RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

A Practical Resource for Graduate Students

Coordinated by
Irasema Mora-Pablo, Edgar Emmanuell García-Ponce and M. Martha Lengelingtt

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Research Methodology In Applied Linguistics:
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INTRODUCTION

The book titled *Research Methodology in Applied Linguistics: A Practical Resource for Graduate Students* presents seven original studies of young researchers who conducted their research projects in diverse contexts. These projects were part of the thesis requirements of the MA in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching at the University of Guanajuato. The studies aimed not only to recognize the importance of language-oriented enquiry for addressing real problems related to language use and language teaching but also to open the panorama to the importance of investigating language. Applied linguistics is an interdisciplinary field, and it is best defined in terms of specialized areas of study and the problems researchers seek to address and answer.

This book consists of seven chapters which focus on the methodology these beginner researchers implemented and how they made decisions when conducting their studies. The relevance of this book is twofold. First, the chapters address how qualitative research can serve as a lens to analyze a particular context where language is of importance. Second, the diversity of approaches and instruments used in these studies allows the readers to reflect on how research is carried out and the choices researchers have. This also provides a space for the readers to understand the research process and adopt any of the authors' ideas for future research endeavors. The chapters in this book cover a wide range of material on research methods in applied linguistics which are individually worthy of a much lengthier space. It is therefore recommended that the readers take into consideration these research ideas and reflect on the questions at the end of each chapter.

In the following paragraphs, we offer the readers summaries of each chapter which are intended to guide the reader with an overview of a range of methods, instruments and techniques presented in these studies.

The first chapter is titled "A Modern Phenomenological View of Transnationalism Through Multiple Small Cultures". The author, José Omar Serna Gutiérrez (Catholic Charities Fort Worth and Tarrant County College), explains how the academic and social (re)insertion experiences of transnational high school students were analyzed under the lens of modern phenomenology. He describes the data collection techniques of emails, research logs, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires. Finally, he discusses the issues of ethics and reflexivity that he took into consideration.

Another author is Alexis Adriana Lozano from the University of Guanajuato. Her chapter "Capturing Their Voices: A Qualitative Approach to a Dual Language Program" discusses the implementation of an instrumental case study to explore the perceptions that participants, a group of 96 parents, teachers, and students, had regarding a dual-language charter school in southern California. To collect the data, she designed and carried out semi-structure interviews, a questionnaire, and a narrative frame. The main findings show that parents have high expectations of the dual language program. They also perceive that being bilingual will provide more professional opportunities for their children in the future. In contrast with what parents expect, the analysis of the data obtained from teachers and students suggests that more attention should be provided to the Spanish curriculum.

The next chapter, "Unravelling Themes Upon Semi-Structured Interviews", comes from Isaac Frausto Hernández (University of Guanajuato/The University of Texas at El Paso). This chapter illustrates the use of semi-structured interviews as a qualitative data-gathering technique under a phenomenological approach. The author's research deals with transnationals and how they construct and reconstruct their identities as they develop within the English language teaching (ELT) field as student-teachers in a language department of a large public university located in the central Mexico. The student-teachers' experiences were explored through semi-structured interviews. The participants reflected on their lives as their identities evolved through a hybrid lens while they continued to develop as student-teachers within the ELT field in central Mexico.

Chapter 4 is titled "English Teacher's Physical Appearance: Eliciting EFL Students' Social Constructs" by Josafat Negrete Martínez, also from the University of Guanajuato. He addresses the issues of race, ethnicity, and skin color in the ELT profession. From his findings, he shows that there is still a preference for white and clear-eyed English teachers, as well as a resistance for the opposite perceived physical features. His research implemented a qualitative paradigm, social phenomenology, modality and multimodality, and discourse and advertising.

"Narrative Inquiry to Analyse European Stories of Transit in Mexico" is our next chapter from Diana Stukan (University of Guanajuato). She describes a qualitative study that analyzes the stories of four multilingual individuals from Europe who live in Mexico. She applied a narrative inquiry methodology. The participants' stories were written by the researcher based on the data obtained from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The data collected was subsequently analysed to examine the language shift because of the participants' migration to a different linguistic environment and its influence on their identity. The data was presented in the form of stories with an analysis of emergent themes, such as language attrition, language and emotions, multilingualism in thinking, and code-switching.

María Fernanda Castillo Acosta (University of Guanajuato) presents the chapter "Creating Snapshots Through a Case Study with an Ethnographic Lens". This qualitative case study implemented an ethnographic lens to explore the linguistic practices of a Mexican family living in Puerto Rico. Through the creation of the participants' snapshots, this study aimed at understanding the cultural context where code-switching occurred, as well as the reasons why the individuals code switched and how this use of language affected their identity. The author is part of this family and makes sense of her position within this research.

Lastly, we present the chapter "Tracking the Use of Narratives and Its Adeptness in Qualitative Data Analysis" by Perla Villegas-Torres of the University of Guanajuato. In this chapter, she describes the use of narratives as the main data source for carrying out her study. Her research focused on analyzing the experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of returnee English teachers and parents, who decided to bring up their children bilingually in Guanajuato, Mexico. She outlines the steps she followed to collect, analyze, and interpret the findings.

In conclusion, we hope you enjoy reading these seven chapters which illustrate the work of our MA students. These studies portray a range of topics, and research methodologies carried out in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico, California, and Puerto Rico. This representation is of value for our profession in Guanajuato, other parts of Mexico, and anyone who is interested in research. We give thanks to the seven authors for their chapters. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the University of Guanajuato, the Division of Social Sciences and Humanities (Campus Guanajuato), and the Language Department for their valuable support in this book.

Chapter 1

A Modern Phenomenological View of Transnationalism Through Multiple Small Cultures

José Omar Serna Gutiérrez *
Catholic Charities Fort Worth & Tarrant County College

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to provide an insight into the methodological and practical aspects of qualitative research design in applied linguistics. This chapter explains how I gave meaning to the everyday activities of transnational high school students through modern phenomenology. I highlight the methodology's usefulness in delving into two small cultures that are interconnected by the transnational phenomenon.

From a methodological standpoint, transnationalism is viewed as a phenomenon of human migration. My interest was to see how transnationalism impacted the academic and social reinsertion of four high school students. This was achieved by utilizing several research techniques that allowed a holistic view of the phenomenon within both small cultures. This holistic view included the perceptions of administrators, EFL teachers, and transnational students.

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In order to provide background information about the methodological choices, I must describe the study these choices helped to frame. The study was carried out in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico in the cities of Silao and San Luis de la Paz. The research sites were two high schools affiliated to the University of Guanajuato.

Initially, an instrumental case study (see Dörnyei, 2007) was intended to be the lens of exploration. However, the selection of two research sites, along with my intent to explore the phenomenon of transnationalism brought several methodological concerns. First, in case study research, the "case itself is secondary to understanding a particular phenomenon" (Mills, Eurepos & Wiebe, 2010, p. 473). For the purposes of my study, this view was incomplete as the case (participants) and the phenomenon (transnationalism) were both primary in truly understanding the academic and social experiences of transnational students. Second, case study research, with its nature of holistic inquiry, sees phenomenon as "occurring in a bound context" (Miles & Huberman, as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). Setting boundaries to transnationalism is simply impossible as it spans beyond both physical and imagined borders. For my research, I sought two contexts which shared experiences with transnationalism and utilized Holliday's (1999; 2007) concept of small cultures to show how despite being distant from one another, they are still bound by the phenomenon of transnationalism.

Qualitative Research

In qualitative research, "the world, or reality, is not fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomena" (Merriam, 2002, p. 3). This signifies that reality is not a quantifiable entity, thus making qualitative perspectives a more appropriate means of exploring subjective, socially constructed worlds. Qualitative research can be defined as a co-construction of experiences through a fluid and flexible inductive process (Dörnyei, 2007; Merriam, 2002; Richards, 2003).

Naturalistic Inquiry

It would be difficult – if not impossible – to explore lived experiences through a study characterized by rationalistic axioms. Instead, the phenomenon of the study called for a naturalistic inquiry. Naturalistic inquiry is "an approach to understanding the social world in which the researcher observes, describes, and interprets the experiences and actions of specific people and groups in societal and cultural context" (Armstrong, 2010, p. 880). It allows for the description and interpretation of phenomena in their natural contexts through the actions and perceptions of those involved (Beuving & de Vries, 2015). Guba and Lincoln (1982) list four characteristics of naturalistic inquiry:

1. Offers contextual relevance and richness.
2. Displays sensitivity to process.
3. Driven by theory grounded in the data.
4. Takes full advantage of the not inconsiderable power of the human-as-instrument. (p. 235)

The characteristics above contain several implications for my study. Firstly, they suggest the relevance of the context as an arena in which the participants interact and are bound together by a specific phenomenon. As Armstrong (2010) states, "naturalistic researchers hold that all human phenomena occur within a particular context and cannot be interpreted or understood apart from these contexts" (p. 884). Secondly, the process of accessing the context and participants in which the study unfolded served to enrich the data. Thirdly, in reference to purposive sampling, which was carried out in order to explore a specific phenomenon in which transnational students were selected. In naturalistic studies, "specifying criteria for the sampling of participants is expected to be part of the research process" (Beuving & de Vries, 2015, p. 37). This type of sampling ensured that all participants were bound by the same phenomenon. These characteristics all describe the naturalistic nature of this project and fundament the choice of methodology.

Modern Phenomenology

The study of the mundane, everyday life implies that such must not be seen as ordinary or matter-of-factly. In my study, I explored the lifeworld of transnational youth, which includes the voices of English teachers and administrators at two high schools in the State of Guanajuato. Each voice – students', teachers', and administrators' – contributes to the descriptions and interpretations of their everyday lives at school which are bound by the modern phenomenon of transnationalism. Through modern phenomenology, everyday instances can be described and interpreted to shed light on transnational students' (re)insertion.

Phenomenology is a research methodology in which lived experiences are described and interpreted through the voices of those living the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). The ultimate goal of phenomenology is the understanding of the relationship between the phenomenon and the participants' experiences. As Valle, King, and Halling (1989) state "[phenomenology's] emphasis is on the world as lived by a person, not the world or reality as something separate from the person" (as cited in Laverty, 2003, p. 22). Such relationship between participants and the world is bound by a common modern phenomenon, which in the case of my study was transnationalism.

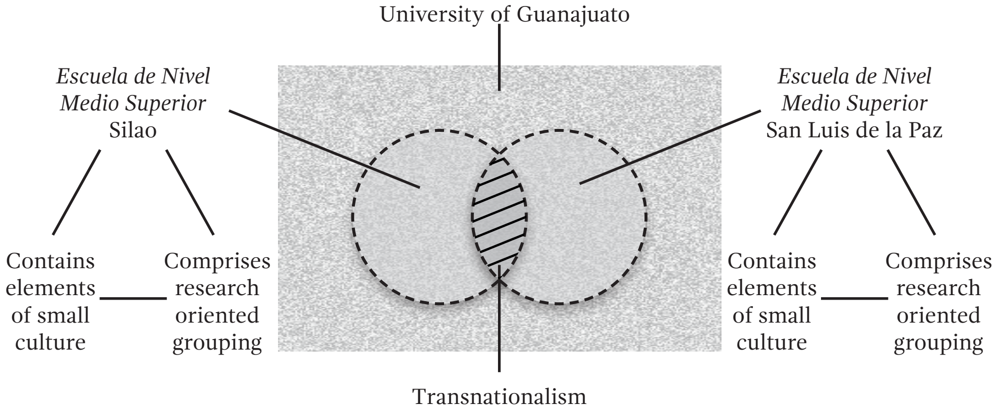
Modernity involves "social change" (Haferkamp & Smelser, 1992; Heaphy, 2007). The social change explored in my research is an unprecedented number of children with transnational experiences who are (re)inserted into the Mexican educational system. According to Berman (1988), "modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind" (p. 15). In that sense, modernity encompasses the world as we know it today and has been constantly affected by change. Martin (2003) defines modernity as a "subjective experience […] characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity driven by flux, change and the ephemeral culture" (p. 215). Such ephemerality represents the constant changes in the dynamics of transnationalism and return migration which holds together the everyday practices of those involved in this project.

The everyday practices bound by the phenomena of transnationalism and return migration are framed by Martin's (2003) conceptualization of the everyday in his book *Interpreting Everyday Culture*. Martin (2003) argues that *everydayness* is a modern phenomenon which is constituted and bound by ideology and power relationships. From Martin's (2003) research, I have adapted the concept of *everyday work* to everyday school. Everyday school life and practices are seen as conveying ideologies and power relationships which may interact in harmony or conflict amongst each other. Although the primary actors – students, teachers, and administrators – may carry out their everyday school lives and activities independently of each other, they are all bound by transnationalism.

Regardless of the participants' distinct roles at the two high schools, whether it be academic or administrative, there are various everyday school practices which at their core are bound by ideologies and power relations influenced by transnationalism. These actors have created what Holliday (1999; 2007) coins as small cultures. Holliday (1999) defines a small culture as "any cohesive social grouping" (p. 237) in which "behavior selected for study may be understood" (p. 255). At the University of Guanajuato, the concept of small cultures has been utilized to study: students and teachers at a Language Department in central Mexico (Armenta Delgado, 2014); a discourse community at the University of Guanajuato in Mexico (Crawford, 2010); transnational English teachers in Mexico (Frausto Hernández, 2017; Rivas Rivas, 2013). The previous studies have demonstrated the complexity found within small cultures and highlighted how they create and follow idiosyncratic norms, behavior, and practices in which its members may belong to a myriad of small cultures.

Figure 1 is an adaptation of Holliday's (1999; 2007) illustration of small cultures. This illustration was created as a result of arduous dialogue with Professor Troy Crawford from the University of Guanajuato.

Figure 1.



Originally, Figure 1 consisted of one social setting. However, to better interpret and describe the phenomenon, two contexts (ENMS, Escuela del Nivel Medio Superior, San Luis de la Paz and Silao) were selected from the *mélange* (Holliday, 1999; 2007) of the university's academic programs of Guanajuato. Both settings consist of many other small cultures pertinent to various academic and administrative practices with varying degrees of overlapping. Although each social setting may function individually as separate small cultures, what binds them together for the purposes of this study is the concept of transnationalism. My purpose in adapting the concept of small cultures for my project was to describe and explain how the phenomenon of transnationalism creates a small culture in which teachers, students, and administrators display their ideologies in their everyday school practices.

Data Collection Techniques

This section outlines the choices made regarding data collection procedures. The first sources of data were the documentary evidence and research log. I highlight their importance in describing access to the participants and the research site, as well as other issues concerning knowledge of the term transnational and return migrant from administrators. Additionally, I discuss semi-structured interviews and how they were applied to both teacher and student participants. Finally, I present the role that questionnaires played in the selection of participants.

E-Mails and Research Log

The purpose of these two sources of data was to provide my insights throughout the research process to the reader or as Duffy (2010) states, "to supplement information obtained by other methods" (p. 124). These sources of data describe: (1) the difficulties faced when searching for participants; (2) how access was gained to the participants; and (3) administrative gaps in records of transnational students in institutional databases and archives.

Documentary data may include printed or manuscript sources and electronic forms of data (Duffy, 2010). The documentary data used for this project are a combination of printed and electronic sources. These include letters and e-mails and my electronic research log (Word). In total, seven emails to and from administrators within the University of Guanajuato and the ENMS (these do not include my own replies to those e-mails) were obtained.

To complement e-mails, I kept a research log. Entries to this research log are reactions and reflections toward email exchanges. Research logs or research journals are "diaries kept by the researchers themselves during the course of a research project rather than by the participants of a study concerning the topic of the investigation" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 159). My research log helped me organize my ideas, plan and set dates, and to reflect on the process of entering my research site and accessing participants. As Bell (2010) states, a research log aids to track the progress of a research project. I was able to track my progress from the beginning when no participants were available to the steps to follow once I had obtained participants.

Semi-Structured Interviews

An interview is defined as a "conversation with a purpose" (Kahn & Cannell, as cited in Marshal & Rossman, 2006, p. 101). However, their significance within qualitative research lies in that they are "planned, prepared, and differ in conduct" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 173) from ordinary conversation. However, these characteristics do not imply that interviews are rigid and structured in all their forms. In general, there are three types of interviews, and they lie within a continuum which describes how they are structured.

