorable. There was a growing Latino gang problem in the city where the study took place (Matteucci, 2009). In addition, the downturn in the economy resulted in many immigrants being accused of taking away jobs from U.S. citizens and becoming dependent on the social system (Gonzalez, J., 2009; Gamboa, 2009). Diminishing funds for public health programs were attributed to the growing Spanish-speaking population (Associated Press, 2009). As a result, state laws were passed to prevent landlords from renting to undocumented immigrants, prevent business owners from hiring undocumented workers, and enforce deportation laws for minor traffic infractions.

Regardless of their residency status, this current political climate affected my study participants. Because they were all Spanish speakers from Mexico and Honduras, most onlookers categorized them as future gang members or dependents on the social system. As newcomers to the United States, my study participants had to face these social realities because of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The aim of this study was to document the extent to which Spanish-speaking middle school newcomers' overall perceptions, expectations, attitudes, and investment toward the learning environment existed during their first 5 months of school in the United States. This study began while the students were initially enrolled in an intensive English newcomer program and extended after they had transitioned from the program back to their mainstream classes at West Metro Middle School.

Implications

Based upon the findings of the four case studies presented, it is important to discuss several key implications in light of education and research with middle-school Spanish-speaking newcomer ELs that are relative to their perceptions about school, expectations from school, attitudes toward school, and investment in the learning environment. During my interviews and conversations with 4 Spanish-speaking middle-school EL newcomers and their mothers, I learned that they had developed specific perceptions about, expectations from, and attitudes toward school in their home countries. As the study participants began to study English during their first 5 months in the United States, they also began to invest (i.e., envision themselves and become a part of) the classroom communities. The data revealed that the participants' classroom communities

impacted their learning. I also learned that the participants' language learning in the classroom was conceptualized in various forms.

Perceptions of, Expectations from, Attitudes Towards, and Investments in School

It became clear that the participants' perceptions about school, expectations from school, and attitudes toward school were key components in the language learning process. If it is critical for newcomers to learn English in order to be successful in their new learning environments, educators and all other stakeholders must examine EL newcomers' perceptions, expectations, attitudes, and investment for guidance in creating the most appropriate learning environment for them. Instructional leaders, principals, administrators, and teacher leaders must ensure that the appropriate personnel are assigned to work with newcomer ELs, which may mean either providing training for or reassigning teachers who currently may be working with ELs.

Instructional leaders also must ensure that the appropriate curriculum is provided for newcomer ELs. This issue may again call for additional training for teachers, providing additional resources to enhance the already established curriculum or even developing a more theoretical and pedagogical curriculum. Changes in personnel, instructional strategies, and curriculum are critical if newcomer ELs are to experience academic success.

In terms of perceptions of school, the data revealed that the EL newcomers' perceptions about their new school were defined through their interpretation of school, which may have been influenced by their mental or emotional state, experience, knowledge, motivations, and other factors. Through their thick and rich descriptions of their lives at home with their families and their learning experiences in their home

countries, the participants began to reveal perceptions not only about their former schools in their native countries but also their new U.S. schools. As they expressed their expectations from their new schools in the United States, their attitudes toward school became evident.

All of the participants had attended school in their native countries. Because of their past experiences, the students began school in the United States with preexisting positive perceptions about school and education. The participants had overwhelmingly positive remarks about their schools and frequently stated that they would not change anything about their new schools. Learning about the participants' perceptions allowed me to build on the participants' positive feelings and views toward school, which could influence their learning in school.

Because positive perceptions toward school are critical, teachers of newcomer ELs must build on newcomer ELs' already established positive perceptions about school. They must create learning environments that allow EL newcomers to experience academic and social successes that will solidify these positive perceptions about school. Teachers must be proactive in creating a foundation for positive communication, interaction, and dialogue in the classroom. It is essential that teachers create a low-risk classroom environment where newcomer ELs are free to use their new language, ask questions, and make mistakes without fear of ridicule or ostracism from the teacher or other students.

The newcomer ELs who participated in this study entered school with high expectations. As evidenced by their comments and effort in class, these students wanted and expected to succeed in school. Success in school was not merely for the moment for

these students. They saw their academic success as the foundation for further education. They saw the possibilities of secondary education either in the United States or in their native countries. The students' expectations were confirmed by their mothers. Understanding that students enter school with certain expectations is critical because it allow educators to build on rather than tear down learners' current expectations and set new expectations for future learning.

Knowing that EL newcomers enter U.S. classrooms with already established expectations provides teachers with a unique opportunity to continue to build on these expectations. Research has suggested that teachers need to understand and incorporate cultural, linguistic, experiential, and socioeconomic differences into their instructional strategies (Moll & Díaz, 1993; Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994; Nieto, 1994; Lai, E. F., 1994; Tinker Sachs, 1996; Fok, Chan, Sin, Ng, & Yeung, 2004; Doheny & Tinker Sachs, 2007). Teachers have the responsibility to fulfill these expectations by providing a curriculum that builds on newcomer ELs' background and educational experiences. Teachers also should consider ELs' short- or long-term goals and provide learning experiences that could range from as basic as how to negotiate the daily affairs of life to an advanced chemistry lesson.

Newcomers' Attitudes Toward Their New Learning Environment

The EL Spanish-speaking newcomers in this study demonstrated an overall positive attitude toward school and learning, even when faced with serious academic and social issues in school. Again, this was evidenced during the mothers' interviews, when they conveyed the same comments as their children. The participants' positive attitudes were their result of their academic success. Most of the participants felt that they are

succeeding in school academically and socially; therefore, it is important that teachers create classroom communities so that ELs can experience this success, which leads to the kind of positive attitudes identified in this study. In such classroom communities, instruction is within the EL newcomers' ZPD yet challenging enough to provide an opportunity for growth. These classroom experiences also include explicit instruction on the unwritten rules of school that EL newcomers may not fully understand, such as U.S. classroom rituals, routines, and norms.

Newcomers' Investments in an Imagined Community

Historically, students have been categorized as being motivated or unmotivated toward learning (Norton, 2001). Rather than describe students as motivated or unmotivated, educators should examine learners' investment in the learning environment. Through the participants' conversations and classroom behaviors, as well as their mothers' interviews, I learned the extent to which they are invested in the learning community at the MIS. Although the participants were still in the early stages of English language development, they envisioned themselves as active participants in the learning community in the near and distant future. Becoming invested in a learning community is key, so educators must focus on the factors that contribute to learners' investment. Educators must consider and implement culturally relevant curricula in which learners envision themselves.

EL newcomers must be aware of future opportunities before they can invest in them. Therefore, it is critical for teachers to provide a glimpse of future opportunities for EL newcomers. Middle school teachers are in a position to provide these glimpses for students, particularly because most students choose their educational path before

beginning high school. Providing guidance for EL newcomers during their middle school years is critical because they may not be aware of the different educational paths available to them in high school. As middle school teachers assist EL newcomers to invest in their new school environments, they also must show newcomers and their parents the opportunities available to them. This may include providing information about secondary schooling at colleges, universities, and technical schools; providing parental workshops and meetings where parents of EL newcomers learn about secondary schooling opportunities and options for financial aid for these opportunities; and providing tutorial programs for the assessments required for college entry.

Doing School: Adjusting to School

As teachers welcome middle-school EL newcomers into U.S. schools, they have to appreciate the tremendous transitions that are occurring at the same time. These newcomers must learn to “do” school. This includes learning all of the unwritten rules of their new learning environments, the way schools are organized, the way instruction occurs, and ways to navigate through the cultural norms of their new school. Successfully learning to “do” school hinges on several factors. Students must learn to become members of their learning communities in socially acceptable ways. José learned to dress similar to his peers, who wore baggy pants and large t-shirts. After experiencing some difficulty, Leslie learned how to address teasing or harassment in school. Students also must learn how to navigate the cultural differences in the classrooms as Milagro learned after a confrontation with a student from a differing cultural group.

Teachers must consider the differences in background and culture, even among same-language students who may be different in their levels of education, learning

experiences, family backgrounds, and socioeconomic status. Teachers also must consider the cultural conflicts that may occur because of differences in newcomers' first languages and cultures and the new English language and U.S. school culture. These conflicts may center on the conceptualization of time, the value assigned to the first language by families and school, the place of homework and the expectations that accompany it, and the matter of choice in the classroom and the decisions that students are allowed to make. Teachers must recognize the sociocultural factors involved in learning a new language and adjusting to a new culture and learning environment. Teachers must think beyond current U.S. cultural norms and ponder the cultural norms that newcomer ELs bring with them, recognizing that newcomer ELs have not yet learned the unwritten rules of the U.S. classroom setting.

Language Learning Conceptualized in the Classroom

When the study participants initially entered the classroom at MIS and West Metro Middle School, most of them were very quiet and participated minimally in classroom activities that involved speaking and reading. However, during the course of the study, the participants moved from an outside, nonparticipatory role toward one of increased participation in the learning community. As the participants moved along the language continuum (WIDA, 2007), their participation in the classroom increased. Most of the participants entered my classroom at a very low or a nonexistent English language proficiency level. However, as they gained more exposure to English and became acclimated socially, their class participation increased. Because ELs learn more when they have a more participatory role in learning environments, teachers must create ways

to include ELs in classroom lessons. They must search for ways to allow EL newcomers to have a more active role in the lessons.

Creating opportunities for ELs to have a more active share in the classroom requires that teachers rethink their instruction and include pedagogical approaches that promote ELs' intrinsic motivation to use the target language to generate their own knowledge, such as sheltered instruction or bilingual education, which taps into students' existing knowledge. As teachers plan for increased EL newcomer participation, they must embed opportunities for interaction and participation in their lessons. They must plan for explicit opportunities for group collaboration, think-pair-share, journal writing, and/or other opportunities for EL newcomers to have a meaningful share in classroom learning activities. Teachers also must provide high-quality instruction that allows EL newcomers to grasp grade-level content as they learn English by planning appropriate lessons that focus on content and language development; building ELs' backgrounds; providing comprehensible input and learning strategies for ELs; and providing opportunities for ELs to interact, practice their new language, and review new concepts.

Surviving in the Classroom: Participants' Coping Strategies

Another aspect of the EL newcomers' learning involves the development of coping strategies so that they can survive within the new learning environment. Stressful situations are normal occurrences in the daily lives of newcomer students until they learn to employ various strategies to cope with their new learning environments. Throughout this study, I learned about some of the various strategies that these students use in the classroom. For example, they primarily sought academic assistance from their class peers

rather than from the teacher, they deeply relied on their network of friends, and they secondarily used classroom resources for assistance.

A West-African proverb states, “It takes a village to raise a child.” This is certainly true in the case of José, Cristián, Milagro, Leslie, and their parents. Their survival in their new schools depended on their new social network. During this study, I learned the depth of this social network and saw how the participants maintained a strong sense of community in the classroom, the school, and the community. While the participants were in school, they relied on their network of friends as links to already established communities. During free time, they participated in the socialization process with their links to already established communities.

Although the focus of this study was the classroom community, during my conversations with the participants, I learned how vital their cultural community is to their survival and ability to thrive in the United States. The participants and their parents relied on their Spanish-speaking neighbors to help them navigate the English-speaking world. The parents also relied on their children, the newcomer ELs, to help them navigate the English-speaking world. Based upon the findings, I suggest that educators must consider what coping strategies students develop and determine how they can support and extend these strategies.

The social network of EL newcomers is critical to their survival in their new country, so instructional leaders and teachers should facilitate more opportunities for EL newcomers and their families to develop these networks. This may include holding community meetings where families can share their experiences as newcomers to the community, learn about available community resources, and learn ways to assist their

children at home as they learn English. To develop these social networks for ELs in the classroom, teachers must provide opportunities for more collaboration among students. Allowing more English-proficient students to collaborate with EL newcomers would provide opportunities for EL newcomers to not only learn more academically but also to establish vital ties to the already existing community that can provide the ongoing support that they will need as newcomers.

Interacting With the Teacher: Questions Anyone?

From the many conversations I had with the participants, I learned that their previous classrooms may have been primarily traditional in nature. However, in the participants' U.S. classrooms, it is expected that students ask questions for inquiry or, at the very least, ask questions for clarification. This expectation may have clashed with the existing school-related cultural norms of the participants.

From our interviews, I learned that the participants rarely, if ever, asked questions in class. Even when language was not a barrier, they often refused to ask for clarification about a topic and never asked questions for inquiry. If they did have questions, they relied on their bilingual peers to ask the questions and interpret the answers for them. Understanding this cultural difference in classroom interactions between the teacher and the students signifies that educators should not interpret a lack of questions to mean that all students understand. Rather, educators should be proactive in ensuring that ELs understand the lesson concepts by asking them questions through an interpreter or a Spanish-speaking peer to ensure their comprehension of the lesson.

As part of their daily instruction, teachers should include opportunities to work with EL newcomers either one-on-one or within small-group settings, which would allow

teachers to evaluate EL newcomers' comprehension as well as establish a rapport with them so that they will become accustomed to conversing with the teacher and eventually asking questions. Because EL newcomers may not have the vocabulary to express themselves in English, their teachers may need to teach them how to ask questions about a particular topic, an activity that may begin with the assistance of bilingual resources or personnel.

Changes in Perceptions, Expectations, Attitudes, and Investments

One of the initial research questions probed for changes in the Spanish-speaking middle school EL newcomers' perceptions of, expectations from, attitudes toward, and investment in school. On the surface, there seemed to be no observable differences in their initial and final perceptions, expectations, and attitudes. The first and fourth interviews and their classroom behaviors showed that the participants maintained their positive perceptions about school, their high levels of expectations, and their eager attitudes toward learning. However, there were changes in their investment in the learning communities.

As the participants moved from outsiders (i.e., nonparticipants) toward the inside of the learning community (i.e., participants), their investment in the learning community changed. They became more "invested" (Norton, 1998, p. 444) in the learning community, wanting to learn and practice the target language. Because learners' investment in learning communities can affect their language proficiency, educators must work diligently to create learning environments where students want to learn and practice the target language. As stated earlier in this chapter, teachers must inform EL newcomers and their parents of existing and future opportunities. This may include providing

guidance about educational and career paths, information on secondary schooling options and the required assessments for these institutions, and information about financial aid.

Shattering Stereotypes of Parental Expectations

Although I anticipated some outcomes from the data, I discovered other findings as I analyzed the data related to the mothers' expectations of their children. I learned that the mothers had high expectations for their middle school children, expecting them to excel as they had in their previous schools in their home countries. The mothers expected not only their children but also themselves to learn English. The mothers also regularly attended parent-teacher meetings to discuss their children's academic progress. Understanding the mothers' interest in their children's education will allow educators to more fully involve parents in the school community. No longer should schools view the language differences as barriers to involving the parents, especially the mothers, in school/home activities.

Although I have offered numerous suggestions for changes in school policy, practice, and structure, these changes will not lead to substantial differences in ELs' educational experiences. Educators must develop different perspectives of EL newcomers, especially Spanish-speaking newcomers, and not rely on old stereotypes. Educators must change how they think about students, what they believe these students deserve, and what they believe that these students are capable of achieving (Nieto, 1994). It is relatively easy to attribute EL newcomers' negative school experiences to perceived cultural attributes. However, it is imperative that educators rely on the realities of different cultural and linguistic groups. Teachers are a critical factor in any interactions involving EL newcomers. As teachers interact with these students, their personal beliefs,

perceptions, expectations, and attitudes, whether positive or negative, become a part of this interaction. Therefore, it is critical that teachers develop different perspectives of EL newcomers because teachers can either facilitate learning in the classroom or impede EL newcomers' adjustment and learning in the classroom, depending on their own perspectives of EL newcomers.

Towards a Learning Community: Implications for Practice

Given the research on newcomer ELs and the acculturation process, it is evident that content-area teachers, language teachers, and administrators may be able to learn from the findings derived from this study. "Successfully educating all students in U.S. schools must begin by challenging school practices that place roadblocks in the way of academic achievement for too many young people" (Nieto, 1994, p. 393). A shift in perspective is necessary among educators from placing blame on students to accepting responsibility as part of the institution of education. The findings from this study on Spanish-speaking middle-school EL newcomers demonstrate the need for schools to restructure certain elements within the education system.

Teachers are critical factors in any learning environment. They are responsible for implementing the curriculum, assessing learners' instructional needs, and creating the appropriate instruction for ELs. The fact that the study participants did not interact with the teacher or ask the teacher questions was a crucial finding. Teachers must be proactive and ensure that the newcomer ELs comprehend the lessons and adjust to their new learning environments. If teachers are not proactive, newcomer ELs may fail to become active members of the learning community. Teachers must, therefore, talk with their EL newcomers, allowing time for them to respond using their new English skills or

employing an interpreter. Teachers also must create a risk-free learning community where EL newcomers are comfortable with expressing themselves without fear of ridicule or sarcasm.