The types of interviews are structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews "focus on the target topic area and […] covers a well-defined domain" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 135), which means that the interviewer follows a strict sequence of questions allowing little flexibility in the dynamics of question and answer. However, this type of interview does not allow exploration in other areas which the interviewee may want to share. In this type of interview there are "pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, [however] the format is open-ended, and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issue raised in an exploratory manner" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136). This allows for the interviewer and the interviewee to expand on certain issues and topics. However, some guidance from the interviewer is required to keep the interviewee on track. On the other end of the spectrum, unstructured interviews "allow maximum flexibility to follow the interviewee in unpredictable directions, with only minimal interference from the research agenda" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 135). This implies that the interview may take many directions and that many themes may arise. Despite this openness, it may be difficult to work with this type of interview with adolescents as in some cases, adolescents may require more elicitation.

For this project, semi-structured interviews were used, and they require that the interviewer "has a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 175). They are flexible and allow both the interviewer and interviewee to engage in dialogue. This type of interview allowed for a "co-construction of meaning regarding a topic [or theme]" (Janesick, as cited in Hernandez Sampieri *et al.,* 2006, p. 597). Moreover, this allows the interviewer to provide "guidance and direction [and] elaborate on certain issues" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews consist of open questions which are answered "on the basis of the knowledge that the interviewee has immediately at hand" (Flick, 2009, p. 152). This flexibility allowed me to receive answers to my prepared questions and it also left space for other emergent areas that I did not expect.

The semi-structured interview was designed in two parts. For teacher participants, this section consisted of questions eliciting their names, age, hometown, years teaching, educational background regarding English language teaching, and how they learned the English language. For student participants, the only difference was in eliciting the years they had spent in the U.S. and the semester in which they were enrolled in at the ENMS. The second part for teachers consisted of their experiences with transnational and return migrant students in their English classrooms. For students they were asked on their experiences both in the U.S. and in Mexico regarding their education, family, academic and social aspects of their (re)insertion processes.

Questionnaires

The fourth technique, questionnaires, did not play a central role in terms of data, but they allowed English teachers to identify the participants and to aid me in the process. Hernandez Sampieri *et al.* (2006) state that "[questionnaires] are perhaps the most used instrument to collect data" (p. 310). Questionnaires fall under survey research which typically "aims at describing the characteristics of a population by examining a sample of that group" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 101). The role of questionnaires in this study was exclusively to identify possible participants. After having contacted the teachers at the ENMS, I instructed them on how to apply the questionnaire in their classrooms. The questionnaire first defined "transnational student" in general terms and outlined the purpose of the study to the possible participants. Along with the informative content, the questionnaire consisted of two questions which were designed specifically to filter out any students who were not transnational. If the students were able to answer the two questions, personal information was solicited. The answered questionnaires, in turn, were used to contact the student-participants and inquire about their participation.

Data Analysis and Coding Procedures

Once all the data were collected and transcribed, the next steps were to analyze and code the raw data. Although here this process may seem sequential, in fact, this process was ongoing and cyclical. However, the formal and systematic analysis of data took part after the fact through a thematic analysis. The *SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (2008) defines thematic analysis as:

> Themes within and across participants or events may be identified. Themes express meaningful patterns, stances of the participants, or concerns. Themes may be qualitatively distinct from one another. A theme is kept close to the text, and textual examples of the theme are required to identify another portion of text exemplifying the same theme. (p. 463)

Regarding the above, themes were identified manually, utilizing a table in Microsoft Word. The contents of the table included raw data excerpts, time, my comments, and theme.

Excerpts of the raw data were included so that the relationship between the excerpts and themes was easier to identify visually. Time/Place was included to represent whether the comments in the excerpt were related to the time the participant spent either in Mexico or in the U.S. My comments are my reflection on the excerpt and facilitated the identification of themes and related concepts. This procedure was carried out for each interview conducted with student and teacher participants. In addition, this process was also carried out for e-mail exchanges and the research journal.

As previously mentioned, a thematic analysis was first carried out for each participant individually. Subsequently, the themes which emerged from each participants' interview were cross-referenced until a refined, visual representation of themes and sub-themes was created. For example, one of the major themes was transnational students' experiences in the English classroom which had several sub-themes including getting bored, students taking the role of English teachers, and feeling invisible.

In preparing the raw data for its use in this thesis, it was first translated and then coded. Coding is defined as:

> […] tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to "chunks" of varying size –words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting. (Miles & Huberman, as cited in Bell, 2010, p. 221)

Each source of data from the semi-structured interviews, e-mails, and journals were given a different tag. Labels for data from semi-structured interviews were coded as the following: Juanita, I. The code includes the participants' pseudonym and 'I' for interview. Codes for e-mails and journals are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Research journal and e-mail coding

Source of Data	Example of Code	Example of Code
Research Journal	RJ, 4	Research Journal, Journal Entry Number
E-mail	E081817	E-mail-Date

Coding data ensures that a point of reference is created between raw and analyzed data. As seen in table 1, the tag or label for an e-mail sent on August 8, 2017 is displayed as E01817. The examples given above represent the rigorous nature of qualitative research in terms of data analysis and coding. It shows that themes are not chosen randomly without before cross-referencing themes among participants. Among these characteristics are also others that consider the participants' role and the researcher´s role.

Ethics and Reflexivity

According to the *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, ethics "refers to moral standards for research practices that involve humans" (Mills *et al.*, 2010, p. 336). As this study focused on the experiences of transnational students, several ethical issues must be addressed. These include the issues related to the participants and the researcher.

First and foremost were the issues of informed consent. This ethical issue implies that everyone involved in the study "fully [understood] the nature of the research being conducted as well as their role in and contribution to the research" (Koulouriotis, 2011, p. 3). To gain access to the participants (teachers and students), the first task was to inform the principals at each ENMS about the research topic and the data collection techniques. To do so, I reported the procedures and objectives verbally, then I provided a short summary explaining in detail what the project consisted of for their records. In addition, I also provided a letter from the General Director of the ENMS which approved that I conducted research at the ENMS campuses. After I had done the previously stated, I also provided the questions for the semi-structured interviews for their approval.

Furthermore, informed consent was given to teachers and students. Teachers were informed verbally and through the project summary. A detailed account of what the project consisted of was necessary as they would be the gatekeepers to the student participants. After they were informed, they were asked to sign a letter of consent for teachers which outlined their role in the project and their anonymity.

The teachers were the gatekeepers to the student participants. Through the use of a questionnaire they identified the transnational students who were willing to participate in the project. Once they had identified the participants, they informed the students of what the project consisted of. This was done in preparation for the semi-structured interview. Before the interview was conducted, they were given a letter of informed consent for students. This letter served the same purpose as the one for teacher participants. This brought an ethical issue related to the age of the participants.

Because several of the participants were underage, permission to participate in the project was necessary from their parents, tutors, or mentors. The letter of informed consent provided a space for parents to signal their approval. Students were asked to return the letter to their English teachers and was later retrieved by me. Initially, six participants had been contacted, however, consent from the parents was only given by four.

Once in contact with the participants, issues related to reflexivity arose. According to Bourke (2014), reflexivity "involves a self-scrutiny on the part of the researcher, a self-conscious awareness of the relationship between the researcher and an 'other'" (pp. 1-2). My relationship with the 'other', is that the participants of this study and I both share similar migratory, transnational experiences as well as funds of transnational knowledge. To expand on Bourke´s idea, Maina Thuo (2013) asserts that reflexivity "entails a researcher historically, culturally and personally situating himself/herself within their research and letting their informants and audience know it" (p. 21). Such transparency was provided to participants in casual conversation before the interview and during the interview as a means to connect with the interviewee. To address this issue, I must make it clear that I fall under the definition of transnational that also characterizes the participants. I do not see this as an interference or clouding my judgment, on the contrary, I see this as an advantage. I can relate first hand to the experiences that my participants are expressing and voice them through my writing.

As Janesick (as cited in Banister, 2007) states, researchers “from the beginning moments of informed consent decisions, to other ethical decisions in the field, to the completion of the study, […] need to allow for the possibilities of recurring ethical dilemmas and problems” (p. 1). This means that ethical issues are always present when conducting research with people and their experiences. Dealing with people’s lived experiences means that “the intention of the researcher is to listen to the voice of participants” (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001, p. 94). This implies that there must be a “balance of power between [the researchers] and those participating in their studies” (Banister, 2007, p. 1). This balance of power is managed through the semi-structured interviews and the analysis of data. The ethical considerations for this project revolve around informed consent, anonymity, age of student participants, and reflexivity in the research project.

Conclusion

By adapting Holliday’s (1999; 2007) concept of small cultures, I was able to bind two research cites with the phenomenon of transnationalism. I argue that exploring multiple small cultures through a modern phenomenology lens allowed me to explain how transnationalism creates small cultures in which teachers, students, and administrators display their ideologies in their everyday school practices. In doing so, I demonstrated the richness of data that may be gathered through email and research logs, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires. Modern phenomenology allows the researcher to view social phenomena through the everyday experiences of participants and by adding small cultures, this allows for the exploration of multiple social settings.

Reflection Questions:

1. Look back at the concept of reflexivity. How would you describe this concept in relation to your own research?

2. Review Hollday´s (1999; 2007) concept of small culture. How could you adapt this to your own research?

3. What other methodology can you choose to explore multiple research sites?

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Chapter 2

Capturing Their Voices: A Qualitative Approach to a Dual Language Program

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Introduction

Numerous studies have been conducted regarding the implementation of dual language programs as well as their impact on the academic performance of the students (Christian, 2011; Esposito, 2020; Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005; Howard *et al.,* 2007; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Poulsen, 2020; Steele *et al.*, 2015). Instead, I decided to conduct a qualitative inquiry that would allow me to explore the state of a dual language charter school through the perceptions of parents, teachers, and students, therefore, deflecting the attention from performance indicators and emphasizing the stakeholders' needs. One of the particularities of this instrumental case study was the number of participants: 73 students, 19 parents, and three teachers. The data collected through interviews, questionnaires, and narrative frames was rich,

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and a variety of themes emerged. One of them was the knowledge of two languages as linguistic capital, which was marked by a phrase that participants often mentioned: *"Ser bilingüe abre puertas"* (Being bilingual opens doors). In these conversations, parents and students acknowledged that bilingual education is not commonly accessed by the majority of the population in El Cajon in California, where this study took place. Additionally, the teachers and students unveiled the language dynamics at school and their non-conformity with the established language curricula.

Experiences and Perceptions: Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry has been a predominant approach to research in the area of applied linguistics because it allows the researcher to explore a phenomenon from different perspectives through a plethora of methodologies and their respective data collection techniques (Lazaraton, 2003). According to Croker (2009), qualitative researchers "reflect on and explore what they know, search for patterns, and try to create a full and rich understanding of the research context" (p. 3). Deep understanding of a phenomenon entails that the researchers employ data collection techniques, such as observation and interviews, that enable them to access the participants' beliefs, perceptions, experiences, etc. The present study was conducted under a qualitative approach because I explored a dual language program through the participants' perceptions: students, parents, and teachers. The data collected allowed me to find themes and patterns in order to provide an understanding of bilingual education in southern California. Qualitative inquiry highly contributes "to our understanding of the social world" (Richards, 2003, p. 1). The social world refers to the everyday events in which personal interactions with others and the world around us are the focus. In the case of my research, qualitative inquiry allows the interpretation of the interaction that exists between the participants and the dual-language charter school. Through this interaction, parents, teachers, and students construct their meaning of the phenomena such as bilingual education, dual language education, bilingualism, biliteracy, and charter schools.

Stake (2010) suggests that in research, there are two types of knowledge: individual and collective knowledge. Individual knowledge is related to particular situations, while collective knowledge is about situations in general. In the case of this study, the perceptions that the parents, teachers, and students have about dual language education, in general, represent collective knowledge. The three groups of participants live in an environment where bilingualism is a commonly known concept since they are in constant contact with bilingual individuals and their charter school implements a bilingual program. Via their experiences, expectations and interactions with others, they have adopted similar perceptions of this social phenomenon. Regarding individual knowledge, the participants' familiarity with the dual language program implemented at EJE (Excellence and Justice in Education) Elementary Academy (EJEEA) represents the particularity of their situation. This description shows that individual knowledge does not necessarily represent one person. This might occur in case studies where the reality of an individual (or group of individuals) is explored, such as schools, homes, etc. Understanding of the world, whether it is individual or collective, is analyzed and interpreted from the data provided by the research participants. In this case, I am concerned with studying individual knowledge of the dual language program in order to expand on collective knowledge regarding bilingual education, specifically dual language education.

To generate relevant qualitative data, the researcher has to carry out a focused exploration of the phenomena. This means that the data collection process and the data analysis have to remain coherent to the purposes of the study. According to Richards (2003), qualitative inquiry requires "rigour, precision, systematicity and careful attention to detail" (p. 6). Because qualitative inquiry has been described as "soft" research (Richards, 2003), it is necessary that scholars conduct their research systematically to convince the audience that they are valid and reliable. Following these suggestions of systematicity, the methodology and data collection techniques of this study were carefully selected, designed, and applied.

Exploring a Dual Language Program: An Instrumental Case Study

Case studies have become a widely implemented methodology in applied linguistics. Hood (2009) points out that this trend has persisted because researchers seek "to understand the world not only in terms of the generalities produced by quantitative methods, but also through close and extended analysis of the particular" (p. 67). Exploring a phenomenon through a case study provides an opportunity to observe and analyze it from different perspectives. Richards (2003) suggests that in a case study "the focus of the research should be on a particular unit or set of units – institutions, programmes, events and so on – and the aim should be to provide a detailed description of the unit(s)" (p. 20). This explanation supports the adoption of case study methodology because I intend to explore the current situation of a particular dual-language charter school through the perceptions of those involved in it.

Yin (2009) proposes using a case study methodology when the researcher's purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of a real-life phenomenon and its contextual conditions. These conditions can be geographical, demographical, educational, sociological, political, and economic, among others which make the case unique. The contextual conditions of EJEEA allow the exploration of the phenomenon through a case study. EJE Academy was the first 90:10 dual language charter school in southern California. Hispanics in this state represent 37.6% of the total population, being the largest minority group not only in California but in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2016). Access to free bilingual education in El Cajon might provide a medium for Hispanic parents to be involved in the education of their children. According to their history, which is found on their website, EJEEA also seeks to make available an education for low-income families to empower them by providing more equitable learning environments (EJE Academies Charter School, 2017). The previous reasons make the case study unique and relevant to research in dual language education.

One of the main criticisms that the case study method has received is that conclusions drawn from the data analysis are not generalizable. Yet, it provides a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon, as well as the locally-situated factors and context-sensitive processes of the dual language charter school. Richards (2003), Yin (2009), and Stake (1978) claim that generalization should not represent a problem if the research design, data collection, and data analysis are systematically conducted. The aim of a case study is "to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization)" (Yin, 2009, p. 55), meaning that it illustrates context-specific issues of a wider phenomenon: in this case, bilingual education. Yin (2009) also suggests that the conclusions of a case study are not generalizable to populations or universes, but to theoretical propositions. A case study does not attempt to generalize its results to the whole existing phenomenon, but to explain how its findings fit into the theoretical propositions found in literature. According to Lynch (2013), a “proposition is a single potentially testable component of a theory” (p. 11). Dual language programs are a component of different bilingual education theories and they represent an effective way to teach bilingual and biliterate children. This has been shown in several studies regarding the effectiveness of dual language education (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Lindholm-Leary, 2012).

Thus far, a case has been described as “a bounded unit which is examined, observed, described, and analyzed in order to capture [its] key components” (Hamilton, 2011, n.p.). However, there are different types of case studies. Stake (2005) identifies three: intrinsic case study, multiple or collective case study, and instrumental case study. The first is conducted because the case itself is of interest to the researchers (a school, a person, and an organization). A multiple or collective case study is when several cases are researched to understand a phenomenon (Stake, 2005). Lastly, a case study is instrumental “if a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization” (Stake, 2005, p. 445). The present research is an instrumental case study. Although the case is of interest to me as a researcher, I believe it will provide insight into dual language education and charter schools in the United States, and it might contribute to the general theories of bilingualism and bilingual education in the U.S.A. This study could also help refine the already established theories regarding the impact that dual language education has in minority/heritage speakers’ academic and personal lives, as well as those concerning bilingual education in general.