It is crucial that teachers be knowledgeable of appropriate ESL or bilingual education strategies. All teachers of ELs should have to complete an ESOL certification or endorsement program. In addition to local or state certifications and endorsements, National Board certification also should be encouraged for teachers of ELs. Although funding is always a concern, addressing the shortage of certified or endorsed teachers of ELs should include discussions about additional pay or other incentives for teachers. Teachers should be knowledgeable of all federal and state policies and procedures regarding EL instruction and testing.

Throughout my career, I have seen ELs relegated to receive instruction from marginal or novice teachers who were unprepared to provide the best instruction for these learners, who need the most specialized instruction. Currently, most states have minimal requirements to receive a lifetime endorsement or certification to teach ELs. However, research in the field continues to grow. Teachers working with ELs should be trained and receive certification or endorsement based on new developments in the field. With certification programs such as National Board certification, teachers are required to recertify every 10 years to demonstrate their knowledge of current research and the most appropriate teaching and learning strategies. Because videotaping and reflection are major components of National Board certification, teachers become reflective practitioners using current research, which leads to a more informed approach to providing the most appropriate instruction for ELs.

There also is a need to incorporate ELs' language, cultures, and communities into the school curriculum, which would lead to more parent participation in school activities. It would demonstrate to newcomer ELs and English-speaking students that newcomer ELs' first languages are recognized and valued. The materials and resources used in schools should be reflective of the demographics of the student population. When learners' cultures and languages are recognized through the various resources used in schools, they become more invested in the learning community (Norton, 1998, 2001), which leads to greater academic achievement. Therefore, when adopting new textbooks or purchasing new materials for the media center or the classroom, schools must select resources that represent the cultural and linguistic demographics of the student population.

Parental Involvement

To increase parental involvement in school, parents need to be empowered (Cummins, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, 1992). The steps to empowerment may include creating or improving parent outreach programs to establish bridges among school, home, and community. The findings showed that the parents of Spanish-speaking ELs are interested in their children's education, have high academic expectations of them, and want them to continue their education. Often, however, language barriers exclude these parents from fully participating in their children's schooling. Therefore, it is necessary for schools and districts to adopt and implement a language access policy that ensures that the parents are provided with adult ESL and literacy classes, translated school information/correspondence/materials, and interpreters during school meetings. Supporting parents as they become more proficient in English and investing in family

literacy will enable Spanish-speaking parents to participate in their children's education fully.

Recommendations for Further Research

As the linguistic composition of the student populations in U.S. schools continues to change, research must continue to investigate how newcomer ELs can learn English successfully (Banks, as cited in Valdés, 2001) and achieve academically. Given that sociocultural factors affect students' academic success, it is important that researchers strive to identify the factors that can impede students' academic success. Several directions for future research based upon this study are recommended.

An expanding body of research has focused on immigrants' acculturation to new learning environments. However, most of this research has focused on high school and college students. There has been minimal research on Spanish-speaking middle school newcomers and the acculturation process. Because middle school is such a critical time for adolescents, particularly ELs, there is a profound need to continue research focused specifically on middle school ELs.

Additional research on teachers' perceptions is needed to fully understand the extent to which Spanish-speaking middle school newcomers' overall perceptions of school, expectations from school, attitudes toward school, and investment in the learning environment exist during their first few months of school in the United States. This study focused on the ways in which the participants acclimated to their new school environments. However, teachers play a critical role in this process. Their day-to-day actions and interactions with EL newcomers can either facilitate or interfere with students' success, and their feeling of self-efficacy can also impact student success.

Longitudinal research on newcomers and their adjustment to school across time and context would greatly increase the understanding of researchers and educators about this population. For example, systematic, in-depth interviews with participants across time and across years would provide more data about Spanish-speaking middle-school newcomer ELs. Within such studies, researchers might encourage the participants to speak in Spanish, even though they may want to speak in English, to glean longer and more in-depth responses to understand more clearly the students' perceptions and attitudes toward U.S. schools and schooling.

Minimal gender comparisons were conducted in this study. Further research would be useful to examine the differences and similarities between male and female participants. Although mothers participated in two interviews, they have a wealth of information that could provide more data for analysis. A deeper investigation focused on parents' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes would yield greater results. In addition, a longitudinal study of the participants' perceptions, expectations, attitudes, and investment in school should be undertaken to identify all of the phenomena surrounding their acculturation or nonacculturation into their new learning environment. This study should be done by interviewing over a longer timeframe and with more in-depth interviewing techniques.

Major Contributions of the Study

This study provided useful information on the extent to which Spanish-speaking middle school EL newcomers' overall perceptions of school, expectations from school, attitudes toward school, and investment in the learning environment existed during their first 5 months of school in the United States. By conducting interviews with the students

and their mothers in their native language to understand their perceptions about, expectations from school, and attitudes toward school, I learned about their previous and current feelings. Interviews, classroom observations, and student artifacts contributed to the overall data used to draw conclusions in this qualitative study.

Although most classrooms focus solely on the academic content, this study revealed the importance of sociocultural factors in the language-learning process. Cummins (1986, 1988, 2001); Vygotsky (1978); and other theorists emphasized the significance of sociocultural factors in language learning. The results of this study supported these theories. Through their coping strategies, community networks, and reliance on their peers to interpret and translate, the participants demonstrated that sociocultural factors contribute greatly to the language-learning experience.

Language theorists (Ellis, 2002; Krashen, 2002; WIDA, 2007) have often attempted to separate English language development into certain stages. Data gathered from this study showed that although ELs may progress through specific language learning stages, various factors may facilitate or interrupt their language learning. Socioaffective factors may contribute to or prevent language learning in the classroom.

Students often are labeled as either motivated or unmotivated in the classroom. Norton (1997, 1998, 2000, and 2001) suggested that as students develop their identities within their new learning environments, they either become invested in the learning environment or they do not. As discussed in chapter 1, my initial questions about what happened to change the students who seemed eager to learn and participate in my classroom into students who seemed to falter and fail to participate in their mainstream classes were based on the participants' identities and investment in their learning

environments. The data revealed that the participants' identity development and investment in the learning community were critical to their learning English. This study will contribute to the understanding of their perceptions of, expectations from, attitudes toward, and investment in their new learning environments.

Limitations of the Study

Research begins with established questions and goals. However, limitations are part of any study. This study was limited to Spanish-speaking ELs and their perceptions of school, their expectations from school, their attitudes toward school, and their investment in school. The study was limited in that only 4 participants were interviewed. I would like to have interviewed more students, but because of the lack of availability of students, that did not occur. Having a larger sample would have yielded more data to draw upon. I believe that the students were candid in their responses during the interviews; however, I wonder if they would have been more candid if I had not used an interpreter and had asked the interview questions myself. I would like to have included the participants' teachers from West Metro Middle School in the interviews because their perspectives would have provided yet more data. This study was limited to 5 months. A longer data collection period would have enriched the data. This study only viewed the major theories of sociocultural theory, SLA, and identity and investment theory. Other prevailing theories could and should have been examined.

Summary

Although the Statue of Liberty beckons the tired, the poor, the huddled masses, and the homeless, educators are not prepared to teach newcomers who arrive in U.S. schools. In the fall of 2008, more than 165,000 Spanish-speaking students were enrolled in public schools in Georgia (GDOE, 2008). All indications have suggested that this number will continue to increase. The 4 Spanish-speaking middle school EL newcomers who participated in this study represented a growing population of students in American schools today, namely, Spanish-speaking newcomers who are learning English. These students are learning how to survive in a new learning environment that comprises a new country, a new school, and a new language. Learning to adjust to any of these new circumstances is an overwhelming task for any student, even more so for an adolescent.

This study set out to explore ELs' perceptions of education, expectations from education, attitudes toward education, and investment in education. The findings were based upon the participants' and the mothers' interview responses, researcher observations, and print-based artifacts. The results showed that ELs enter school with certain perceptions, expectations, attitudes, and investments. Language learning is conceptualized in various ways for ELs. In addition, the ELs' parents have certain expectations and aspirations for their children. The participants exhibited various perceptions of school based on their previous learning experiences, various expectations from school based on their future desires, and various attitudes toward school based on their current school experiences. This study also revealed that the participants had developed various strategies to navigate their new learning environments.

In the opening chapter of this study, I presented the research questions that guided my research and data collection. This process unveiled the many factors involved in academic success for ELs. Therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge the impact of sociocultural phenomena on English language learning, implement changes in ELs' learning environment, and provide professional development for all stakeholders involved in EL education.

Epilogue

At the end of the 2006-2007 school year, all 4 student participants transitioned back to their home school, West Metro Middle School. They began the 2007-2008 school at West Metro Middle School, receiving language support in ESOL through the push-in model (ESOL teacher co teaches with content-area teacher, supporting ELs within the mainstream classroom). Over the following year, I always looked for José, Cristián, Milagro, and Leslie whenever I visited West Metro Middle. Two years after the study, all participants were still enrolled in school and still receiving language support services through the pull-out model (ELs received language support with ESOL teacher during a class segment outside of the content-area or mainstream classroom) or through the push-in model.

I have seen José Alvarez only once since the conclusion of the study. In the hallways of West Metro Middle School, he socialized and talked with his classmates. Upon seeing me, he smiled and asked whether I still worked at the MIS. I reminded him that I did and that I was his teacher at MIS, after which he smiled. On the surface, José seemed to be happy and content with his surroundings at school. His teachers related that although he was doing “okay” in his class work, there was room for improvement. During the data collection period, I was concerned that José might decide to leave school to find a job so that he could financially assist his family. However, his records showed that although he recently turned 16, he was still enrolled in school.

Although Cristián Morales completed the 2006-2007 and began the 2007-2008 school year at West Metro Middle School, he and his family returned to Mexico in

September, 2007. Neither his teachers nor his records indicated why the family left the United States.

Milagro and her brother continued to attend English classes and the after-school tutorial at MIS until the end of the 2007 school year. The following year, Milagro's brother attended English classes at the local community college, and Milagro participated in the after-school programs at her local school. During the 2008-2009 school year, Milagro entered her 1st year of high school at a high school with in the Metro School System. Her current ESOL teacher reported that she is doing well academically and socially.

Leslie Utitia had also progressed to high school. I often saw her working alone in the media center when I visited her high school. Each time we talked, I asked to tell me about high school. She always smiled while explaining that school was fine. I have had several conversations with Ms. Utitia since the conclusion of the study. Each time we spoke, she had positive comments about Leslie and school. She also thanked me for my help when Leslie threatened to run away to Mexico, relating that Leslie is now focused on attending a college in the United States after high school.

A year after the study, the MIS moved into its own facility to accommodate the growth in the student population from 150 to well over 300 students in 1 year. Under the leadership of a different principal, the instructional focus changed from a focus on developing the necessary vocabulary that provided a bridge between their home language and content vocabulary to passing the state-adopted standardized assessment. The faculty also increased from 6 to 11 teachers.

REFERENCES

- Akos, P. (2002). Student perceptions of the transition from elementary to middle school. *Professional School Counseling*, 5, 339-345.
- Allensworth, E., & Easton, J.Q. (2007). *What matters for staying on-track and graduating in Chicago Public High Schools: A close look at course grades, failures and attendance in the freshman year*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.
- Aspira Association. (2004). *Education issues*. Retrieved from http://aspira.org/public_policy.htm
- Associated Press (2009). Group launch immigration rights campaign. Retrieved from Atlanta Journal and Constitution website:
http://www.ajc.com/feeds/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2009/06/01/atlanta_immigration_rally.html?cxtype=rss&cxsvc=7&cxcac=13.
- Baker, C. (1992). *Attitudes and language*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Barkhuizen, G. (2006). Social influences on language learning. In A. Davies & C. Elder (Eds.), *The handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 552-575). Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell.
- Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local literacies: Reading and writing in one community*. London: Routledge.
- Benedict, R. (1934). *Patterns of Culture*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

- Berry, J. W. (1980). Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. In A. M. Padilla (Ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, models, and some new findings* (pp. 9-25). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46, 5-34.
- Berry, J. W. (2003). Conceptual approaches to acculturation. In K. M. Chun, P. Balls Organista, & G. Marin (Eds.), *Acculturation advances in theory, measurement, and applied research* (pp. 17-37). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Berry, J. W. & Kim, U. (1988). Acculturation and mental health. In P. R. Dasen, J. W. Berry, and N. Sarorius (Eds.) *Health and cross cultural psychology: Toward applications* (pp. 207-236). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Biddle, B. (1979). *Role theory: Expectation, identities, and behaviors*. New York: Academic Press.
- Biddle, J. (1986). Recent developments in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12, 67-92.
- Bilingual Education Act. (1994). Retrieved from http://www.nabe.org/documents/policy_legislation/TitleVII1994.pdf.
- Blumer, H. (1955). Attitudes and the social act. *Social Problems*, 3, 59-65.
- Boyd, F., Ariail, M., Williams, R., Jocson, K., Tinker Sachs, G., & McNeal, K. (2006). Real teaching for real diversity: Preparing for English language arts teachers for 21st century classrooms. *English Education*, 38(4), 329-350.

- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1977). *Schooling in capitalist America: Education reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bridgeland, J., Dilulio, J., Jr., & Morison, K. (March 2006). *The silent epidemic: Perspective of high school dropouts*. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- Brown, S., & Souto-Manning, M. (2008). Culture is the way they live here: Young Latinas and parents navigate linguistic and cultural borderlands in U.S. schools. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 7(1), 25-42.
- Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bucholtz, M. (2002). Youth and cultural practice. *Annual Review Anthropology*, 31, 525-552.
- Bunch, G. C., Abram, P. L., Lotan, R. A., & Valdés, G. (2001) Beyond sheltered instruction: Rethinking conditions for academic language development, *TESOL Journal*, 10(2/3), 28-33.
- Butler, Y. G., & Gutierrez, M. B. (2003). Learning climates for English language learners: A case of fourth-grade students in California. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 27(2), 171-194.
- Cadzen, C. (1988). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Cameron, D., Fraser, E., Harvey, P., Rampton, M. B., & Richardson, K. (1992). Ethics, advocacy and empowerment: Issues of method in researching language. *Language and Communication*, 13(2), 81-94.
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to

- second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1-47.
- Carrera, J. W. (1989). *Educating undocumented children: A review of practices and policies*. Las Cruces, NM: University of New Mexico.
- Chang, L. (2004). The role of classroom norms in contextualizing the relations of children's social behaviors to peer acceptance. *Developmental Psychology*, 40 (5), 691-702.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Clément, R., & Gardner, R. C. (2001). Second language mastery. In W. P. Robinson & H. Giles (Eds.), *The new handbook of language and social psychology* (pp. 439-504). West Sussex: John Chiles and Sons.
- Collier, V. P. (1995). *Acquiring a second language for school*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/directions/04.htm>
- Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of learners' errors. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 5, 161-9.
- Creswell, J. (2006). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crookes, G., & Schmidt, R. W. (1991). Motivation: Reopening the research agenda. *Language Learning*, 41(4), 469-512.
- Cummins, J. (1986). Empowering minority students: A framework for intervention. *Harvard Educational Review*, 56, 18-36.
- Cummins, J. (1988). From multiculturalism to anti-racist education: An analysis of

- programmes and policies in Ontario. In T. Skutnabb-Kangas & J. Cummins (Eds.), *Minority education: From shame to struggle* (pp. 127-157). Philadelphia, PA: Multilingual Matters.
- Cummins, J. (2001). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society*. Toronto, Ontario: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Cummins, J. (2002). Rights and responsibilities of educators of bilingual-bicultural children. In L. D. Soto (Ed.), *Making a difference in the lives of bilingual-bicultural learners* (195-210). New York: Peter Lang.
- Cummins, J. (2007). *Distinguishing between different aspects of English language proficiency*. Retrieved from <http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/index.htm>
- Cushman, K. (2003). *Fires in the bathroom: Advice to teachers from high school students*. New York: New Press.
- Dagenais, D. (2003). Accessing imagined communities through multiculturalism and immersion education. *Journal of Language, Identity, & Education*, 2(4), 269-283.
- Da Silva Iddings, A. C. (2005). Linguistic access and participation: English language learners in an English-Dominant community practice, *Bilingual Research Journal*, (29)1, 165-182.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1991). Involving parents in the schools: A process of empowerment. *American Journal of Education*, 100, 495-513.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1992). School matters in the Mexican American home: Socializing children to education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 29, 495-513.
- Delpit, L. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(8), 280-298.