The Data Collection Process

Some of the most commonly used techniques in qualitative inquiry are interviews, observation, questionnaires, narrative frames, biographies, field notes, and research journals (Dörnyei, 2007; Heigham & Croker, 2009). Although the data can be collected from several sources, they are “usually transformed into textual form” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 124), such as the transcripts of interviews. Concerning this, Croker (2009) states that “qualitative research entails collecting primarily textual data and examining it using interpretive analysis” (p. 5). One of the disadvantages of qualitative inquiry is that there are no restrictions to what the researcher can consider as data. Hence, the challenge that the researcher faces is how to generate relevant data (Dörnyei, 2007). This might be accomplished through the researcher's reflexibility. Sutton and Austin (2015) suggest that researchers should "reflect upon and clearly articulate their position and subjectivities (world view, perspectives, biases), so that readers can better understand the filters through which questions were asked, data was gathered and analyzed, and findings were reported" (p. 226). While biases cannot be completely avoided, constant reflexibility allows for an understanding of the subject through a critical perspective. This means that the researcher must not only present the data that suits the study, but also that which may go against his or her personal believes and contributes to a critical interpretation of the data and discussion of the findings. Since the motives of the present research originated from personal experiences, reflexivity was constant through the data collection and analysis.

To gather the data, I designed and implemented semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire, and a narrative frame. The use of multiple data collection techniques with three groups of participants served to triangulate the data in order to understand it from different perspectives and to provide validity. The analysis of the data collected from the three groups allows to determine areas of agreement and divergence regarding the dual language program.

Interviews are one of the most common data collection techniques employed in qualitative research (Dörnyei, 2007). Burgess (as cited in Richards, 2003) defines them as a "conversation with a purpose" (p. 50). Interviews involve the interaction of two or more people "leading to negotiated, contextually based results" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 646). Through a negotiation of meaning with their participants, researchers collect and code the data that they deem pertinent for the purposes of their studies. Croker (2009) notes that some researchers write memos which remind them of the situations that might influence their study. They referred to it when framing the research questions, collection, and analysis of the data. A second option would be reviewing data with participants to avoid bias. Since I did not have access to the participants after the data collection, I decided to reflect upon my own perceptions and biases regarding EJEEA and bilingual education.

Rabionet (2011) suggests that "qualitative interviewing is a flexible and powerful tool to capture the voices and the ways people make meaning of their experiences" (p. 563). They provide a space for the participants to express their ideas, beliefs, and opinions about a certain topic. People are able to speak for themselves and become constructors of their knowledge of a phenomenon. Qualitative researchers often recur to interviews because an interview "is a known communication routine" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 134). It is a way of communication that takes place in different contexts: social, political, cultural, educational. Likewise, interviewing has the purpose "to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 1996, pp. 5-6). There are different types of interviews. The most common are: open-ended, structured, and semi-structured interviews (Heigham & Croker, 2009).

The type of interview employed depends on the purpose that it serves. In open-ended interviews, the conversation between the interviewee and the interviewer is not limited to a set of questions. It allows the conversation to develop around a certain topic while including the unanticipated responses of the participants (Hoffman, 2007). The opposite occurs with structured interviews, which Richards (2003) has also named 'oral questionnaires'. These interviews follow a strict 'interview schedule,' the set of questions that will be orderly asked and that does not allow follow-up questions. However, to enable a more natural conversation that is still guided by the interviewer, semi-structured interviews were designed and conducted to collect data from parents and students in this study. The development of semi-structured interviews also depends on the responses of the participant.

The semi-structured interview questions used with the participants were about language preference at school and at home, number of children enrolled at EJEEA, reasons why parents chose the school, and thoughts about the dual language program. Other questions arose from the participants' answers, such as the language that the students use with their teachers, their favorite subjects, and parents' lives before migrating to the U.S.A. These interviews were held with 73 students and 20 parents from June 6-15, 2017. The interviews were recorded with two devices: a tablet and a cellphone.

The participants were invited to speak the language they were comfortable with: English or Spanish. All of the students decided to speak in English during the interviews, while three of the 20 parents spoke that language. Fourteen group interviews with the students, three group interviews with parents, and nine individual interviews with the parents were carried out. Besides parents and students, I also had teacher participants. Due to time constraints, a questionnaire and narrative frame were employed to collect data from this group.

Richards and Schmidt (2013) define questionnaires as “a set of questions on a topic or group of topics designed to be answered by a respondent” (p. 478). Questionnaires are usually used in quantitative studies (Dörnyei, 2007). However, they can be applied to qualitative research in order to obtain “the characteristics of the population by examining a sample of that group” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 101). These characteristics might be age, level of studies, languages spoken, to name a few. Questionnaires must be designed in relation to the research question or problem (Hernández, Fernández, & Baptista, 2014).

There are two basic types of questionnaires: open-ended (or open-response) and close-ended. According to Dörnyei (2003, as cited in McKay, 2006), both types of questionnaires can provide the following information: factual information, behavioral information, and attitudinal information. I decided to use open-response items in the questionnaire designed for the teachers. These types of items allow the participants to respond to the questions using their own words, unlike close-ended questionnaires, which require them to select from a number of options (Brown, 2009). The questionnaire employed in this research was designed to obtain factual information about the teachers: background, teaching qualifications and experience. The teachers' responses were used to understand their experiences as bilingual teachers at EJEEA, which they narrated through the use of a narrative frame. Thus, I did not interpret the data provided in the questionnaires but used it as a reference.

Although narrative frames are usually implemented in narrative inquiry, I decided to design one to collect data from the three teachers participating in this instrumental case study. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) affirm that:

> The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This general notion translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories. (p. 2)

According to Barkhuizen and Wette (2008), this data collection instrument is based on frames, which provide a “‘skeleton’ to scaffold writing” (Warwick & Maloch, 2003, p. 59). Narrative frames guide participants when they do not know what to write about a particular situation or topic. Regarding this, Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) indicate that "narrative frames provide guidance and support in terms of both the structure and content of what is to be written" (p. 376). This structure helps the researcher because the frames are a way to ensure that the content of the participants' writing is, in a way, what was expected of them.

The narrative frame employed in this study was sent via e-mail. This frame consisted of a series of prompts that the teachers completed. The technique was selected in order to understand the experiences and perceptions that the teachers hold regarding a variety of aspects of their profession: their work at EJEEA, their students and the parents, bilinguialism, and biliteracy, among others.

I decided to recognize the experiences of the teachers by providing them with a space where they were able to express themselves about their professional practice and their perceptions of the dual language program implemented in their school. The voices of the teachers needed to be heard because they were a key component of the dual-language program. They have been trained academically and professionally in order to teach in a school where the mission is to prepare students who are able to communicate in two languages (EJE Academies Charter School, 2017).

What to Do with All This Data?

A thematic analysis of the data was conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dual language charter school. The data represented a process of "summarizing, reflecting, and theorizing. As the research proceeds, the observer's descriptions, ideas, and hunches gradually develop and are fed into an ongoing interpretation as to what is happening in the research setting" (Cowie, 2009, p.173). This means that the researcher has to carry out a thorough analysis of data and add his or her own reflections. The identification of patterns, themes, and categories "helps explain the phenomena under consideration and the contexts in which they occur" (Hood, 2009, p. 78). For the purposes of the study, the terms "data corpus" and "dataset" were employed. The former refers to all the collection of data, while the latter refers to the set that is being use for a specific analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research, there were three datasets within the corpus: the data from the parents, the data from the students, and the data from the teachers. An analysis of each dataset was conducted to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the data as a corpus. Once this was decided, three steps were followed to code and analyze each dataset:

1) *Transcribe the interviews:* the transcriptions of the interviews were carried out in a one-month period, using Word 2013.

2) *Code the data:* this step of the research process is vital for the researcher to keep track of the data she has collected. Hood (2009) defines coding as “the process of developing a textual or alphanumeric reference system and assigning a unique marker to each piece of data as it is collected” (pp. 78-79). This means that a name or label should be provided for every sample of data used in the analysis.

3) *Organize the data thematically:* the themes and categories were identified and color coded. This information was arranged in a chart using Word 2013.

Each of the techniques conducted generated a significant amount of data, especially the semi-structured interviews with the parents and the students. A key with the codes was kept in order to easily access the data which was organized according to the group of participants and technique.

Cowie (2009) explains that there are three stages in the interpretation of data: descriptive, interpretative, and argumentative, where the findings of the research are carefully exposed to the reader. In this study, the process of organizing the data by themes and categories represents the descriptive stage. The second part consists of interpreting the participants’ message regarding the current state of the dual language program implemented at EJEEA. In the argumentative stage of the study, the commentary of the participants is coherently connected to the ideas that the researcher proposes throughout the analysis. These ideas are supported by literature from similar studies.

To have a more comprehensive understanding of the dual language program, the data deriving from the various accounts of the participants was triangulated. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995):

> […]data-source triangulation involves the comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but deriving from different phases of the fieldwork, different points in the temporal cycles occurring in the setting, or the accounts of different participants (including the ethnographer) differentially located in the setting. (p. 183)

Some researchers consider triangulation as the use of different instruments to collect data with the aim of giving validity to a study (Hood, 2009; Olsen, 2004). However, in this research, only semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data from the two largest groups of the study: the parents and the students. Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) definition of triangulation was more appropriate for this study since the dual language program is viewed from the perspectives of the three groups of participants, who will be described in the following section along with the context of the study.

Whose Voices? Describing the Participants and Their Context

The study was conducted in EJE Elementary Academy in El Cajon, California. This school consists of two sections: EJE Elementary Academy (K-5), and EJE Middle Academy (6-8). Parents and teachers who belong to the advocacy group called Excellence and Justice for Education (EJE) decided to create the school to attend to low-income families and minorities, as well as to include bilingual education in the curriculum. Table 1 summarizes the population of students in the 2015-2016 school year:

Table 1. Student population at EJE Elementary Academy, El Cajon, California. 2015-2016.

Student group	Example of Code
Black or African American	4.8%
American Indian or Alaska native	0.2%
Asian	0.6%
Filipino	0.2%
Hispanic or Latin	86.9%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.4%
White	6.7%
Two or more races	0.4%
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	81.1%
English learners	52.8%
Students with disabilities	8.8%
Foster youth	0%

El Cajon is the fifth largest city in the county of San Diego, California. As shown in table 1, 86.9% of the students are Hispanic or Latino, 81.1% are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 52.8% are in the process of learning English as a second language. This does not reflect the city's statistics since the majority (69%) is white, and in EJEEA only 6.7% of the students represent this population. Hispanics in El Cajon correspond to 28% of the population (Suburban Stats, 2017). The statistics might indicate that Hispanics seek the school, perhaps because it helps them maintain and develop their minority language.

The participants of the present study were 73 fifth-grade students, male and female, 19 female parents and one male, and three female teachers from EJEEA, which represent a total of 96 participants. The three teacher participants were a fifth-grade teacher, a sixth-grade teacher, and a teacher who works with sixth to eighth grade students from EJE Middle Academy. Fifth-grade students were chosen as participants because the dual language program is implemented 50/50, which means that "instructional time is evenly divided between Spanish and English. The two languages are used separately during different periods of the day. Homework is in both languages" (EJE Academies Charter School, 2017, para. 1). The program implements a content-based syllabus, which means that students take classes such as mathematics and science in English and Spanish.

All participants of the study received consent forms and were informed of the study's purposes to ensure that they were "honored, respected, and protected from harm" (Rallis & Rossman, 2009, p. 264). Conducting a study requires the researcher to make several decisions. These decisions have to be carefully considered because they might affect the participants, the researcher, and others involved in the study. The participants must be informed of the purposes of the study, their role as a participant, the use of their information for academic and research purposes only, their right to withdraw from the study at any moment, and their right to anonymity (pseudonyms are used to identify the data sources) (Rallis & Rossman, 2009).

To access the participants of this research, I sought permission from the school administrators. First, an e-mail explaining the purposes of the study was sent to the principal. She asked questions regarding the length of the study, the groups of students to work with, and the data collection techniques. The principal also received a copy of the research proposal. The aim was to work with the students who had studied for the longest time at EJEEA, because they would have a general idea of how the school functions. The principal agreed to participate in the project and provided the contact information of the fifth-grade head teacher. The teacher sent the consent form to the parents and informed the students about the research. She also provided the time and space necessary to conduct the interviews with both the parents and the students.

To conduct a study ethically, it is necessary for the researcher to examine the consequences that that the rearch will have. research will have. It was a priority to design two informed consent forms that included the characteristics listed above. One was created for the parents and another for the teachers. The informed consent form for the parents also included the description of their children's participation in the study. Children were also informed of the content of the form, and they were assured that their names would not be used and that they could refuse to participate in the research.

According to Smith (2011), "young children's participation rights entitle them to have their voices heard and taken into account, and to give and receive information" (p. 11). Before, during, and after the interviews, the fifth-grade students had the freedom to ask any questions about the research and to express their opinions freely. Many used the space to voice their positive and negative opinions about the school. For this reason, they were assured that their names would never be revealed, and the researcher would not discuss any comments that they did not wish to include in the study. Although there is not a written policy indicating this, Mrs. Lolbel (pseudonym), the fifth-grade head teacher, affirmed that the interviews could not be held with more than five students at a time due to ethical issues.

The teachers also had questions regarding their participation in the research. The consent form was sent via e-mail to ten teachers. Six of the teachers signed and returned the consent form. Four answered the questionnaire, and three completed the narrative frame. A total of three teachers withdrew from the study. If they did not complete the three steps of the data collection process, none of their information was included in the analysis.

The responses of parents, students, and teachers gathered from the interviews and narrative frames were not changed and their opinions were respected. However, qualitative data can be open to different interpretations, which is why the analysis must be conducted in an unbiased and critical manner.

What Are These Voices Saying? An Overview of Bilingual Education

The main objective of this study was to explore the participants' perceptions regarding the current state of a dual language charter school in southern California. The data shows that parents expect their children to be bilingual and biliterate in order to access better professional and educational opportunities. Many parents believe that being bilingual 'opens doors' to the students. Therefore, the knowledge of two languages is perceived as linguistic capital. Since 18 of the 20 parents are Hispanic and speak Spanish at home, they trust the program will teach their children to read and write in this language because they have already learned how to speak it. Hispanic parents consider that their children will have no problems learning English, since they are in a context where it has become the *de facto* language. Another finding shows that first-generation Hispanic immigrant parents also expect their children to become bicultural and to keep their ties to their mother culture, in most cases the Mexican culture. However, this might be counterproductive in a school that aims for two-way immersion, since it has mostly attracted people from a single ethnolinguistic background.

The parents highly regard EJEEA and its dual language program, and they perceive them as successful. Nonetheless, the teachers' comments show that the Spanish program is not at the same level as the English program. They have observed that not all their students are proficient in Spanish by the time they graduate from fifth grade. They claim that one of the reasons why the Spanish program has weakened is the emphasis given to standardized testing in California, which is in English. These tests measure the academic performance of students in subjects such as science, math, and language arts. EJEEA should give the teachers the opportunity to express this common opinion regarding the current situation of the dual language program. The data shows that by listening to the teachers, the dual language program could improve and reach one of the main goals at EJEEA, which is for the students to achieve high proficiency in both English and Spanish.

The language use, preference, and choice of the students, whether at school or home, also reflect their proficiency in Spanish and the relevance in their lives. Most of these children claim that they use English with their friends and classmates because many of them, even though they are Hispanic, do not understand the language or have difficulties speaking it. Those who are children to first-generation immigrants state that they use Spanish with their parents and some family members because these members do not know English or do not speak it correctly. This seems to empower the students because they are able to communicate with relatives, or people in general, that they would not be able to interact with if they were not bilingual. Nevertheless, they also acknowledged that they do not use Spanish during their classes as much as it was expected, which is consistent with the teachers' views of the dual language program.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the approach and methodology that I adopted to explore the participants' perceptions of the dual language program implemented at a charter school in southern California. Listening to the voices of the stakeholders allowed me to understand bilingualism and bilingual education through their perspectives, instead of just reviewing a bilingual school's academic performance compared to monolingual classrooms. The voices of teachers, parents and students presented in this instrumental case study were captured through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and narrative frames. This chapter also described how the data was organized, coded, and analyzed through thematic analysis. I included a description of the participants and the context of the study and discussed the ethics, as well as the procedures followed to gain access to EJEEA. The results section explained some of the main findings regarding the current state of the dual language program.

Reflection Questions

1. When the motivation to carry out a study arises from personal experience, how can reflexibility aid in the critical analysis of the data?

2. How would you handle a large number of participants in a qualitative study? Do you think the data collection techniques implemented in this study were adequate? Why or why not?

3. How do you think case studies contribute to general knowledge of a topic?

4. Why should educational institutions provide a space for teachers, parents, students, and also administrative staff to provide their opinions regarding the programs being implemented?