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000), Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-28). London: Sage.
- DeStigter, T. (2001). *Reflections of a citizen teacher: The forgotten students of Addison High*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Doda, N., & Knowles, T. (2008). Listening to the voices of young adolescents. *Middle School Journal*, 39(3), 26-33.
- Doheny, C., & Tinker Sachs, G. (2007). The status of teacher education in the state of Georgia. *Georgia Journal of Reading*, 30, 32-39.
- Dulay, H. & Burt, M. (1973). Should we teach children syntax? *Language Learning*, 24, 245-258.
- Dulay, H., Burt, M., & Krashen, S. (1982). *Language two*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Eccles, J. S., Midgley, C., Wigfield, A., Buchanan, C. M., Reuman, E., Flanagan, E., et al. (1993). Development during adolescence: The impact of stage-environment fit on young adolescent's experiences in schools and in families. *American Psychologist*, 48, 90-101.
- Echevarria, J. & Graves. (2006). *Sheltered content instruction: Teaching English learners with diverse abilities*. NY: Allyn & Bacon.
- Edwards, L. M., & Romero, A. J. (2008). Coping with discrimination among Mexican descent adolescents. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 30(1), 24-39.
- Ellis, R. (2002). *The study of second language acquisition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Epstein, J. L. (1995). School, family, and community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76, 701-712.
- Epstein, J. L. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Fairbanks, C. M., & Broughton, M. A. (2003). Literacy lessons: The convergence of expectations, practices, and classroom culture. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 34(4), 391-428.
- Fillmore, L. W., & Snow, C. E. (2000). *What teachers need to know about language*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fok, S., Chan, K., Sin, K. F., Ng, A. H., & Yeung, A.S. (2004). *In-service teacher training needs in Hong Kong*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Sydney, Australia, 2005.
- Frau-Ramos, M., & Nieto, S. (1993). "I was an outsider": Dropping out among Puerto Rican youths in Holyoke, Massachusetts. In Rivera & S. Nieto (Eds.), *The education of Latino students in Massachusetts: Research and policy considerations* (pp. 143-166). Boston: Gastón Institute.
- Freeman, D., & Freeman, Y. (2001). *Between worlds: Access to second language acquisition*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- French, S. E., Seidman, E., Allen, L., & Aber, J. L. (2006). The development of ethnic identity during adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(1), 1-10.

- Fry, R. (2003a). *High school dropout rates for Latino youths*. Retrieved from <http://www.ericdigests.org/2004-3/latino.html>
- Fry, R. (2003b). *Hispanic youth dropping out of U.S. schools: Measuring the challenge*. Retrieved from www.pewhispanic.org
- Fu, D. (1995). *My trouble is my English: Asian students and the American dream*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Gamboa, S. (2009). *ICE launches workplace immigration crackdown*. Retrieved from Atlanta Journal and Constitution website: http://www.ajc.com/feeds/content/shared-gen/ap/Other_US_Government/US_Immigration_Employers.html?cxntlid=inform_sr.
- Garcia, E. (1992). Effective instruction for language minority students: The teacher. *Journal of Education*, 173(2), 130-142.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Arnold.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second-language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Gee, J. (1996). Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses. In P. B. Mosenthal & M. L. Kamil (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research: Volume II* (pp. 195-207). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Gee, J. (2000). Discourse and sociocultural studies in reading. In R. Barr, P. D. Pearson, P. B. Mosenthal, & M. L. Kamil, (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research: Volume II* (pp.195-207). White Plains, NY: Longman.

- Georgia Department of Education. (2008). *2006-2007 report card. Three-year comparison of dropout rates for grades 7-12*. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ReportingFW.aspx?PageReq=102&StateId=ALL&T=1>
- Georgia Laws. (1996). *English designated official language*. Retrieved from <http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/1996act-1.htm>
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Gonzalez, J. (2009). Immigrants along Buford highway face mixed signals. Retrieved from Atlanta Journal and Constitution website: http://www.ajc.com/feeds/content/metro/dekalb/stories/2009/03/10/buford_highway_immigration.html?cxtype=rss&cxsvc=7&cxcac=13
- Gonzalez, R., & Ayala-Alcantar, C. (2008). Caring: Dispelling Latino stereotypes among preservice teachers. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 7(2), 129-143.
- Greene, J. P., & Winters, M. (2006). *Leaving boys behind: Public high school graduation rates*. New York: Manhattan Institute for Policy Research.
- Greenland, K., & Brown, R. (2005). Acculturation and contact in Japanese students studying in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 145(4), 373-389.
- Hall, J. K. (1993). The role of oral practices in the accomplishment of our everyday lives: The sociocultural dimension of interaction with implications for the learning of another language. *Applied Linguistics*, 16, 206-232.
- Hamburg, D. A. & Takanishi, R. (1989). Preparing for life: The critical transition of adolescence. *American Psychologist*, 44, 825-827.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and*

- classrooms*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Helmer, S., & Eddy, E. (2003). *Look at me when I talk to you: ESL learners in non-ESL classrooms*. Toronto, ON: Pippin.
- Heppen, J., & Therriault, S. (2008). Developing early warning systems to identify potential high school dropout. *National High School Center, Issue Brief* (July).
- Hirsch, B., & DeBois, D. (1992). The relation of peer support and psychological symptomatology during the transition to junior high school: A two year-longitudinal analysis. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 20, 333-347.
- Hollins, E. R., King, J. E., & Hayman, W. C. (Eds.). (1994). *Teaching diverse populations: Formulating a knowledge base*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Hughes, C. A. (2003). What teacher education programs can learn from successful Mexican-descent students. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 27(2), 226-244.
- Hughes, C., Hollander, M. J., Martinez, A. W. (2009). Hispanic acculturation in a predominately Black high school: Application of an adapted model. *Hispanic of Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 31(1), 32-56
- Hutchinson, S. A. (1988). Education and grounded theory. In R. Sherman & R. B. Webb, (Eds.), *Qualitative research in education: Focus and methods* (pp. 2-20). New York: Falmer Press.
- Hunter, J. (1997). Multiple perceptions: Social identity in multilingual elementary classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31(3), 603-611.
- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (Eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics* (pp. 269-293). New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston.

- Ibarra, R. A. (2004). Academic success and the Latino family. In R. E. Ybarra & N. Lopez (Eds.), *Creating alternative discourses in the education of Latinos and Latinas* (pp. 113-132). New York: Lang.
- Jessor, R. (1993). Successful adolescent development among youth in high-risk settings. *American Psychologist*, 48, 117-126.
- Johnson, E. (1997). Cultural norms affect oral communication in the classroom. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 70, 47-52.
- Johnson, K. (1996). Language teaching and skill learning. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Jonassen, D. H. (2004). *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology: A project of the association for educational communications and technology*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- King, K., & Ganuza, N. (2005). Language, identity, education, and transmigration: Chilean adolescents in Sweden. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 4(3), 179-199.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles in practice in second language acquisition*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Kress, G. (1985). *Linguistic processes in sociocultural practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lai, E. F. (1994). *Teachers' views on ways of improving English language teaching in Hong Kong*. Paper presented at the Annual International Language in Education Conference, Hong Kong, December 1994.

- Landsman, J. (2004, November). Confronting the racism of low expectations: Racism in educators' attitudes - how students are placed in advanced classes - still robs minority students of chances for success. *Educational Leadership*, xx, 28-32.
- Lantolf, J. P. (Ed.) (2000). *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lave, J. (1996). Teaching, as learning, in practice and mind. *Cultural and Society*, 3(3), 149-164.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- LeCompte, M. D., & Schensul, J. J. (1999a). *Analyzing and interpreting ethnographic research: Ethnographer's toolkit*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- LeCompte, M. D., & Schensul, J. J. (1999b). *Designing and conducting ethnographic research: Ethnographer's toolkit*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- LeCompte, M., Schensul, J., Weeks, M. & Singer, M., (1999). *Researcher roles & research partnerships: Ethnographer's toolkit*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- LeCroy, C. W., & Krysik, J. (2008). Predictors of academic achievement and school attachment among Hispanic adolescents. *Schools and Children*, 30(4), 197-209.
- Liebkind, K. (2001). Acculturation. In R. Brown and S. Gaetner (Eds.) *Blackwell handbook of social psychology* (pp. 386-406). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lippi-Green, R. (1997). *Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States*. London: Routledge.

- Littlewood, W. (2006). Second language learning. In A. Davies & C. Elder (Eds), *The handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 501-524). Carlton, Victoria, Australia: Blackwell.
- Long, M. (1985). Input and second language acquisition theory. In S. M. Gass & C. G. Madden (eds), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 377-93). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Lopez, G. R. (2001). The value of hard work: Lessons on parent involvement from an (im)migrant household. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71, 416-437.
- Lopez, G. R., Scribner, J. D., & Mahitivanichcha, K. (2001). Redefining parental involvement: Lessons from high-performing migrant-impacted schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38, 253-288.
- Mantle-Bromley, C. (1995). Positive attitudes and realistic beliefs: Links to proficiency. *Modern Language Journal*, 79(3), 372-386.
- Marx, S. (2008). "Not blending in": Latino students in a predominantly White school. *Hispanic Journal Behavioral Sciences*, 30(1), 69-88.
- Matteuci, M. (2009). Gang sweeps net arrests and deportations. Retrieved from Atlanta Journal and Constitution website:
http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/choke/stories/2009/05/14/choke_suspected_gang.html.
- McLaughlin, B., & McLeod, B. (1996). *Educating all our students: Improving education for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/ncrcdsll/edall.htm>
- McNamara, T. (1997). Theorizing social identity: What do we mean by social identity?

- Competing frameworks, competing discourses. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31(3), 561-567.
- Meier, M., & Gutierrez, M. (2003). *The Mexican American experience: An encyclopedia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, J. (2000). Language use, identity and social interaction: Migrant students in Australia. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 33(1), 69-100.
- Mitchell, C. (1984). Case studies. In R. F. Ellen (Ed.), *Ethnographic research: A guide to general conduct* (pp. 151-153). New York: Academic Press.
- Moll, L., & Diaz, S. (1993). Change as the goal of educational research. In D. Jacob & C. Jordan (Eds.), *Minority education: Anthropological perspectives* (pp. 67-79). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Mondada, L., & Doehler, S. (2004). Second language acquisition as situated practice: Task accomplishment in the French second language classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, 88, 501-520.
- Moscicki, E. B., Locke, B., Rae, D., & Boyd, J. (1989). Depressive symptoms among Mexican-Americans: The Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 130, 348-360.
- Muuss, R. (1996). *Theories of adolescence*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Nadeau, R., & Kafatos, M. (2001). *The non local universe: The new physics and matters of the mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- National Center for Education Statistics. (2004b). *Language minorities and their educational and labor market indicators—Recent trends, NCES 2004–09*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2007). *Overview of public elementary and secondary schools and districts: School year 2001-2002*. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/quarterly/vol_5/5_2/q3_5_t2.asp#Table-10
- National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition. (2007). *Educational statistics quarterly*. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/quarterly/vol_5/5_2/q3_5_t2.asp#Table-10
- National Council of Teachers of English. (2008). English language learners: A policy research brief prepared by the National Council of Teachers of English. *Council Chronicle*, 17(3), 15-22.
- Neild, R., & Balfanz, R. (2006). An extreme degree of difficulty: The educational demographics of the urban neighborhood high school. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 11(2), 123-141.
- Nieto, S. (1994). Lessons from students of creating a chance to dream. *Harvard Educational Review*, 64(4), 392-426.
- Nieto, S. (2004). *Language, culture, and teaching: Critical perspectives for a new century*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publisher.
- Nieto, S. (2008). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*, 5th ed. NY: Allyn & Bacon.
- No Child Left Behind Act. (2002). Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=ln>

- Norton Peirce, B. (1995). The theory of methodology in qualitative research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(3), 569-576.
- Norton, B. (1997). Language, identity, and the ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31(3), 409-429.
- Norton, B. (1998). Rethinking acculturation in second language acquisition. *PROSPECT: Australian Journal of TESOL Associations*, 13(2), 4-19.
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity, and educational change*. New York: Longman.
- Norton, B. (2001). Non-participation, imagined communities, and the language classroom. In M. Breen, (Ed.), *Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research* (pp. 159-171). Harlow, England: Pearson Education.
- Norton, B. (2002). Interview with Bonny Norton. *Language Teacher*, 26(6), 3-5.
- Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2001). Changing perspectives on good language learners. *Forum*, 35(2), 307-322.
- Olsen, L. (1997). *Made in America*. New York: The Press.
- Padilla, A. M., & Perez, W. (2003). Acculturation, social identity, and social cognition: A new perspective. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 25(1), 35-55.
- Peirce, B. N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1), pp. 9-31.
- Persons, S. (1987). *Ethnic studies at Chicago: 1905-45*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Purcell-Gates, S. P. (1997). *Other people's words*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

- Qin-Hilliard, D. B. (2003). Gendered expectations and gendered experiences: Immigrant students' adaptation in schools. *New directions for youth development*, 100 (Winter), 91-109.
- Rodriguez, T. D. (2002). Oppositional culture and academic performance of children of immigrants in the USA. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 5(2), 199-215.
- Rosenblatt, Louise M. (2004). The transactional theory of reading and writing. In R. B Rudell and J. J. Unrau (eds). *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading*. pp. 1363-1398, IRA.
- Rovai, A., Cristol, D. S., & Lucking, R. (2001, April 12). *Building classroom community at a distance*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting, Seattle, WA.
- Ruiz-de-Velasco, J., Fix, M., & Clewell, B. C. (2000). *Overlooked and underserved: Immigrant students in U.S. secondary schools*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Savignon, S. J., & Wang, C. (2003). Communicative language teaching in EFL contexts: Learner attitudes and perceptions. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 41, 223-249.
- Schumann, J. (1978). *The pidginization process : a model for second language acquisition*. Rowley, MA : Newbury House.
- Schumann, J. (1986). Research on the acculturation model for second language acquisition. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 7, 379-392.
- Schumann, J. (1990). Extending the scope of the acculturation/pidginization model to include cognition. *TESOL Quarterly*, 24(4), 667-684.

- Seidman, E., Lambert, L. E., Allen, L., & Aber, J. L. (2003). Urban adolescents' transition to junior high school and protective family transactions. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 23(2), 166-193.
- Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 10, 209-231.
- Sinclair, R., & Ghory, W. (1987). Becoming marginal. In H. Trueba (Ed.), *Success or failure? Learning and language minority students* (pp. 169-184). Cambridge, MA: Newbury House.
- Slavin, R. E. (1988). *Educational psychology theory into practice* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Stubbs, M. (2002). Some basic sociolinguistics concepts. In L. Delpit & J.K. Dowdey (Eds.), *The skin we speak* (pp. 63-85). New York: New Press.
- Street, B. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Street, B. (1995). *Social literacies: Critical approaches to literacy development, ethnography, and education*. London: Longman.
- Suarez-Orozco, C., & Suarez-Orozco, M. (1995a). *Transformations: Immigration, family life and achievement motivation among Latino adolescents*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Suarez-Orozco, C., & Suarez-Orozco, M. (1995b). Migration: Generational

- discontinuities and the making of Latino identities. In L. Romanucci-Ross & G. DeVos (Eds.), *Ethnic identity: Creation, conflict, and accommodation* (3rd ed., pp. 321-347). Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Teske, R. H. C., & Nelson, B. H. (1974). Acculturation and assimilation: A clarification. *American Ethnologist*, 17, 218-235.
- Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. (1997). School effectiveness for language minority students. *NCBE Resource Collection Series*, 9(12), 40-50.
- Thompson, G. (2007). A mindset is a difficult thing to change: Why reforming low-performing schools require eradicating negative beliefs about students. *Claremont Letter*, 3(2), 1-5.
- Thompson, G., Warren, S., & Carter, L. (2004). It's not my fault: Predicting high school teachers who blame parents and students for students' low achievement. *High School Journal*, 87(3), 5-14.
- Tinker Sachs, G. (1996). *Thinking and talking like real teachers: Bridging the gap*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Chicago, Illinois, March, 1996.
- Tomasello, M., Kruger, A., & Ratner, H. (1993) Cultural learning. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 16, 495-552.
- Trickett, E. J., & Birman, D. (2005). Acculturation, school context, and school outcomes: Adaptation of refugee adolescents from the former Soviet Union. *Psychology in the Schools*, 42(1), 27-38.
- Trueba, H. T. (1989). *Raising silent voices: Educating linguistic minorities for the 21st century*. New York: Harper & Row.

- Trueba, H. T. (1991). Notes on cultural acquisition and transmission. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 22, 279-281.
- Trueba, H. T. (1997). The education of Latino students: Is school reform enough? *ERIC/CUE Digest*, 123, 1-10.
- Tse, L., & McQuillen, J. (1996, April 8-12). *Culture, language, and literacy: The effects of child brokering on language minority education*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). *Foreign-born population in the United States: Population characteristics*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov>.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *NAEP*. Washington, DC: NCES.
- Valencia, E. Y., & Johnson, V. (2009). Latino students in North Carolina: Acculturation, perceptions of school environment, and academic aspirations. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 28(3), 350-367.
- Valencia, R., & Black, M. (2002). Mexican Americans don't value education! – On the basis of the myth, mythmaking, and debunking. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1(2), 81-103.
- Valencia, R., & Solórzano, D. (1997). Contemporary deficit thinking. In R. Valencia (Ed.), *The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice* (pp. 160-210). Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press.
- Valdés, G. (1996). *Con respeto: Bridging the distance between culturally diverse families and school: An ethnographic portrait*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Valdés, G. (1998). The world outside and inside schools: Language and immigrant children. *Educational Researcher*, 27(6), 4-18.