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Chapter 3

Unravelling Themes upon Semi-Structured Interviews

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Introduction

This research was originally inspired by work on transnationalism (*e.g.*, Binford, 2000; Duany, 2011; Portes *et al.*, 1999; Sánchez, 2007; Schiller, Schiller *et al.*, 1992; Vertovec, 2009). The initial aim was to explore those factors that influence identity construction as well as the teaching practices of transnational student-teachers undertaking a BA TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) at a large public university in central Mexico. Having explored such topic under a phenomenological approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I was intrigued to continue exploring further into the topic. Thus, I decided to adopt socio-cultural theory (*e.g.* Moll, 2014; Vygotsky,

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1986, 1987) as a theoretical framework in aiming to further explore how those who engage in transnational migration practices construct and reconstruct their identities.

From the data, a key area that emerged pertains to how the participants locate themselves within a third or hybrid space upon having migrated constantly between both Mexico and the United States. In this chapter, I focus on how semi-structured interviews become crucial means of data collection techniques in exploring the lived experiences of a group of people who relate to one another through their migrating experiences as they develop as student-teachers within the TEFL field.

The Call for Qualitative Research and Interviews

Qualitative research aims to understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what possible meaning may be attributed to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Hence, qualitative research questions about understanding human experiences. A qualitative paradigm was selected for the purposes of this research project due to the need to understand and examine the words and lived experiences of the participants concerning their experiences as transnationals and now as student-teachers within different settings.

A social constructivist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) interpretive framework was adopted in aiming to explore how individuals understand the world in which they live in. In addition, an interpretation of the data provided by the participants becomes essential in arriving to an understanding of their reality as transnational English teachers developing in a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) context in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. The participants' lived experiences also help to better understand how they construct and reconstruct their identity as they recall their past migrating experiences.

As qualitative research seeks to inquire about the lived experiences and voices of a group of people, a central phenomenon becomes key to explore. As Cresswell (2007) explains, under the qualitative worldview, "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live" (p. 20). This in turn allows them to "develop subjective meanings of their experiences…" (Cresswell, 2007, p. 20). Merriam (2009) further notes that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). In this sense, interest arose in understanding how the participants of this research project construct and reconstruct their identity through their lived experiences. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) note that "qualitative research examines people's words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants" (p. 2). In other words, qualitative research may seek to examine and interpret what is said or done by people in a given situation, which is ultimately interpreted by the researcher.

Qualitative research may be linked to interpretative analysis (Merriam, 2009). This interpretative paradigm supports the idea that humans are different, experiencing natural events in different manners; therefore, their reality can be seen as being socially constructed (Mora Pablo, 2012). Nonetheless, Holliday (2002) states:

> The qualitative belief that the realities of the research setting and the people in it are mysterious and can only be superficially touched by research which tries to make sense is interpretative. It maintains that we can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate then try to interpret bits of reality. Interpretation is as far as we can go. (p. 5)

In this sense, what can be done in qualitative inquiry is to center on the words and experiences of the participants through an interpretation of the reality. This can be done through the use of interviews.

Seidman (2019) highlights the importance of interviewing within qualitative research practices. He notes how crucial telling stories is within meaning-making processes. Interviews refer to the one-on-one encounters between interviewer and interviewee aimed at understanding subjects' lives and their personal experiences expressed in their own words (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). With regards to the need of interactants to arrive to a mutual understanding, Warren (2001) describes interviewing within qualitative research as aiming to "understand the meaning of respondents' experiences and worlds" (p. 83). In other words, an aim for the interviewer to be able to access objective knowledge about the interviewee in ways that affect the understanding of the knowledge that may be produced throughout the interview, and as an advocate to give voice to the interviewee (Edwards & Holland, 2013).

Maccoby and Maccoby (1954) defined the interview as “a face-to-face verbal exchange, in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons” (p. 449). Moreover, Kvale (1996) allured to the interview as “an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest (that) sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production … and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data” (p. 14). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) more recently refer to the interview as “the art of asking questions and listening” (p. 643), which can provide the opportunity for a richer conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee (Gaskell, 2002), and which may also result in providing more meaningful data. Thus, one can refer to an interview as an interchange and request of information through the elicitation of questions and answers.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Due to the core phenomenon which held the group of participants together, phenomenological interviews (see Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Siedman, 2019) in a semi-structured manner seemed to be the most suitable type of interview to implement in exploring the experiences of the participants as they engaged in transnational migration.

The semi-structured interview collects detailed information in a style that is closely related to a conversation, and is often used when the researcher wishes to delve deeply into a topic with the attempt to understand the provided answers thoroughly (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). In addition, a semi-structured interview allows for the interviewer to be flexible in the questions he or she wishes to cover in the interview, with the purpose of understanding the topics under discussion and what is attempted to be conveyed by the interviewer (Edwards & Holland, 2013). One may arrive to an understanding of a semi-structured interview as a type of conversation which elicits information based on a guide, and this type of interview allows for flexibility to ask further questions to elicit more information and attempt to understand that provided by the interviewee as best as possible.

With regards to semi-structured interviews, Corbetta (2003) states the following:

> The order in which the various topics are dealt with and the wording of the questions are left to the interviewer's discretion. Within each topic, the interviewer is free to conduct the conversation as he thinks fit, to ask the questions he deems appropriate in the words he considers best, to give explanation and ask for clarification if the answer is not clear, to prompt the respondent to elucidate further if necessary, and to establish his own style of conversation. (p. 270)

This refers to the idea that semi-structured interviews provide certain freedom for the interviewer with regards to the emerging themes; that is, semi-structured interviews are generally organized around a set of determined open-ended questions, with the possibility of other questions emerging from the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee (DiCicoo-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). One may further understand that interviews may result in themes, under which semi-structured interviews may be helpful in further explaining a given theme as it arises, with the purpose of comprehending it as best as possible.

I considered semi-structured interviews as the most suitable technique for data collection for my research project. Since the intent of my research process was to explore the role that society and culture may play in how transnational English teachers construct their identity, my main reason for using semi-structured interviews was with the purpose of allowing the participants to recall their experiences, being open for emerging topics and allowing space for further information.

Previous to the interviews, I approached the possible participants, held a brief conversation with each of them regarding their migrating experiences between Mexico and the United States and their teaching experiences, and explained the purpose of collecting information for research purposes through an informed consent form. I then exchanged contact information with the selected accepting participants with the purpose of maintaining communication to arrange the date and time to carry out the semi-structured interviews. Relying on Siedman's (2019) three interview series proposal, the number of phases was established upon the participants' availability, which required the phases to be condensed into one or two interviews. The participants chose whether the interview would be carried out in English or Spanish, and were also notified of the freedom to code-switch or code-mix between both languages, translanguage using their full meaning-making strategies, and/or use any linguistic elements of their choice.

Several questions were used as a basis for each of the semi-structured interviews for the purposes of the research project (Appendix A). Some central questions make reference to the aspects of both cultures that the participants most related to, what knowledge was obtained as a result of their migrating experiences, and how the participants were viewed as they developed as student-teachers within the TEFL field.

Upon the previous inquiries, the aim was to obtain as much valuable data as possible that would be helpful in attempting to answer the research question. In addition to the base questions, I decided to implement follow-up questions that allowed extending the data when considering that additional information could be provided from the participant. Some examples of follow-up questions are the following:

- Could you elaborate more on…?
- How did such make you feel?
- What do you mean by…?

The semi-structured interviews took place within the facilities of the Language Department of the location site, primarily in unoccupied classrooms or throughout the patio. The decision for opting for this type of interview was regarding the belief that such could help me obtain more authentic information from the participants, and allow for the opportunity to seek further information by eliciting follow-up questions.

The decision of implementing semi-structured interviews as a qualitative data-gathering tool seemed to be an effective way to obtain pertinent information from the participants. Though the information provided by the participants seemed to be very useful, an interpretation was needed. Holliday (2002) states that:

> The qualitative belief that the realities of the research setting and the people in it are mysterious and can only be superficially touched by research which tries to make sense is interpretative. It maintains that we can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate, then try to interpret bits of reality. Interpretation is as far as we can go. (p. 5)

The purpose of eliciting questions through a semi-structured interview was to obtain and extend as much comprehensible data as possible. The manner of approaching the questions through this type of interview had the purpose of offering the participants a sense of flexibility to express themselves in a more open and personal means, other than providing a limited amount of information in an interview of a more closed and structured manner. The intent was to be able to interpret the meaning the participants embedded in the experiences they provided. Hence, any possible reality that could be reached would be a construct of the interpretation given by the participants and myself. This is what Kvale (1996) refers to as a "social construction of perspectival reality" (p. 42). In this sense, data interpretation was mutually constructed by the participants and myself as the researcher.

The idea of implementing only one data collection technique may seem to limit the possibilities of triangulating the data with alternative techniques. Nonetheless, the implementation of only semi-structured interviews was with the purpose of obtaining as much information as possible from each participant. While the technique allowed for some participants to deviate from the set of base questions, it is the same set of base questions that helped refer back and make connections to topics that were covered by the participants.

Semi-structured interviews resulted to be a highly helpful tool in obtaining and extending rich and valuable information provided by the participants. Having a set of base questions allowed the researcher to relate the information provided by one participant to that provided from others. What was also helpful in extending the initial information was having the flexibility to implement follow-up questions.

Phenomenology

Qualitative research is phenomenological in nature as tt seeks to explore a phenomenon through the voices of a group of people as a result of their perspectives and experiences. Thus, phenomenology was selected as a more suitable approach.

Phenomenology originated a school of philosophy associated with Husserl (1970), which gradually developed into a type of qualitative research. Phenomenology reduces a human participant's experiences with a phenomenon to a description of its essence with the purpose of having a qualitative researcher identify a phenomenon as an object of human experience and give voice to it (Cresswell, 2007). Phenomenology can be described as "the study of people's conscious experience of their life-world; that is, their everyday life and social action" (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). Consecutively, the aim of phenomenology is to penetrate into the essential meaning of human experience, focusing on the phenomenon with the purpose of generating understanding from within while aiming to penetrate into the essence of the phenomenon (Richards, 2003). In sum, phenomenology is a theoretical perspective aimed at generating knowledge about how people experience things (Barbour, 2008). What may seem to be an ordinary experience may be viewed as a phenomenon in order to analyze its core.

Patton (2002) argues that there is an essence to shared experience. Moreover, "these essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced" (p. 106). Thus, phenomenologists are interested in the lived experiences, requiring the focus to be directly on the things themselves, turning towards the phenomena, depicting the essence or basic structure of experience (Merriam, 2009). The task of the researcher is to view lived experiences with an attempt to understand the essence of such. For such, it became crucial to analyze the data obtained from the interviews.

Analyzing the Interviews Through Thematic Analysis

Throughout the process of data collection, semi-structured interviews (comprised of base questions and follow-up questions) were carried out with the participants of the research project. The base questions were used with the consideration of staying within the same topics of discussion for each of the participants. The implementation of follow-up questions allowed for the expansion of any further or more in-depth and detailed information from the participants.

Throughout the data collection process, the information provided from the participants was audio-recorded and transcribed accordingly. During the process of transcribing, I took into account what Richards (2003) refers to as aspects of delivery and turn-taking; that is, I used commas and periods as I perceived pauses within the responses provided by the participants in each turn-take they held. The vast amount of information suggested codifying the answers provided by the participants in order to better refer to them when needed.

While relying on interviews as a primary data collection technique, it becomes crucial for the researcher to set aside any everyday understandings, judgments, and knowledge in order to revisit the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). These prejudices and assumptions are bracketed or set aside temporarily. Along with *bracketing*, there are other strategies that pertain to phenomenological research. *Phenomenological reduction* is the process of continuously returning to the essence of the experience with hopes of deriving the inner meaning in and of itself (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Within such process, there is an aim to isolate the phenomenon in order to comprehend its essence. *Horizontalization* is the process of laying out all the data for examination, and treating it all as having equal value and importance at an initial data analysis stage (Merrian & Tisdell, 2016). The different data excerpts are then organized into themes.

In such process of looking for themes, an initial step is to provide an initial code for each data excerpt. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) describe an initial code as an identifier which includes the source of data, where it can be found within the raw data, and whom the data was provided by. Once having an initial code for the data excerpts, the next step is to unitize and categorize the data (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the afore-mentioned process as identifying single units of data in order to relate them to each other in possible categories, or as Merriam (2002) notes, "one begins with a unit of data and compares it to another unit of data and so on, all while looking for common patterns across the data" (p. 14). This process can be referred to as thematic analysis.

In the process of debriefing the phenomenon, every perception is granted value, and a description of the phenomenon becomes crucial to arrive at. This ought to be accomplished through the process of imaginative variation, which involves viewing the data from various perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). *Thematic analysis* is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting particular patterns (referred to as themes) within the data, searching across the obtained data in search of repeated patterns to join together (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process of a thematic analysis was carried out through an inductive way through establishing certain themes as directed by the content of the data. When attempting to find themes within the obtained raw units of data, the overall content was used as a reference to connect what was provided by one participant with what was provided by the other participants. Being able to identify certain similarities in what the participants provided within the data, several themes emerged. The product, then, of a phenomenological study is a description that aims to present the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), which aims to be displayed through the data analysis.

Presenting Themes

Once having provided an initial code to the raw data excerpts derived from the transcribed interviews, I was able to find reoccurring patterns within the data, which allowed me to place the common patterns jointly for the purposes of creating themes.

For the purposes of this chapter, I will recall the themes pertaining to how the transnational student-teachers considered for this research project view themselves as different upon social interaction, which allows them to better align to a hybrid or third cultural space while simultaneously constructing and reconstructing their social identity.

The Hybrid/Third Culture in Reconstructing a Cultural Identity

The concepts of the hybrid and the third culture are considered pertinent for this research project. It is important to consider how some participants of this inquiry did not feel fully identified with a particular culture, nor found difficulty when deciding which culture they may feel more attached to or related with. Nevertheless, they felt sagacity in finding an in-between space, as well as taking aspects from both cultures to create a sense of a third or a hybrid culture.

The notion of the third culture relates to Bhabha's (1994) conception of the third space in which teachers arrive with conflicting ideas between their own identity as speakers of their home language, and the urge to adopt a different language in their teaching practice. Bhabha (1994) further displaced hybridity to the field of culture, exploring hybridity in the context of the subaltern and natives who resist imperial domination, affirming that "The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (p. 2).The notion of the hybrid culture is connected to Kumaravadivelu's (2008) concept in which the inherited and the learned culture play an important role in creating a new culture, resulting in uncertainty as to which given culture to relate to more.

For example, Andrew, who migrated to the U.S. at a young age and settled back in Mexico for over ten years at the moment of the data collection, refers to an in-between space in which he can best identify with. When discussing his attachment to either the American or the Mexican culture, he provides the following:

> Actually… when saying American or Mexican, I would think just in between, not so much American nor Mexican… I haven't considered myself either Mexican or American that much (Andrew).

Andrew feels that he does not have a preference for one culture over the other, which in turn raises uncertainty about which culture he can relate to more.

Oscar, who migrated to the U.S. at a young age, and who constantly traveled to Mexico during vacation periods, arrived back to his hometown in Mexico six years previous to the data collection process. He recalls his transition of re-adapting to Mexico:

> …it's kind of difficult because the transition happened a while back, I guess; I don't know if I'm still going through it… I guess there was a time like getting used to the system, the way things work here [Mexico]… (Oscar)

Oscar refers to the transition as a change in adapting back to Mexico. He seems to be unsure of whether or not he is still adapting to Mexico. This continuous process of adjustment seems to be the cause of him feeling unsure about which culture he can relate to most. Oscar further acknowledges the mixture of cultures present within him. He adds:

> …I think it's always been a mixture… I think now I like Mexican food a lot more… there's a lot of things from Mexico that I love and that I will never be detached from… there's also things from the States, so I think it's a mixture… I've

> also shed some things away, I remember when I first arrived from the States, I was a little bit closed minded when it came to trying different things… (Oscar)

Oscar, considering himself to be a mixture, believes that he is attached to aspects of both the United States as well as the Mexican culture. He also believes that he has become more adapted to elements from both cultures, being more open-minded and consciously getting rid of negative views that may interfere with his sense of belonging to either cultural group.

Similar to Oscar is the case of Samuel. Samuel was born in Mexico and was taken to the U.S. during his infancy. He maintained close contact back home and sparingly visited Mexico during vacation periods. He returned to Mexico due to family health-related issues, and decided to settle down to pursue his undergraduate degree. When discussing cultural aspects that he enjoyed from both cultures, he recalled an array from both cultures. When being questioned about which culture he could relate to more, he answers:

> …I want to say, with the American culture, but at the same time I want to say the Mexican culture… we got to understand also the why and the how of both cultures… (Samuel)

Samuel does not identify with a specific culture. He feels connected to both cultures, and he does not seem to lean more towards one over the other; yet, he feels that knowing about both is important.

Abel, who migrated to the U.S. during his teen years to settle permanently for over fifteen years, and who had settled back in Mexico for ten years at the moment of the data collection process, finds uncertainty in relating more to a specific culture. He provides the following:

> …at this point, well… I used to be related more to the American culture, but as I spend more time here in Mexico, I am related more to the Mexican culture… even though… I still have aspects about the American culture that I like and that I miss (Abel)

Abel points out missing certain aspects from the U.S. that he enjoys. However, due to an increase of time settlement in Mexico, he gradually feels more of a sense of belonging and identification towards a given culture over the other, while simultaneously missing out on aspects of the other.

Graciela is the youngest participant at the moment of the data collection. She was born in the U.S., and spent up to three extended vacation periods per year in Mexico. She decided to settle in Mexico as she pursued her undergraduate degrees. Graciela feels connected to both cultures. Opposite to not being sure about which culture to relate to more, Graciela feels equally attached to the Mexican culture as she does to the American. She mentions the following:

> I have always considered myself a 50-50. I don't consider myself more American or more Mexican… I see myself as someone who has two countries, two different nationalities, that make me who I am… I don't see myself as more Mexican or more American… I feel equally as Mexican as American; I never choose one or the other. (Graciela)

Graciela is aware of her two nationalities, considering herself "a 50-50". This helps her feel unbiased towards both cultures and feel equally a part of one culture as to the other. Moreover, Graciela believes that having had contact with both cultures gave her certain knowledge and a larger point of view of what culture is. She adds:

> I think it gives me a certain type of knowledge because I see two different worlds… it has many different aspects… education is different… and it's different how they handle it… it gives me like an open mind sometimes to different things, like not being so close-minded. (Graciela)

Graciela believes that she was able to "see two different worlds" due to her past migrating experiences. This seems to have given her a larger perspective of several aspects of both cultures, such as the education system and being more open-minded about how to view things, in general.

For participants such as Andrew, Oscar, Samuel, Abel, and Graciela, they seemed to be more open-minded about cultural differences between both cultures they developed in. This helped them take aspects that they became more familiar with in order to portray how they view the world. Whether it was a cultural aspect or a state of mind, their past lived experiences shaped them in order to position themselves differently than those who are culturally related to only one culture. This in turn allowed them to position themselves in a fluid hybrid or third space in which they embedded and negotiated elements of both cultures.

Reconstructing a Social Identity

For the participants, reconstructing a cultural identity within a hybrid or third space allowed them to simultaneously reconstruct their social identity through interaction with their surrounding society. The professional and academic atmosphere in which the participants developed seemed to play an important role in how the participants were viewed. Bucholtz (1999) sustains that individuals embrace a particular social identity by virtue of a position they hold within the social structure in which they are in. In this sense, the participants constructed and reconstructed their social identities through being positioned according to their professional and academic practices. The main institutions which were involved in this process were school and social gatherings such as student-teacher and peer/ colleague relationships. This in turn helped the student-teachers acknowledge their linguistic capital as a valuable resource in projecting themselves within their social, professional, and academic environments.

Oscar believes that his lived experiences migrating between Mexico and the United States help his students view him in a particular manner. This also leads to them being curious about Oscar's lived experiences. When questioned about how he considers he is perceived by his students, Oscar mentions:

> …I guess it opens them up, it just like gives them a bigger point of view on what culture is… and, for example they're always curious about me, like, where do you come from?… why do you speak English so well? And I tell them about my experience and I guess they have like this moment of ahhh, so that's why. And they get curious and they ask…they start getting curious about it. (Oscar)

Oscar believes that his background helps his students become more aware of cultural aspects of the United States. Also, as Oscar believes, his students become more curious about his past once they are aware of the migrating experiences he lived and the reason of his proficiency in the English language.

Similar to Oscar, Graciela believes that her language usage also plays a role in how she is viewed by her colleagues and students. When questioned about which aspects she is considered to have different than other teachers, Graciela responds:

> Maybe how I pronounce, I don't know, maybe it's my accent. It's different… students or teachers have commented that I have a good accent, that it sounds American… So I guess that's the only thing that would probably make me different than other teachers, that they say that I speak it [English] very well. (Graciela)

Graciela believes that her accent plays an important role in her being viewed in a certain manner compared to other English teachers. She becomes aware of such accent because of her students and colleagues making it explicit for her. This results in Graciela sounding "American" because of the accent she is able to portray in her speech.

Andrew has also been signaled out by his students because of his accent. When questioned how others perceived his accent, Andrew provides the following:

> …it sounds a little bit American; I have compared myself with native speakers and I don't sound like them, but for students, they can't really tell that difference. They just say it sounds different… so they like that. (Andrew)

Andrew believes that his students view his accent being similar to an American accent. Although his accent is perceived to be somewhat different than that of a native speaker, he feels that his students enjoy this difference.

Samuel notes that he is seen as a more experienced teacher who brings cultural knowledge into the classroom, and argues that this facilitates the learning process for his students. When questioned about how he is viewed by his colleagues and students, Samuel recalls the following:

> …they view me as somebody that has experience with the language… I bring like the cultural knowledge of the language, examples… I know how to facilitate the language towards my learners. (Samuel)

Samuel thinks he is noticed due to his developed language usage. His experiences migrating to the United States allow him to provide examples leading to the language learning process being more facilitated with his students.

Similar to Samuel, Abel makes reference to being viewed in a certain manner due to his experiences migrating to the United States, along with his experiences as a teacher. When questioned about how he is viewed by his students and colleagues, Abel responds:

> They can see that I have more experience… more knowledge… they can see that I'm not just person that is teaching because he speaks English… I also can tell you about specific places. I can tell you about the life, some aspects of the culture; I can tell you how to go about things in a certain situation… that's interesting for them. (Abel)

Abel believes to be viewed as a more experienced teacher in terms of his professional and migrating experiences. He considers he is perceived in a certain manner because he is able to rely on his past experiences in which he was able to be in direct contact with the target culture. This in turn allowed him to provide cultural information for his students, which they view as interesting in the sense of being presented as a more knowledgeable teacher.

For these participants, society played an important role in helping them create a social identity at a professional level. Being submerged in a professional educational field, some participants were seen by their students as having particular characteristics, as well as their colleagues. Aspects such as providing more cultural knowledge, being signaled out for their pronunciation, accent, and English language usage, as well as being acknowledged as experienced teachers were all very important for the participants to be seen in a particular manner by the institution in which they developed as English teachers.

Conclusion

Implementing semi-structured interviews allows for the expansion of information provided by the participants. Semi-structured interviews provide a framework for the implementation of a set of base questions for all the participants of a study, while also allowing for further information to be solicited as it arises within the interview. Semi-structured interviews become useful when inquiring into the experiences or perspectives of people, including how they shape their perceptions and reconstruct their ideologies and identities. This technique that was implemented in the study helped me to explore into the lived experiences of the participants, which in turn provided insights into how they constructed and reconstructed their identities within a hybrid or third space in which they better positioned themselves.

As in the implementation of any research techniques, there may be limitations. Time is a primary limitation. Semi-structured interviews require time for their application when gathering data, as well as transcribing them for the corresponding data analysis. The collaboration of the participants becomes essential when carrying out semi-structured interviews as multiple phases may occur within a single interview according to participants' time availability. The identities of the participants require protection as they are exposing their lived experiences. Consent is necessary in order to guarantee the use of data and its potential publications.

A number of phases was initially considered for each of the participants, but was adjusted due to their time availability and willingness to cooperate with the research project. This demonstrates how qualitative research requires flexibility and adaptability in adjusting and adapting data collection techniques while accommodating to the availability of the participants. The research gradually takes shape, and it becomes essential for the researcher to allow this to occur naturally.

The central phenomenon of having engaged in transnational migration was shared by the participants. The qualitative paradigm seemed the most suitable to explore such phenomenon. This also led to consider a social constructivist interpretive when analyzing the shared experiences of the participants. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for a mutual understanding of the lived experiences of the participants in terms of how they construct and reconstruct their identities within the TEFL field throughout central Mexico.

The semi-structured interview manner allowed the researcher to further delve into the experiences of the participants, while having a basis to refer back to as needed. The thematic analysis made it possible to connect units of data with one another as patterns along the data began to emerge. These patterns were grouped together to form themes. The implementation of semi-structured interviews when aiming to unveil the essence of a shared phenomenon amongst the participants makes it possible to carry out a thematic analysis, and thus, unravel an array of themes that may emerge when analyzing the data.

Reflection Questions:

1. As a graduate student developing your research project, consider the following:
   - □ What is beneficial about implementing semi-structured interviews as a data-collection technique?
   - □ What is the relationship between semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis?
2. As researchers, how may we better adjust and adapt to the unexpected changes that may arise along our research project(s)?

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Appendix A

Semi-structured Interview Questionnaire and Follow-up Questions

Semi-structured interview base questions

- □ Which aspects of the United States can you relate to the most and why?
- □ Which aspects of Mexico can you relate to the most and why?
- □ What experiences can you recall because of your migrating experiences between Mexico and the United States?
- □ What type of knowledge do you think you obtained from migrating between both countries?
- □ How do you believe you implement this knowledge into your teaching practice?
- □ How do you view yourself as an English teacher in Mexico considering your migrating experiences to the United States?
- □ How are you viewed as an English teacher by your students and colleagues as they are aware of your migrating experience to the United States?

Follow-up questions

- □ Could you describe…?
- □ Could you elaborate more on…?
- □ How did such make you feel?
- □ What do you refer to?
- □ What do you mean by…?
- □ Could you provide an example?

Chapter 4

English Teachers' Physical Appearance: Eliciting EFL Students' Social Constructs

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Introduction

At the early stages of this study, I wanted to understand all the results in research I had encountered about the physical appearance of English teachers in advertising. Almost each result would be similar to the next one, in the sense that the vast majority of them seemed to point in the same direction. When it comes to advertising, the preference over an assumed native speaker appearance would be salient as a conclusion. In the light of teaching English to students of other languages (TESOL), the same results would be found, hand in hand with discrimination, racism, and ethnicity. When it comes to methodological approaches to be carried out, most of them would depict the researcher's perspective on what they observed and deconstructed in relation to

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the physical appearance of English teachers, Caucasian facial features, ethnicity, racism, and preference and discrimination in the TESOL profession.

All the above concepts were discussed in isolation, but would also overlap some other times, and that is when I reached the point in which I came to realize there was something that I did not observe as a common variable: perceptions from English as a foreign language (EFL) students. I then discovered that was something I would like to explore and provide a result about. I knew I needed something to prompt discussion and I started to think about questions that could be asked, together with images that could be shown to elicit conversations among the participants, who had to be English students that I selected randomly as an attempt to bridge the gap I had found in the literature I reviewed.

When I started to see the direction I wanted to take, I began to take some action on all the implications to carry out the study. From the bigger picture such as the methodology to very specific decisions to make such as techniques and literature that would give the study a solid support.

Throughout this chapter, we will cover the specifications I took since the paradigm that set the starting point to ethical concerns about the study. We will also go through other aspects such as piloting, methodology, and techniques used to target the objective I established.

Qualitative Paradigm

One specific characteristic of the study is that in-depth perceptions being deconstructed and socialized was key for achieving the expected results in relation to the data to be gathered. Consequently, the study was thought to be designed under a qualitative approach since the objective was to determine how students constructed a view on English teachers' physical appearance.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) refer to *paradigm* as a set of beliefs with principles that provide methodological procedures to address and/or explain human constructions. Dörnyei (2007) claims that "qualitative research is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences, and feelings of individuals and thus the explicit goal of research is to explore the participants' views of the situation being studied" (p.38). In agreement with Dörnyei's (2007) description of a qualitative paradigm, Buckley (2007) states that qualitative approaches are useful in terms of understanding experiences, emotions, and feelings that underlie certain behaviors. Continuing through the same path, Maykut and Morehouse (1994) describe "human-as-instrument" (p. 49) as a basis for qualitative studies in which the objective is to identify and describe a situation. Based on all of the above descriptions, I could confidently argue that high-frequently encountered words when reading qualitative research are "experiences", along with "beliefs" and "humans". This consequently directed me to make the decision of adopting a qualitative paradigm to understand the reasons behind why the participants verbalized ideas, and the influences that may have triggered them to elaborate on the topic and build up a construct. When it comes to the researcher, the interpretation of the participants' verbalizations was the central concern of the study and the interaction among them were factors that required close attention.

Method: Social Phenomenology

Social phenomenology has its roots in sociology, and when it comes to the TESOL profession and research, it appears to be uncommon in action as a research method. The present section will begin with a brief description of what phenomenology entails in order to narrow the path down the chosen method: social phenomenology.

Edmund Husserl, who is known as the pioneer of phenomenology, defines it as a science "to discover the basis of consciousness" (Nellyckappilly, 2006, pp. 1-2), and more descriptive conceptions are provided by authors such as Starks and Brown (2007), who describe phenomenology as a close analysis that pictures the meaning of events in the participants' lived experiences. Dörnyei (2007) states that when looking at preconceived beliefs and opinions, the researcher aims to understand the phenomena by noticing the meaning of a past experience. Previous events are taken as the central concern of study when phenomenology is considered as a method for conducting research, but when it comes to social phenomenology, the approach becomes more specific.

A less explicit method for obtaining qualitative data – at least in the TESOL profession – is social phenomenology, which goes beyond past experiences and connects such experiences to memory, imagination, emotion, and perception. I say "less explicit" because the veil between phenomenology and social phenomenology can be quite thin, as in the words of Rehorick and

Bentz (2009), "there is always a powerful and essential underlying implicit impact. Others who have fully embraced the phenomenological domain can sense it, even if the words saying "I'm doing it" are not always evident" (p.11). We shall now continue with the foundations of such a method.

Schutz's (1970) basis of social phenomenology is that the construction of reality does not come exclusively from individual experience, however, reality is created through interaction with others. He defines this phenomenon as *inter-subjectivity*. The concept can also be explained as an existing construction in the present, in which we speak, listen, and share time and space with others in a particular and immediate context. Therefore, close attention is needed in relation to how individuals relate to one another's experiences, in which a bond that relates them to the same community is crucial. Cuff and Payne (1979) also address *inter-subjectivity*, and they claim in agreement that Schutz's "analysis of social life is concerned with the structure of the social world as it is experienced by individuals within it, and with how that experience is itself socially constructed and organized" (Cuff & Payne, 1979, p. 18). Lastly, Muzzetto (2006) states that a person is set with pre-given creations of culture and the world itself, which has been "…built, shared, and handed down by others" (p. 19) is then socially shared.

Having stated the foundations of social phenomenology, how it derives from sociology and more specifically phenomenology, I state that the method was adopted to carry out this study in order to understand how predetermined social constructs on the physical appearance of English teachers gravitate and reshape through socialization. All of the above views within social phenomenology offered a through-the-lens perspective that provided me with the opportunity to explore isolated views that were later shared among a group of participants of a specific community.

Research Questions

The objective of the study was to understand how EFL students reacted to a physical EFL advertisement and more importantly, their interpretation of photographs of representative English teachers that were to be presented to them. Thus, it was intended that the following research questions would be answered:

1. How do students build constructs about English teachers' physical appearance when consulting EFL visual advertising in northern Mexico?

2. What factors regarding physical appearance of English teachers' photographs in visual EFL advertising might influence students' decisions when selecting a teacher for taking English classes?

When it comes to designing research questions, the suffering of changes and carefulness with which one needs to articulate them is a thorough process in the need of great attention. In the words of Agee (2009), "poorly conceived or constructed questions will likely create problems that affect all subsequent stages of a study" (p. 431), which gives us reasons to revise whether the question will take one to the expected research outcome. The questions I designed had to attempt to yield specific results that I could formulate based on the gathered data. They would also need to draw the pathway to the techniques to be used, characteristics that will be discussed in the subsequent pages.

Data Collection Techniques

The data was gathered based on three research techniques: six research flyers, focus group interviews, and a post-focus group questionnaire. These techniques will be described more in-depth in the subsequent sections.

Research Flyers: Visual Elicitation

English teacher's physical appearance along with the advertising domain, discourse, and semiotics in TESOL were the underpinning reasons why I started to think about designing research flyers that I could use as a technique for gathering data. Consequently, I also had to think about how the design will be supported. Thus, the involved approaches for such design will be discussed subsequently.