- Valdés, G. (2001). *Learning and not learning English: Latino students in American schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Valenzuela, A., & Dornbusch, S. M. (1994). Familism and social capital in the academic achievement of Mexican origin and Anglo adolescents. *Social Science Quarterly*, 75, 18-36.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Waxman, H. C., Walker de Felix, J., Anderson, J. E., & Baptiste, H. P., Jr., (1992). *Students at risk in at-risk schools*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.
- Wells, A. (1989). Middle school education: The critical link in dropout prevention. *ERIC/CUE Digest*, No. 56. Retrieved from: <http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9213/middle.htm>
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenz-Gross, M., Siperman, G. N., Untch, A. S., & Widaman, K. F. (1997). Stress, social support, and adjustment of adolescents in middle school. *Journal of Adolescence*, 17, 129-151.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Woods, P., Boyle, M., & Hubbard, N. (1999). *Multicultural children in the early years*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Woolfolk, Anita. (2004). *Educational Psychology*. (9th ed). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Woolley, M. E., Kol, K. L., & Bowen, G. L. (2009). The social context of school success for Latino Middle School students. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 29(1), 43-70.

World-Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA) 2007. Retrieved from:

<http://www.wida.us>

Wright, W. (2005). English language learners left behind in Arizona: The nullification of accommodations in the intersection of federal and state policies. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(1), 1-29.

Yashima, T., Zenuk-Nishide, L., & Shimizu, K. (2004). The influence of attitudes and affect on willingness to communicate and second language communication. *Language Learning*, 54(1), 119-152.

Zanger, V. (1994). Not joined in: The social context of English literacy development for Hispanic youth. In B. Ferdman, R. M. Weber, & A. Ramirez (Eds.), *Literacy across languages and cultures* (pp. 171-198). Albany: SUNY Press.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Glossary of Terms

Adequate Yearly Progress – AYP is one of the cornerstones of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. It is a measure of year-to-year student achievement on statewide assessments.

Attitudes – Learners’ feelings toward the teachers, learning environment, or the class or classroom itself.

English Language Learner (EL) – as school age elementary or secondary students who are:

- Not born in the U.S. or whose native language is not English
- Native American, Alaskan Native, or resident of the outlying areas
- From an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on an individual’s English language proficiency level
- Migratory and comes from an environment where English is not the dominant language
- Has difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, and understanding English which may prevent the student from meeting the state’s proficient level achievement and the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where English is the language of instruction, or to fully participate in society

English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) – The language support services within each school provided to ELs. Students may be pulled out from Social Studies or Science for small group instruction. The ESOL teacher may work collaboratively with the mainstream teacher to provide instruction. Or, in Middle or High school, students may be scheduled for an ESOL class where the teacher provides language support in a small group setting.

Expectations – EL held or expressions made by learners statements that express a modal reaction about characteristics of [subject or] object persons (Biddle, 1979).

Imagined Communities – The community (school or secular) in which ELs envision themselves taking part in.

Investments – The “socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” (Norton, 1997, p. 411). When learners invest in target language learning practices, they demonstrate their desire for a wider range of identities and expanded set of possibilities in the future as a member of that target language community, thus investing in a desired identity. Norton contends that “investment” is not a fixed personality trait, but rather an active sociological construct that captures relationship of the learner and the social world. Norton challenges educators to question learners’ *investment* in the language practices in a community rather than label them as motivated or unmotivated learners.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) – Term used to describe English language learners. Used primarily used in government documents and older research/documents in the ESOL field. This term has been replaced with the term EL or PHLOTE, which focus on learners’ abilities rather than their limitations.

Metro International School (MIS) – Participants’ school where they received Intensive English instruction during their first few months in the U.S. Students were bused in each day to receive Intensive English instruction and then returned to their neighborhood (home) school in the afternoon where they received Math, Art, Science, or Physical Education classes. MIS was also the primary data collection site.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the federal law affecting K-12 education. NCLB was signed into law on January 8th, 2002. Since that time, it has caused much controversy over its legality, funding, and expectations. NCLB is built on four principles: accountability for results, more choices for parents, greater local control and flexibility, and an emphasis on doing what works for learners based on scientific research.

Newcomer – Students who had been in the country for less than one year.

Perceptions – Perception is defined as a person’s interpretation of stimuli. It may be influenced by one’s mental/emotional state, experience, knowledge, motivations, and other factors (Slavin, 1988).

Primary Home Language Other Than English (PHLOTE) – Refers to learners who speak another language other than English in their homes.

Sociocultural Theory – Suggests that learning is culturally bound, dependent on social and cultural processes. Activities, settings, and learning that often accompanies social practice (Norton & Toohey, 2001) provided the basis for language development. Vygotsky (1978) is considered to have created the foundation for sociocultural approaches to learning with his emphasis on the importance of social contexts in processes of acculturation.

Target Language – The language the non-native speaker is in the process of learning.

Theory of Second Language Acquisition -- Describes and explains learners' linguistic or communicative competences. As a forerunner in the field of second language acquisition, Krashen (1982) proposed that language learning progresses through various stages of language development. The theory of second language acquisition proposed that second language acquisition is dependent on five main hypotheses: (1) acquisition-learning, (2) natural order, (3) monitor, (4) input, and (5) affective filter.

West Metro Middle School – The neighborhood (home) school of study participants. Students were bused to and from this school for Intensive English instruction at the MIS.

APPENDIX B

Table 3. Status dropout rates and number and distribution of dropouts of 16- through 24-year-olds, by background characteristics: October 2001					
Characteristic	Status dropout rate (percent)	Number of status dropouts (thousands)	Population (thousands)	Percent of all dropouts	Percent of population
Total	10.7	3,774	35,195	100.0	100.0
Sex					
Male	12.2	2,151	17,645	57.0	50.1
Female	9.3	1,623	17,549	43.0	49.9
Race/ethnicity ¹					
White, non-Hispanic	7.3	1,677	22,903	44.4	65.1
Black, non-Hispanic	10.9	557	5,111	14.7	14.5
Hispanic	27.0	1,442	5,350	38.2	15.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.6	53	1,487	1.4	4.2
Age					
16	4.2	168	3,984	4.4	11.3
17	5.6	229	4,060	6.1	11.5
18	12.9	514	3,975	13.6	11.3
19	12.5	528	4,227	14.0	12.0
20–24	12.3	2,336	18,949	61.9	53.8
Recency of immigration					
Born outside the 50 states and District of Columbia					
Hispanic	43.4	980	2,261	26.0	6.4
Non-Hispanic	6.2	125	2,001	3.3	5.7
First generation ²					
Hispanic	15.4	267	1,735	7.1	4.9
Non-Hispanic	4.8	92	1,917	2.4	5.4
Second generation or more ²					
Hispanic	14.4	195	1,353	5.2	3.8
Non-Hispanic	8.2	2,116	25,927	56.1	73.7
Region					
Northeast	8.8	543	6,133	14.4	17.4
Midwest	8.6	717	8,288	19.0	23.5
South	13.1	1,643	12,527	43.5	35.6
West	10.6	872	8,248	23.1	23.4

¹Due to small sample sizes, American Indians/Alaska Natives are included in the total but are not shown separately.

²Individuals defined as "first generation" were born in the 50 states or the District of Columbia, and one or both of their parents were born outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia. Individuals defined as "second generation or more" were born in the 50 states or the District of Columbia, as were both of their parents.

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2001.

Taken from: National Center for Educational Statistics. (2004, August). *English language learners in U. S. public schools: 1994 to 2000*. U. S. Department of Education. Retrieved May 22, 2006 from, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/quarterly/vol_3/3_4/q3-3.asp#H3.

APPENDIX C

Parent and Student Information and Consent

At the Edge of a New Culture: Perceptions, Expectations, and Attitudes of Newcomer Middle School Students

Researcher: Margo Williams, English to Speakers of Other Languages Teacher, Metro School District

I am conducting a research study of how students enrolled in the Intensive English Program at the Metro International School adjust to their new schools. The students' placement of 7/8th grade students is an indicator that the student may struggle with English language development. I will study how students' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes affect their academic success. I will share this information in class with your child and invite him/her to participate. Please feel free to contact me with all and any questions you both may have after reading this description. In order to participate in the study, both student and parent (or guardian) must sign the consent.