A multimodal design – related to advertising – is about including different semiotic resources, such as text, images, colors, different fonts, and sometimes music in the same piece. The design should aim to persuade the target audience towards what the paper or digital advertisement wants them to draw their attention to. For the purpose of the study, the created research flyers followed a design based on Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and van Leeuwen's (2001) works on modality and multimodality. Such works address how visual representations, as well as linguistic features, represent or separate people's ideas or beliefs based on social truths of the groups they belong to. Concerning the discourse in advertising, White (2000) maintains that society can change whether for better or worse their state when encountering any type of publicity. Based on the previous claims, I managed to create a set of six research flyers that would drive me towards design and positioning of all the linguistic and semiotic elements to be included. That was when I encountered *Reading Images*, a book on modality and the core of the design of the flyers: Left and right positioning and top and bottom composition (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 155-211).

Left and right composition

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) maintain that what is regularly presented on the left refers to *given* information, that is, information that the audience can easily assume. According to the authors, this *given* information has no major impact, and in the case of the flyers designed, the information about the school, such as contact references, was placed on the left. On the other hand, what is positioned on the right side is taken as "the information at issue" (p. 181) – problematic and contestable. In order to grab the participants' attention, the visual and attractive element – in this study, the photographs of the English teachers – was placed on the right side of the flyer. In short, contact information of the school on the left and the photograph on the right side of the flyer followed Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) criteria for how a piece of advertising is commonly organized. This decision was made with the purpose of basing the design of the flyer upon the existing literature. Finally, the photographs in the flyers are the more salient elements with the purpose of directing the participants' eyes to the representative English teachers.

Top and Bottom Composition

There is another framework of design discussed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) in their book. They claim that the information that is placed in the top is taken as ideal, as *what might be*, whereas information on the bottom on the other hand refers to real information or "what is" (p. 186). The photograph which was placed on the right side of the flyer was also oriented upwards, while the contact information about the school leaned more downwards. It is also important to mention that the phrase *¡Elije tus maestros!* (Choose your teachers! in English) was also placed at the left-top of the advertisement, with the intention of making a connection to the participants' context where they select their teachers themselves – this will be further discussed in the context section.

The final design of the flyer encompasses both left and right, and top and bottom compositions[1]. Such combination does not mean that a major impact will be achieved, however, all of the components included in the flyer could be better organized when considering both positions – left and right; top and bottom – with regards to advertising. The website that helped in designing the flyer is called *Canva*, in which one has to register and select the wanted sections and filters so as to finally create the piece of advertisement up to one's decision (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Research flyers

[1] All of the flyers were numbered, and the names of the figures below are actual labels that the participants used when referring to the teachers in each of the flyers.

The photographs in the flyers are generic images that I took from the internet, and these people or models represent English teachers for the purpose of the flyer. The intention of such photographs was to have consistency in terms of a white background, and variety in terms of peoples' assumed race and age, and gender. Taking into consideration these factors, I used Google search engine. In the searching process, this engine would often refer my search to different sites, such as *Gettyimages* and *Shutterstock*. These sites have a copyright free use of the images they enable online for users to consult. Finally, the viewpoints of the participants were taken as descriptions towards the assumed role of the representative English teachers in the photographs.

Focus Group Interviews

A topic of interest is the central aspect to discuss in a focus group, and according to Lengeling (2013), a large amount of data can be gathered using focus groups. In the same vein, Gill *et al.* (2008) claim that interviews, as well as focus groups, are the most common methods used when conducting qualitative research, even though some other authors discuss the limitations and strengths of the method in applied linguistics (Ho, 2006; Prior, 2018). The focus group was considered a quite efficient technique for this study due to the fact that some participants' responses may have resulted to be thought-provoking for others. Having considered social phenomenology as the method and the focus groups as the primary technique, directed the study to a framework of connections between such method and technique, in which the participants had the opportunity to discuss upon others' opinions and arguments through socialization and interaction.

Regarding technical aspects of this technique, semi-structured questions were selected as the suitable type to include. There were two focus groups conducted and the discussion was audio-recorded and later transcribed. This recording and transcription phase will be discussed more in-depth in the data management and procedures section. The questions in the focus groups, as well as the questionnaires, were conducted in Spanish – the first language of the participants. Previous to the data collection process, it was assumed that the participants might feel more confident if the focus groups and post-focus group questionnaires were to be conducted in Spanish. This assumption was later confirmed by the participants themselves when they asked what language they would use to proceed, considering that their level of English was between beginner and intermediate.

Social phenomenology seeks to present how viewpoints are socially constructed and the focus groups combined with the selected method helped to achieve this outcome. In the interviews, the participants could expose previous experiences and relate to the others' through socialization. This combination of the method and technique allowed the environment of the discussion in the focus group to comprehend how experiences are socially shared, in this case, having previous experiences as the starting point of reference.

Visual Elicitation

In the data gathering process, there is an aspect that is worth remarking: visual elicitation. It can be thought of as having – most of the times – a physical visual in which the participants can draw attention in order to verbalize their opinions on the topic in question: English teacher's physical appearance in this study. In research, this type of technique is often referred to as *photo elicitation*, where in the words of Shaw (2013), it consists of "a qualitative research method in which photographs are integrated into the interview process" (p. 786). Another view on the topic comes from Haultain (2013), who maintains that this is a data collection technique in which the researcher inserts photographs in the interview in order to prompt discussion. Boucher (2017) goes more in-depth in this subject matter, and talks about empowering the participants when they are provided with photographs to elicit discussion as well as the ethical contemplations that are worth considering.

I decided to go for visual elicitation rather than the so-called *photo elicitation* technique in gathering qualitative data – more specifically, in interviews – because not only did I use photographs to prompt discussion among my participants, but I also included other semiotic resources in the flyers. Even though such resources were meant to be included with the only purpose of providing more information so the flyer looked closer to what one would encounter in real-life situations, the attention was driven to the photographs of the representative English teachers. Considering the previous context as a base, the participants had the opportunity to talk and behave critically towards a piece of advertising they could be judgmental too, exposing their perspectives on design, lack of or unnecessary elements, and their thoughts on what the flyer was offering.

Including visual elicitation in the focus group interviews enabled me to take an extra step back regarding my positioning as a researcher and gave me the opportunity to look and analyze the data more objectively.

Post-focus group questionnaire

Another stage of the data collection process was a post-focus group questionnaire. According to Dörnyei (2010), questionnaires arose from research in social sciences, and they have contributed substantially to the area of second language acquisition (SLA). Such questionnaires included multiple option items in order to profile the participants. The main objective of the first part of the questionnaire was to gather profile information such as age, gender, and level of English – this last one as defined by the institution. The intention of such information was to be used in the data analysis by referring to how certain stereotypes may be particular of a certain age or gender, for instance. At the end of the focus groups conducted, the participants were orally asked whether they would decide to provide this background information anonymously in the questionnaire and they provided their oral consent.

In relation to the second part of the questionnaire, where the participants were asked the reasons for enrolling in the English courses offered at the university language center, the following information was collected (see table 1).

Table 1. Participants' reasons and aspects for studying English

Reasons for enrolling in the English courses (2 duplicate answers)			**Aspects to consider when selecting a teacher**	
Personal decision (2)	Institutional requirement (8)	Other (3)	Schedule (2)	Others (9)
		Personal development		Appearance
		Improve language skills		Reputation
		Personal interest		Level of studies
				Training
				Attitudes
				Evaluation processes

When considering reasons for enrolling in the English courses, 8 out of the total of 11 participants chose the option *institutional requirement*, leaving 2 for *personal decision* and 1 for the option *other*. It is important to mention that 2 participants duplicated answers, meaning that they chose two options out of the three provided in the questionnaire. Considering that the third option was an open line for them to write the reason (*other*), the phrases included in the table appeared.

On the other hand, where the participants were asked to specify the aspects to consider when selecting a former English teacher, two out of the 11 wrote the word *schedule*, and the other nine wrote a variety of words that are also included in the table.

Based on the data provided by the participants, I could conclude that most of the participants are enrolled in the English courses because a given institution demands them to acquire the language, perhaps at a certain level. It can also imply that many of them seek for background information about the teachers to select, whether this information is shared as given recommendations by other students or investigated by themselves. This can support the participants' views on the research flyer for eliciting discussion in the focus groups, where they mentioned that more background information of the representative English teachers was needed.

Pilot

A pilot entails putting in practice the techniques one intends to apply in a given research. According to Sampson (2014), piloting sessions have not been recognized widely in qualitative research to clearly define how powerful they can be. Nevertheless, conducting a pilot anticipated unexpected technical or procedural issues of the data collection process that had not been estimated such as what technique to introduce first. In the pilot, I introduced only two flyers that were not used in the latter two-focus groups that I carried out. I also provided the questionnaire before the interviews took place. This gave me the opportunity to make minor changes to the flyers, more specifically changes to the quality of the whole design. In terms of the other data collection techniques – the focus group interviews and questionnaires – I decided to switch the order, meaning that the focus group interviews were implemented before the questionnaires. The reason for the change is that I noticed certain preoccupation regarding why I asked for the participants' level of English, for instance, since they thought the interview was to be conducted in English. Finally, no information that was collected in the pilot was used for the data analysis.

Data management and procedures

The following section is a brief account of the data procedures that were carried during the study. The intention of the text is to give the reader an outline about how information was collected, processed, and analyzed.

Data Transcription and Coding

This section begins with the description of the assigned codes for each of the participants' utterances. Some difficulties were identified when transcribing the audio recordings, such as who exactly said what. Yet, in my notes during the discussion, I saw written names of the participants based on what they said, the places they were sitting, and the flyers they had in their hands which was useful for identification. Afterwards, I decided to code the participants by numbers instead of pseudonyms in the transcriptions because it was easier to identify their voices. The coding of utterances includes the letters "FG" that stand for focus groups and "P" referring to the participant, as in "FG1P4" for instance. The letters are followed by numbers depending on what focus group or participant the researcher refers to.

The software that I used in the transcription phase was simple. My telephone recorded the interviews and it automatically saved the files in a platform linked to my phone which gives me the opportunity to back up every file I save. When it comes to the transcription, I used headphones and a software called *Otranscribe* which allows the transcriber to pause and play when it is needed, as well as play slowly or rapidly the audio in case it was necessary. However, there was a drawback in this phase; transcribing an interview takes several hours to type and confirm what has been said, but I experienced no major issues.

Data Analysis

After having completed the two focus group interviews, my personal notes were a significant tool so as to highlight some possible pre-visualized emergent themes, categories, and data coding techniques. Tesch (1990) refers to two views of looking at how researchers analyze text, namely the linguistic tradition and the sociological tradition. The first concerns text itself as a unit of analysis, while the latter takes text as a view of human experience. In this study, human experience is connected to social constructions and interactions, thus I shall claim that, based on Tesch's (1990) view on thematic analysis, a sociological approach was more suitable.

A thematic analysis was conducted so as to find the emergent themes in the data provided. According to Gery and Bernard (2000), finding themes suggests repetition of words, shifts in content, and identification of metaphors so as to finally identify constructs provided by the participants. To support this method of analysis, Spradley (1979) as cited in Denzin and Lincoln (2000), claims that finding themes entails:

> Looking for evidence of social conflict, cultural contradictions, informal methods of social control, things that people do in managing impersonal social relationships, methods by which people acquire and maintain achieved and ascribed status, and information about how people solve problems. (p. 780)

At the time the transcription phase started, I could match the participants' expressions with my notes and cues during the focus group interviews. The written patterns identified were the starting point and consequently, identifying salient or emergent themes that could be the center of analysis led me to conduct the thematic analysis intended. This way, the thematic analysis was conducted following the process of introducing the interview excerpts and then presenting them to consecutively continue with the reflexive analysis on the content of such parts of the interview. It is crucial to mention that the participants had the opportunity to agree or disagree with what others claimed and thought, leading the analysis to a rich socialization in the context where the study was carried out.

Regarding the difficulties faced, I could identify several times where I took the participants' agreements or disagreements as something negatively influenced by others. At first, I assumed that the data had taken a different direction until the concept of social phenomenology made sense in terms of how individual constructs may be shaped through interaction. Finally, the thematic analysis helped to explain the participants' perceptions and how those perceptions are enriched and influenced through interaction with others, as well as linked to previous experiences.

Site and Context

The data was collected in a public university language center in the north of Mexico, more specifically in the state of Tamaulipas. Such center is part of other four around the state and happens to be "extremely popular" (Mora, Trejo, & Roux, p.6, 2013). In this institution, students enroll in EFL courses for different purposes. For instance, some of them are required to achieve a specific level of mastery in order to graduate and others take classes simply because they enjoy the language. On the subject of advertising, the school used to present profiles of actual teachers who worked in the institution, which are no longer available. It is difficult to state when exactly they stopped presenting teachers or the reason why but, in the present, the language courses are commonly advertised with students that are part of the institution as the inserted photographs.

Context plays a significant role in this study because of the environment in the institution. The students who enroll in the language courses commonly ask other members of the community for recommendations, and this curious situation may not be particular to this single context. In this language center, teachers are recommended through generations based on students' perceptions with regards to classroom environment, classroom activities, accent, teacher's personality, and even proficiency in the language. My experience working there for more than three years allowed me to be a part of a community in which there is a students' need to know how a teacher is through the lens of the experience of others. Apart from that, it seems to be also necessary to physically see the teacher that students are describing so as to confirm whether the teacher's appearance somehow corresponds to those descriptions. Finally, being a teacher there opened an opportunity to experience how the students see one based on what other students describe and see.

Participants

The focus of the research centers on EFL students, who take English classes from basic to advanced levels and they are able to pass through the levels every semester. The participants for the study were randomly selected within two groups. The first group was a beginner level in summer courses and the second an intermediate. The teachers in charge of such groups indicated to their students that they could participate in the study voluntarily, and the only needed requirement was to be over 18 years old so that they could provide their own consent. There was variation in gender: A total of eight women and three men, and this was not a significant variable in the study. Finally, all of them were Mexican – aspect that I confirmed with them orally.

Ethics

As part of the data collection procedures, there was some previous contact via email with the institution as well as with the principal and the coordinator of the English program. On the first visit to the language center, a permission request with the description of the data collection processes and requirements was signed to begin with the study. This included randomly chosen students from two different groups, a classroom to perform the interviews, and around fifty free minutes of the class for the students to participate. Besides the permission request, the participants also signed a consent form. It was clearly specified in the documents that the information would be used for academic purposes specifically and that the participants would remain anonymous. It also included the contact information of the researcher in case it was needed.

The consent form for the participants included all the information about the interview and when it comes to the post-focus questionnaire, they were orally asked whether they would be willing to conclude with anonymity. There was a careful explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire and they all orally agreed on completing the questionnaire with no objection.

Conclusion

Social phenomenology – as an inquiry method in qualitative research – is rarely encountered in the TESOL profession in an explicit way and in the area that I explored. It draws on how language gives a social meaning to the world we all share and experience through the perspectives we verbalize, and it can become more and more philosophical as we dive into the foundations of it (see Chelstrom, 2013). However, and for the purpose of the study, social phenomenology is taken as the method in which "experiences from the past are shared through interaction, thus new perspectives are socially created" (Martínez, 2019, p. 131). So as for *photo elicitation* - or *visual elicitation* in this study – I found myself in a situation in which, as a researcher, I was taking a step forward to innovation but also, I became a target of methodical examination. What appeared to be attention grabbing was the fact of introducing social phenomenology as an uncommon method of conducting research in TESOL and, furthermore, visual elicitation with the research flyers I myself created.

I provided some context above so I could get to the argument that exploring the physical appearance of an English teacher along with race, ethnicity, and discrimination gravitating around the study boosted me to be intensively critical and objective about the pathway of my own research. I had to support and defend my research contributions to the field of applied linguistics and TESOL, so I could get to a point in which I could deviate from what had been done in the area and take a step forward where I observed I was able to bridge a gap. That is why I strongly believe that all the methodological specifications described and deconstructed above are objectively put out for discussion in the field.

Conclusively, I consider myself to be a part of a novice researcher community in which I invite others to aim to clearly define the explored area firstly. Consequently, I also prompt you to be attentive to possible gaps that can be bridged in such an area, so that we can later start defining the methodological decisions to be made, and approaches and techniques to be chosen and applied. Finally, I invite you to support solidly the research directions to be taken and put out your contributions to discussion so all those interested can debate and learn from one another.