Information Collection

I will ask students questions about school. I will take notes and occasionally audio tape class or group discussions. I will also collect information from student journals, and examples of student work. As the research progresses, I will invite several students to become key participants. With their consent and yours, I will interview them in depth about their experiences in their new educational settings. Your signature on this consent form gives me, the researcher, the right to collect these materials and use them in a final report.

Confidentiality

All of the information in this research will be kept confidential. It will be stored securely and not available to any person other than the researcher without specific permission from you in writing. The students' real names will not be used during data collection, or in written reports. There will be no references which might link the student to the study. Neither the name of the school nor the town is mentioned in the final report.

Participation

All participation in this study is voluntary, and the student has the right to withdraw at any time for any reason. Participation in the study is not linked in any way to the student's grade in class, and the student will not be pulled out of other classes or regular activities as part of this study.

Use of Research Data

The information collected in this study will be used for a doctoral dissertation to meet the requirements of my program of study at Georgia State University and possibly, for articles to be published in scholarly journals and/or presentations at professional conferences. Tapes and data are used for research purposes. Your child may be given a preliminary report of the findings of this study and asked for any comments and reactions. You may also request to see a copy of the final report submitted to my research committee at Georgia State University.

Contact

If you have any questions at any time, you may contact me at XXXXXXXXXX or email XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. You may also send a message through your child and I will respond promptly.

Student Permission

I have read and understood the above information and I agree to participate in the study.

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Permission

I have read and understood the above information and give my consent for my student to participate in the study.

Parents' Signature _____ Date _____

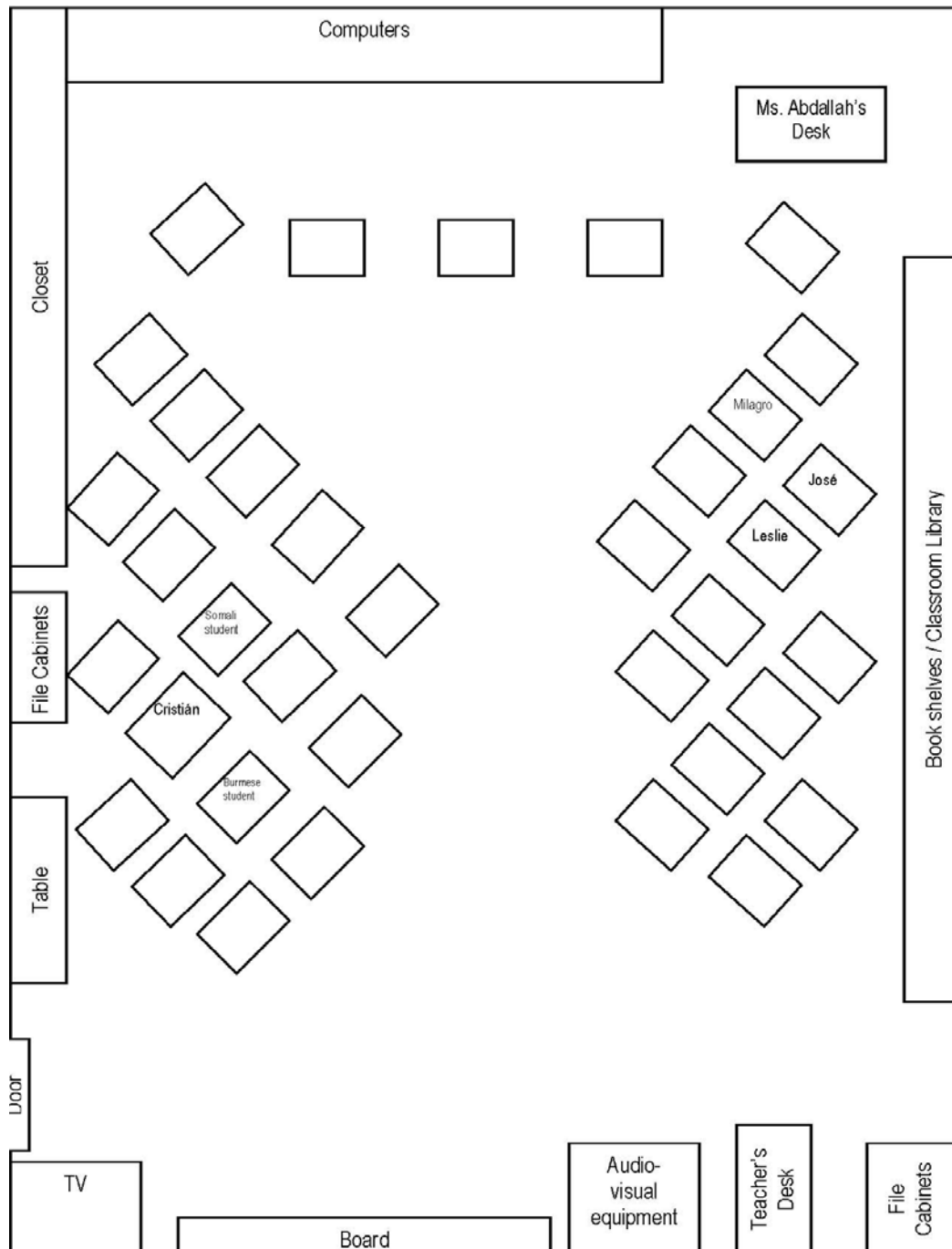
APPENDIX D

Research Time Line for Data Collection and Analysis

Task	Wk. 1	Wk. 2	Wk. 3	Wk. 4	Wk. 5	Wk. 6	Wk. 7	Wk. 8	Wk. 9	Wk. 10	Wk. 11	Wk. 12	Wk. 13	Wk. 14-16
Initial Parent Interview #1	X													
Student Interviews #1	X													
• Observations	X	X	X											
• Record/transcribe Data	X	X	X											
Student Interviews #2				X										
• Observations				X	X	X								
• Record/transcribe Data				X	X	X								
Student Interview #3								X						
• Observations								X	X	X				
• Record/transcribe Data								X	X	X				
Student Interview #4											X			
• Observations											X		X	
• Record/transcribe Data											X		X	
Locate Artifacts/Documents	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Final Parent Interviews #2										X	X			X
• Record/transcribe Data										X	X			X
Data Management	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Collect	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Enter	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Analyze	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fine Tune Findings												X	X	X
Preliminary Report												X	X	X

APPENDIX E

Classroom Layout



APPENDIX F

Proposed Interview Questions

Interview I—What has school been like you from the time you first remember until the present?

- What do you remember about before you came to the US? Did you like school?
- What was school like for you in elementary school?
- Did you parent(s) help you with school work? How as that?
- Tell me about a time when school was really (good/bad) for you.
- Tell me about where you lived and what your schools were like.
- What is school like for you now?
- Can you recreate ____ for me? You haven't said much about ____?
- I'm trying to get a sense of _____. (...and other open-ended questions).

Interview II—What is school like for you right now?

- Tell me as many stories as you can about what school is like for you now.
- Tell me about a typical day in school.
- What do you do when you don't understand something in school?
- How do other people help or hinder your learning?
- Some people say that school is uncomfortable, even distressing to them. Is that ever true for you? How?
- I'm trying to imagine you at school. If I had a picture, what would it look like?
- What makes school easy for you? What gives you a problem with school? What do you worry about? Do you try to figure out what teachers want when you go to school?

Interview III—What sense do you make of your experience with school?

- Tell me about a typical day in school.
- Thinking about your past experience with school and your present experience with school, what sense do you make of the whole thing? How do you understand that experience? (Asking the question in several different ways helped).
- What things are important to you in your life? How does school connect with what is important?
- Are you realizing anything through these interviews about schooling and its effect on you? How has the experience of schooling been good/bad/exciting/distressing/frustrating? How did you understand that?
- What is there that seems important to you that we haven't discussed?

Parent Interview Questions

Initial Interview

- What kind of student was your child in his/her native country?
- Did you child enjoy school in your native country?
- What are their attitudes/expectations/perceptions about school?
- Do they enjoy American schools?
- What grades do they expect for this semester grading period?
- What kind of student is your child in American schools?
- What are your attitudes/expectations/perceptions about school?

Final Interview

- How is your child doing in school?
- What are their attitudes/expectations/perceptions about school?
- Do they enjoy American schools?
- What grades do they expect for this semester grading period?
- What kind of student is your child in American schools?
- What are your attitudes/expectations/perceptions about school?