Reflection Questions:

1. Will you be willing to take a step forward and implement innovative research ideas along with the methodical examination you will be open to?
2. Are you considering the different directions that your study can possibly take?
3. Are you highlighting the key points of your study that will possibly bridge a gap in research and open up discussion?
4. Is your argument supported solidly so you can spread research more confidently? How would you do it?

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Chapter 5

Narrative Inquiry to Analyse European Stories of Transit in Mexico

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Introduction

Stories surround us in different areas and times of our lives: in our childhood fairy tales that our parents read to us when we were little; in the novels we read for pleasure now; in the experiences we share with our friends or families after an ordinary working day; in biographies of our role models, and so forth. "Our lives are stories" (Murray, 2009, p. 45). Social researchers had an idea to document and analyse these stories. This is how narrative inquiry, as a research method has emerged in the last century (Murray, 2009).

With this research project, I initially had the purpose of examining the language use of multilingual adults living in Mexico who were not English or Spanish native speakers to find out if they experienced language shift. However, after rereading the transcripts of collected data many times, I discov-

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ered many identity themes there. This led me to the second research question: how language changes as a result of living in Mexico affected my participants' identity? Since I needed to dig into the participants' language use and language experiences they had in Mexico, narrative inquiry seemed the most appropriate method because it is through stories that we make sense of people's lives (Murray 2009). Also, Murray (2009) believes that stories "help us establish our identities" (p. 45). This point is quite relevant for the current study, which explores participants' identity too. Although, as mentioned above, I did not have an objective to examine identity at first, making narratives revealed this theme.

According to Barkhuizen (2011), constructing and analysing narratives engages a researcher in the process of meaning-making not only of participants' experiences but also of his/her own ones. I certainly agree with that argument. I myself share a similar profile with participants of my research: I am a multilingual European who was living in Mexico when the research was conducted; and now, shortly after the study was carried out, I can certainly state that moving to Mexico, in a different linguistic environment, has considerably altered my language use. When I was reading the narratives I constructed, I was also making sense of my own story and was noticing some aspects I did not think about before. When I was starting this study, I had an idea to be both a researcher and participant and to analyse my story as well. Nevertheless, what I learned about myself as a result of analysing other people's narratives made me quit that intention. The information about my language and identity experiences in Mexico was too personal; therefore, I did not wish to expose it to readers' attention.

Now that the background and purpose of this study have been outlined, I will continue explaining its paradigm and the method adopted. Second, I will present the techniques which were used to collect data in order to answer the research questions. Furthermore, the chapter will briefly describe the research participants, using some excerpts from original stories and the research context. After that, I will discuss ethical issues of the study and data analysis procedures will also be clarified.

Qualitative Paradigm

As it has been mentioned previously, the study conducted was qualitative in nature. Qualitative methods offer an effective way of collecting data concerning people's views, experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings. They are defined as less systematic and standardized (Dörnyei, 2007). Richards (2003) states that the qualitative approach is "person-centred" (p. 36). This means that the main focus of qualitative research is a "person," his/her experiences, opinions, and feelings. This research project is a study about the experiences and opinions of four multilingual people living in Mexico. Understanding the reason why the participants came to Mexico and their feelings regarding language shift are key to answering the research questions of the study.

McKay (2006) argues that qualitative research is inductive, that is, it uses the data collected to arrive to conclusions. The purpose of qualitative research is to interpret data and to answer research questions. The researcher's role is to become a part of what he/she studies. This was quite an easy task for me because I indeed was part of the study, and my transit and language experiences were the principal motivation for doing it.

The strength of qualitative research is that it provides a complex textual description of "how people experience a given research issue" (Mack *et al.*, 2005, p. 1). The purpose of this study is to understand how the participants experience language shift, and what influence the latter has on their identity. Additionally, the qualitative paradigm uses more flexible ways of extracting and categorizing responses to questions. Qualitative methods can be easily adapted and can allow more interaction between a researcher and participants in order to collect richer data. To compare, quantitative methods are more structured and do not permit respondents to elaborate on their responses as much as in qualitative research. Qualitative paradigm in the present study allowed me to understand and analyse participants' opinions, experiences, and feelings about the phenomenon studied which led to particular findings. Participants' stories related to the phenomenon investigated were given in a form of textual descriptions made by me.

Narrative Inquiry Method

The present research adopted a narrative inquiry method. Benson (2014) defines narrative inquiry as “the use of stories in academic research” (p. 154). It was suitable for this research because I present part of the data in the form of participants’ stories. Barkhuizen (2011) points out that narrative inquiry is “a means of making sense of experience” (p. 395) because by writing a story, the writer reflects on it and makes sense of it. For instance, writing the participants’ stories helped me understand my experiences better and analyse how they affected my identity, as discussed above. I did not think of and did not notice the changes that happened to me as a result of language shift until I started writing the respondents’ stories and reflecting on my own.

Barkhuizen and De Klerk (2006) argue that:

> Narratives offer a way of bringing coherence to immigrants’ fragmented and shifting linguistic and identity experiences, and since these experiences are embodied in their stories, researchers are able to learn about them by analysing the complex process of narration in specific instances (i.e., individual’s stories). (p. 281)

As Barkhuizen (2011) explains, whenever he was presenting his research about “linguistic and identity experiences of Afrikaans-speaking migrants from South Africa living in New Zealand” (pp. 391-392), he wanted to retell participants’ stories collected during interviews. I felt similarly: I always had the need to tell these multilingual individuals’ stories before discussing findings more thoroughly. I also felt it was relevant to give a brief overview of my experiences as a multilingual European who came to live in Mexico as it was a thread that connected me with the respondents of this study and motivated my deep interest in the investigation. Since the participants are immigrants, and I explore their language shift and identity, it is important for the reader to find out why they came to Mexico, how they felt in the country, their language experiences, and how their language use has changed. Using stories is the most suitable and the most comprehensible way to help the reader understand these people’s experiences better.

Varaki (2007) argues that voice is a significant aspect in any story. A story can have several voices, including the ones of a narrator and a researcher. Thus, collaboration between the narrator and the researcher in narrative inquiry is inevitable because the researcher "puts him/herself in the story of another individual to magnify the heard voice" (Varaki, 2007, p. 4). Such collaborative work, of course, demands the voice of the researcher. It is also vital to ensure that the narrator's story is being told. That is why I describe some of my experiences in the research, too. I could not put them aside because my own story motivated me to carry out this study. Moreover, my story helped me understand the participants better as our profiles share many similarities, and we had some similar experiences in Mexico.

Benson (2014) distinguishes between two types of narrative inquiry: 1) Analyses of narrative and 2) narrative analysis. The first type uses stories as data. Narrative analysis refers to "research in which storytelling is used as a means of analysing non-narrative data" (Benson, 2014, p. 155). Nevertheless, the distinction between the two types is not so rigid. For example, Jiménez Langarica (2019) argues that he used a combination of both because he examined narrative and non-narrative data but presented the analysis in the form of stories. I applied narrative analysis as I analysed non-narrative content, which I collected by conducting interviews. However, I shall point out that during these interviews, I obtained some narratives. For example, the participants told me stories about their coming to Mexico and their experiences in the country. This proves once again that boundaries between the two types of narrative inquiry are rather flexible. It is relevant to mention that I also identified some themes in the data that were analysed in the Data Analysis chapter below the stories. I will elaborate on that in the section where I outline the presentation of data.

Narrative inquiry has its strengths and limitations. The strength is that it allows a researcher to understand the experience – both investigator's and his/her participants' one. It can permit a researcher to obtain information that participants do not consciously know about themselves. Thus, it requires an in-depth analysis in order to make meaning of respondents' subconscious thoughts and assumptions. On the other hand, narrative inquiry is not suitable for working with many participants because it requires time commitment. I worked with four participants that makes it an appropriate method for the present research. In addition, ethical issues must be seriously considered in such type of research because close collaboration with participants is required. When analysing stories, the researcher may impose "meaning on participants' lived experience"

(Bell, 2002, p. 210). In order to avoid this, I sent the stories to the participants so that they could read them and either approve or change some details.

According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006), the three main elements which identify a story are:

1) *Temporality.* It refers to the past, present, and future of people, places, things or events in the stories.

2) *Sociality.* This element refers to people's experiences and feelings, and to the interaction between a researcher and a participant.

3) *Place.* It is defined as physical boundaries of where the story takes place.

The stories in the current research include the three mentioned elements, too. They describe the past and present experiences of four Europeans who live in Mexico and their interactions with other people. Some stories draw on the participants' plans for the future. Now I will explain the process of data collection.

Data Collection Techniques

The techniques that helped me collect the data are a questionnaire, interviews, and researcher's log. I explain why they were suitable for the present research and point out their strengths and weaknesses.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire may refer to quantitative research methods because it is structured. However, it can also be used in qualitative research for particular purposes. Dörnyei (2007) defines questionnaires as "any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers" (p. 102). If a researcher provides options for answers, it may be difficult for the participants to find a response that best reflects their opinions.

The main types of questions used in questionnaires are yes/no questions, wh- questions like who, where, why, hypotheses, and multiple-choice questions (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005). With the help of these questions, questionnaires can measure three types of data: 1) "Factual" (complete name, gender, age, nationality, race, religion, marital status, occupation, etc.); 2) "Behavioural" (actions, lifestyles, and habits); 3) "Attitudinal" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 103) (respondents' opinions, values, beliefs, interests, etc.). Questionnaires gather information about respondents in a non-evaluative manner. Their main goal is to collect particular data about the respondent for a particular purpose.

The principal aim of the questionnaire I implemented was to collect background data so that I could know if the potential participants were suitable for the research project. I asked seven closed-ended questions. Siniscalco and Auriat (2005) define this type of questions as the ones asking the respondent for "the response that most closely represents his/her point of view" (p. 23). The questions I asked were the following:

1. What is your full name?
2. Where are you from?
3. How old are you?
4. What is your educational background?
5. How long have you lived in Mexico?
6. What do you do in Mexico?
7. What languages do you speak?

I sent the questionnaire to the participants via email. Although such type of data collection was asynchronous in time and place, I did not have any delay in obtaining the participants' responses. The questionnaire did not require a lot of information and reflection, so the participants did not take much time to respond. Initially, I sent the questionnaire to fifteen potential participants, but only eight of them answered. I had to remove four of them because they did not correspond to the required profile: an adult foreigner in Mexico whose mother tongue is other than Spanish or English.

Interview

There are many tools of narrative inquiry: interviews, autobiographies, diaries, life histories, letters, orally told stories, life documents, narrative frames, and so forth (Jiménez Langarica, 2019; Murray, 2009; Varaki, 2007). In my case, I used interviews. I also thought about having participants write their stories, but it would have prevented me from controlling the data collection process. I would have had to conduct follow-up interviews after analysing stories written by them and, due to time constraints, it was not feasible for the present study.

Codó (2008) argues that an interview is a "versatile technique for gathering data on multilingualism" because it can be conducted to "obtain both linguistic productions from bi-/multilingual speakers and content data" (p. 159). Interviews were suitable for this research because I could analyse participants' language use (*e.g.*, code-mixing or code-switching in their speech) which was useful for this study. Additionally, it allowed me to collect rich content data at the same time.

The type of interview I implemented was semi-structured. It is "a more flexible version of the structured" (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 40) one because it allows to broaden the interviewee's responses while having a developed structure of the interview. By doing this type of interview, the researcher can control and guide the process while being able to ask the participant to elaborate on some questions (Dörnyei, 2007).

Semi-structured interviews allowed me to have a list of questions prepared in advance. I also asked additional questions during the interview when a further specification was necessary. I used open-ended questions that gave the participants more freedom of expression and permitted me to gather richer qualitative data (Dörnyei, 2007). In addition, each question was checked to ensure that it was free of words, idioms or syntax likely to interfere with the respondents' meaning of them. The interviews were audio recorded, and the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim later. Before carrying out the interview with the participants, I piloted it with my friend, who has also had an experience of living abroad. A pilot study helped me understand which questions were unclear and reword them.

Regarding the process of conducting the interviews, I carried out face-to-face interviews with three of the participants who lived in Guanajuato and Leon. I let them choose a site for an interview so they could feel comfortable and at ease. I sent questions via email to the other participant who resides in Colima. It is worth mentioning that the email interview was asynchronous in time and place, and that caused the problem of extended delay in responding. However, the participant responded to only several questions via email. Afterwards, she explained it was not convenient for her; thus, we agreed to have the interview by Skype. The Skype interview was audio recorded too. In order to record the Skype interview, I downloaded an app called Callnote. Each interview took from 45 minutes to one hour, depending on the number of details each participant was ready to provide. Three of the interviews were in English, and one interview was in Ukrainian. The participants from Ukraine and Russia were given a chance to choose the language of the interview because I also speak their native language (Ukrainian and Russian).

The main advantage of the email interview is that I did not need to transcribe it. On the other hand, I had a delay in responses, and it was harder to control it than face-to-face or Skype interviews. The advantage of the face-to-face interviews compared to the Skype interview is that they did not depend on the Internet connection. However, the face-to-face interviews required some time and money to arrive in the location of the interviews.

Researcher's Log

Another technique that was useful for the purpose of the study was a researcher's log, which can also be called a journal or a diary. In this study, I decided to use the word "researcher's log." Lengeling (2010) describes it as a tool "to probe more deeply into the lives and emotions" (p. 151) of the participants. Flores (2017) argues that the researcher's log is a technique "to identify and record events, experiences and ideas throughout the research" (p. 34). Thus, using a researcher's log allows the researcher to identify other experiential and affective factors that may be of relevance to the study.

Regarding my researcher's log, I used it to write some comments about the most remarkable moments of the interviews. In addition, I noted some peculiar features of the participants' linguistic behaviour to remember them later. I also used the researcher's log to describe my personal experiences throughout my stay in Mexico. To be more precise, I recorded the changes in my linguistic behaviour as a result of my arriving in Mexico and language shift. Thus, the researcher's log served me as a tool to control the research process. Additionally, it is used as a data collection technique. During the process of data analysis, I compared the findings from the participants' stories with my experiences described in the researcher's log.

Participants and Research Context

To answer the research questions, I collected data from four participants. In this section, I provide a brief description of each participant of the study, including some excerpts from the original stories. Due to ethical issues, the participants' real names were changed.

Alexander is a 49-year-old male from Austria. He has lived in Mexico for 18 years and has taught literature at the University of Guanajuato. He holds a PhD in Comparative Literature. His native language is German. In addition to it, he has a high level of proficiency in Spanish and English, as well as speaks some "broken French." Alexander resides in Guanajuato. His story is titled "A Mexican with Austrian identity" because he feels very attached to Mexico and Spanish; however, people in Mexico notice he is a foreigner in spite of his efforts to adjust his linguistic behaviour:

> I am in Mexico, but my linguistic behaviour is not Mexican. There is this openness, this friendliness that most Mexicans express. I try it, of course, but I can't because I cannot deny that I am Austrian. Austrians are very cold and they like distance. I try to adapt, I try to talk like a Mexican, and I try to be as open as a Mexican, but there always will be this distance.

In spite of these cultural and linguistic differences, Alexander appreciates Mexico and considers it his home.

Katrine is the youngest participant – she is 27 years old. She is from Ukraine like myself, and this made the interview with her especially friendly. She has lived in Mexico for only three years. She works as a commercial director in the company which she founded with her husband. Her native languages are Ukrainian and Russian. She was brought up in the two languages.

Throughout her life, she has learned other languages like English, German, French, Dutch, and Spanish. Interestingly, she explained that she started to use some Spanish in the communication with her husband (it used to be entirely in English before) to do something "nice to the person." Katrine lives in Colima. Katrine's story is named "Starting a business in Mexico" because it was the main reason for her migration to the country, even though her husband is Mexican. She described her adaptation process as a hard experience principally because of insecurity and language barrier:

> When people ask me what I think about Mexico, I answer: "Not bad. You know, I lived one year in Michoacan and I survived. So, everything is OK." It was a little bit scary. I had a route from the flat to Starbucks because there was Internet and back. Then I learned about the city and got used to the lifestyle.

When she became accustomed to the new lifestyle and gained more fluency in Spanish, "a nice life started" as she pointed out.

Mary is a 50-year-old woman from Russia. She has lived in Mexico for 20 years in different states. Currently, she lives in Leon in central Mexico and is an entrepreneur. She has a degree in Computer Science and Economics. Her mother tongue is Russian, but she also speaks fluent Spanish and English. Curiously, she is the only participant who did not report any language attrition, although she believes Spanish is her most frequently used language and she has lived the longest time in Mexico. Her story is entitled "How to say no and to come on time?" It also describes some difficulties she faced in Mexico:

> I don't think I got used to the lifestyle here easily because there are some different things, especially talking about my family. For example, my father is very honest and he is always on time. Even he always comes earlier and he taught me to be the same and never be late. It was extremely difficult here. […] And then people here never tell you that they cannot do something. If, for example, you ask for a help, they always tell you "yes", but you never know if they will really do it.

Nevertheless, she adjusted her lifestyle, like Katrine and Alexander did, and seems quite comfortable in Mexico now.

Simon is a 33-year-old male from Switzerland. He has lived in Mexico for seven years, and during this time, he has worked as a language teacher at the

University of Guanajuato. Concerning his educational background, he has two bachelor's degrees: Multilingual Communication and TESOL. He also has a master's degree in TESOL. His mother tongue is German, but he has mainly used Spanish since he moved to Mexico. Additionally, Simon used to speak French with his grandparents when he was a child. Since he was very attached to them, he has stopped speaking French after their death. Currently, he does not make any efforts to practice it. As he states: "For the moment, I put it on hold." This particular case is discussed in the study's analysis of emergent themes where parallels with other participants, who also had similar emotional attachments to some of their languages, are made. Unlike other participants, he did not encounter any difficulties in Mexico because:

> It was my decision; nobody forced me to go back to Mexico. I liked it, and it was not difficult to adjust my lifestyle to the life here. In some cases, it was compatible to my previous lifestyle. So, I wouldn't say it was difficult.

Simon's story is titled "Struggling with double meaning" because it was his initial linguistic struggle with Spanish when he came to live in Mexico. With time he became more proficient in Spanish and consequently started to feel more comfortable in Mexico. As he points out: "It comes with experience."

As you can see from the table and the descriptions above, the participants have in common the knowledge of English and Spanish. They are multilingual because they speak from three to seven languages. All the participants have teaching experience, but only Simon and Alexander continue teaching. The four respondents experienced some linguistic complexities, and language was the principal medium of their adaptation process in Mexico. Additionally, all the participants are from Europe. I shall note that it was not the purpose of the study to have only European participants. They are the people who agreed to participate and matched with the following requirements: multilingual adult foreigners who live in Mexico.

The interviews with Simon and Alexander were conducted in English. Mary and Katrine had a choice between Ukrainian, Russian, and English because I also speak the three languages. Mary opted for English, whereas Katrine preferred Ukrainian. I did not offer Spanish, although I speak it too, because I was afraid I could not analyse the data in Spanish as thoroughly as

I could do it in English, Ukrainian or Russian. The interviews with Simon, Alexander and Mary were carried out face-to-face in the State of Guanajuato. Since Katrine is in Colima, I conducted an interview with her by email and Skype. Furthermore, the interviews with Mary and Katrine were more informal and conversational because I had met them several times before the interview.

Ethical Issues

When carrying out this research, I addressed ethical issues, such as consent to participate, anonymity, and respect for privacy. First, I explained to the participants the purpose of the current study and answered all the questions they had. I informed them about their right to withdraw at any time they wanted. Also, they were free to decline to answer a question they felt uncomfortable with. Second, the participants signed the consent form and confirmed their wish to participate in the study. Third, the participants remained anonymous because I used pseudonyms for the purpose of the study. Therefore, their identities were protected.

Data analysis Procedures and Presentation of Data

In this section, I describe the procedures applied in the process of data analysis: data coding and content analysis and outline data presentation. In my analysis, I sometimes included comments about myself as part of the study. This inclusion is because I have lived similar experiences to the participants. It is through my own story that I could interpret and make sense of the respondents' narratives. Nevertheless, I did not add a deeper analysis of my story for the reasons described in the Introduction to this chapter.

Data Coding

Once the data was collected and transcribed, it was analysed later. Basit (2003) argues that qualitative data analysis is "a dynamic, intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorizing" (p. 143). In order to make it less complex and help the reader view the data, data coding was applied. It is the process that involves "subdividing the data as well as assigning categories" (Basit, 2003, p. 144). It served as a tool to organize, sort, and manage the data. For example, a code SSIA.6 stands for "semi-structured interview with Alexander, turn-taking 6"; RL stands for "researcher's log." All the data excerpts had codes. Thus, when I needed to go back to the data, I could easily find each extract with the help of the code.

Content Analysis

Content analysis was applied to the collected data. Content analysis is defined as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Having read the transcripts several times, the following six themes emerged:

1) Language attrition

2) Reconstructing identity

3) Language and emotions

4) Different languages in different contexts

5) Multilingualism in thinking

6) Code-switching

Each excerpt of a particular category was highlighted with a particular colour. For instance, the category "language attrition" was red. The participants' turns that referred to a particular category were highlighted with the category's colour.

In order to identify the relationship between the participants' stories, a matrix was devised in an Excel file. The matrix included one column with the participants' pseudonyms and another column with the data excerpts. The matrix helped me link the participants' stories and find some differences.

Some excerpts from the researcher's log were written manually. Handwritten excerpts were scanned and placed in the electronic version of the researcher's log in order to keep all the information organised. I also read the researcher's log several times and made connections with the already devised categories.

Presenting Data

My main dilemma was how to present the results of the data analysis. Because in research conferences I could not show the entire stories, I was wondering how to demonstrate the data to the reader. Some researchers present their narrative data in form of abridged narratives (Murray, 2009). Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik (2014) explain there might be different forms of presenting data within narrative inquiry such as analysis of themes that emerged, stories, narrative interaction or even poetry. An interesting form of data presentation can be found in Jiménez Langarica's (2019) study: crafted narratives. Twenty-eight participants completed his narrative frameworks, but he presented data in three crafted narratives of three imaginary people. The author categorised data into three emergent themes and constructed a story of a fictional character based on real experiences of his participants for each theme, inserting data excerpts in each crafted narrative.

Concerning me, I chose to introduce my participants in the form of their stories, and afterwards, I provided an analysis of salient themes. My initial intention was to present all the data in stories. However, when I started working on Data Analysis chapter, I discovered more themes and thought it would be quite difficult for the reader to follow stories with so many details. The four stories described the respondents' background, their reasons for coming to Mexico, their impressions of the country, and their linguistic profile. Each story was framed by participants' voices. Subsequently, an in-depth analysis of six themes mentioned in the previous subsection was included. While stories introduced each participant individually, salient themes were examined across the four participants. Including both stories and themes showed the data from different angles and provided a more in-depth analysis.

Conclusion

The application of the narrative inquiry method in an investigation involves using stories. They are a rather suitable genre in qualitative research, whose main focus is people's lives and experiences, because they provide a researcher with an opportunity to gain an insight into the world their participants live (Murray, 2009). Narrative inquiry has been used in applied linguistics to explore a variety of phenomena including language and identity (Barkhuizen & De Klerk, 2006), multilingualism (Block, 2006) and university teacher's experiences (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008), to name a few. My study examined the language shift of four multilingual Europeans who migrated to Mexico and its impact on their identity. Narrative analysis has been applied to the data, and these individuals' stories of transit were constructed. An analysis of emergent themes was also provided for a deeper understanding of participants' complex linguistic profiles and identities.

Following a narrative inquiry approach in my research had its challenges, but it ended up being an enjoyable experience as it allowed me to truly dig into the participants' linguistic profiles and to observe the things that would have been difficult to observe so thoroughly and in such a short time. It could have been interesting to have the participants write their own narratives in addition to stories constructed by me based on non-narrative data and to compare them afterwards. However, time constraints posed a limitation. I may consider this option for future similar research.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is the role of stories in understanding who our participants are and in gaining insight into their language use?

2. What can a researcher do to avoid imposing meaning on participants' narratives?

3. How can a researcher present respondents' stories in research conferences in a short time that is given?

4. What challenges can an investigator face doing a narrative study and how might they be overcome?

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Chapter 6

Creating Snapshots Through a Case Study with an Ethnographic Lens

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Introduction

Stories surround us in different areas and times of our lives: in our childhood fairy tales that our parents read to us when we were little; in the novels we read for pleasure now; in the experiences we share with our friends or families after an ordinary working day; in biographies of our role models, and so forth. "Our lives are stories" (Murray, 2009, p. 45). Social researchers had an idea to document and analyse these stories. This is how a research method called narrative inquiry has emerged in the last century (Murray, 2009).

Understanding the relatively new linguistic practices of my own family became not only my personal but academic quest. Code-switching intrigued me deeply, and when my family moved to a place where it is a common practice, it opened a window of opportunity that I could not pass on. I needed to

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find a methodology that allowed me to observe my family in order to study the phenomenon commonly experienced in Puerto Rico; moreover, it was crucial to not compromise my position as the researcher since I am a member of the family.

Norton (2010) suggests that "the value ascribed to speech cannot be understood apart from the person who speaks, and the person who speaks cannot be understood apart from larger networks of social relationships" (p. 350). Hence, this study outlines each participant's case through a snapshot, where their personal stories provide data to understand the interplay between the alternation of English and Spanish and who they are. Stets and Burke (2000) propose that "the core of an identity is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance" (p. 225). Consequently, the intention is to understand the identity of each member of the family by outlining their roles not only within the family but in society and the impact that these factors have on the way they communicate.

In this chapter, I will explore the context in which my participants are situated, which is an important factor to understand the outcomes of the study. Relevant information about the sociocultural and linguistic characteristics that have influenced the participants will be described through a family snapshot. I will outline the research paradigm, methodology, and techniques used for this study. Finally, the most significant findings of the research will be briefly mentioned. Because the participants live in Puerto Rico, it is necessary to understand some historical and political aspects of the island that have impacted the use of English and Spanish. Therefore, I will continue with the description of the context where the study was carried out.

Context of the Study

The history of Puerto Rico has had a crucial impact on the way that people communicate on the island. Previously inhabited by the Tainos, Puerto Rico was discovered by the Spaniards in 1493, which later became a colony for 400 years. In 1898, the United States took control of the island, which according to Nickels (2005), was a consequence of the commerce that Puerto Rico and the United States had maintained while Spain was at war with England. Regarding the language during this period, Nickels (2005) further comments that "the vast majority of Puerto Ricans became exclusively monolingual, and remained so for four centuries, while trade with the United States was developing" (p. 227). Even though Spain was the one in control of the island, the linguistic influence of the United States had begun through commerce.

According to Nickels (2005), it was not until 1902 that English and Spanish were both declared the official languages, a condition that has been maintained until now. Nickels (2005) clarifies that the only time where this situation almost changed was in 1990 when the pro-commonwealth party proposed Spanish as the only official language of the island: "even though the bill was passed in 1991, when the pro-statehood party came into power in 1993, their first act was to reinstate English as an official language along with Spanish" (p. 229). This situation provides a concrete example of the continued and strained debate that the Puerto Rican politicians have had throughout the years, which has also affected the instruction of both English and Spanish in schools and its society in general.

In 1952, the island obtained commonwealth status, which meant that it had a "conferred self-governing authority under federal jurisdiction and rendered the island a 'free associated state' of the United States" (Davila, 1997, p. 2). According to Morris (1995), there has been a continuous debate regarding the extent to which the United States has influenced for more than one hundred years the identity of the Puerto Ricans in terms of their politics and culture. However, Davila (1997) states that the American colonization "shattered Puerto Rico's aspirations for autonomy, but the early twentieth century saw an upsurge in local interest in the island's national identity" (p. 25). Therefore, despite what the political situation of the island has dictated, Puerto Ricans still feel the need to define themselves independently from the presence of the United States.

Regardless of the strong American influence in Puerto Rico, the attitudes towards English have been conflicting based on the idea of imperialism that some citizens perceive. In this regard, Baker and Wright (2017) note the following:

> In Puerto Rico, failed English-only instruction policies were followed by instruction policies aimed at the bilingualization of the island. Nonetheless, factors such as nationalism, political uncertainty and the relationship between language and identity have led to resistance, keeping the majority of the island's population functionally monolingual in Spanish. (p. 71)

However, this resistance has become blurred, particularly in specific social contexts within the capital and in younger generations that identify with the American culture. Nickels (2005) suggests that this struggle has affected Puerto Ricans who recognize the value and opportunities that English provides yet perceive its use as a betrayal to the Puerto Rican culture. However, Nickels (2005) claims that “the attitudes of Puerto Ricans as a society do not reflect their attitudes as individuals” (p. 230). The latter supports the idea of a constant battle between the conditions in which the island has been in contact with English and the benefits of a bilingual society. Velez (1996) addresses this issue, where he explains that most islanders “enthusiastically support the concept of individual bilingualism. We admire people who speak more than one language, and we want our children to master English as well as Spanish” (p. 15). Nevertheless, this aspect also had an impact on other political factors that affect the general perception of English on the island. Fayer, Castro, Diaz, and Plata (1998) note that, regardless of the commonwealth, statehood or independence status of the island, there has always been a direct impact on the language attitudes where, for many islanders, their Puerto Rican identity is directly determined by their use of Spanish.

Nickels (2005) reports that the presence of English in Puerto Rico can be recognized in signs, hospital records, laboratory reports, instructions, and labels, among others. Yet, Nickels (2005) also points out how the most relevant source of English input comes from the media since most magazines, newspapers, and television channels are in English. Therefore, American pop culture plays an important role on the island, particularly among the younger generations.

The historical, political, and linguistic aspects of the island have been discussed to provide a depiction of the context where the research was carried out. I will now present a general description of the family to understand the background story that motivated this study.

Snapshot of a Mexican Family Living in Puerto Rico

The participants that I selected are my mother, father, and brother. My family decided to move to Puerto Rico for work-related reasons. My father, who has always worked in computing, decided that Puerto Rico was a good option because he was offered a job opportunity However, I decided to stay in Mexico because I had been living in the United States for a year, and I was already enrolled in a university to start my BA. Since then, I have spent a fair amount of time exploring Puerto Rico and its culture.

Throughout time, I have noticed that the way that my family communicates has been shaped according to how Puerto Ricans speak. The development of code-switching, specifically, has been a significant factor because it has changed the way in which my family communicates. I noticed how their interactions changed, and I started to wonder how this would affect who they are. The adaption process that the members of my family went through, both individually and as a family, was an aspect that I have always been interested in. This awareness led me to consider studying this phenomenon, not only as a member of my family but as a researcher. Being able to observe those interactions and my close relationship with them would allow me to have an in-depth insight into how a Mexican family living in Puerto Rico communicates using both English and Spanish. My role as a member of the family gave me a better understanding of their dynamics, as well as an outsider perspective since I do not live in Puerto Rico.

Upon the arrival of my family to the island in 2006, the contact with English increased for my father and my brother. Both interacted with people who code-switched and code-mixed English and Spanish. My father has always worked in computer companies that require the use of both languages. In this field, the use of terms in English is common, even when communicating in Spanish. My brother continued his education in bilingual schools, where half of his subjects were in English. Even though the contact with English increased for my mother, her interactions were still in Spanish for the beginning years. Her connection was only through television, radio, or even some magazines or newspapers. It was not until recent years that she began to comment on how she was able to understand more words and sentences in English. She started to take formal English classes in 2017, specifically to prepare herself for the citizenship test of the United States.

Diving into a Case Study with an Ethnographic Lens

This study is based on a qualitative approach. Dörnyei (2007) mentions that the qualitative paradigm has been present in the field of applied linguistics since the mid-1990s. He continues by stating that "almost every aspect of language acquisition and use is determined or significantly shaped by social, cultural, and situational factors, and qualitative research is ideal for providing insights into such contextual conditions and influences" (p. 36). Throughout this study, the sociolinguistic aspects of code-switching will be analyzed. These elements are supported by Dörnyei's (2007) depiction of the qualitative paradigm, where the cultural aspect of the context influences the participants to provide enough data to support the phenomenon that this study focuses on.

Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault (2015) state that "the phrase qualitative methodology refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data—people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior" (p. 7). These characteristics describe this study since the data that is used serves as descriptions of the participants' behavior towards code-switching. The participants' behavior was supported by the observations and notes of the researcher, providing enough elements to sustain the findings.

Dörnyei (2007) provides characteristics of qualitative research. The following aspects are the most relevant and serve to back up this study:

- Emergent research design, meaning that the study is kept open and fluid so that it can respond in a flexible way to new details or openings that may emerge during the process of investigation.
- Because the common objective of all the different types of qualitative methods is to make sense of a set of (cultural or personal) meanings in the observed phenomena, it is indispensable that the data should capture rich and complex details. Therefore, to achieve such a 'thick' description, almost any relevant information can be admitted as QUAL data.
- Qualitative research takes place in the natural settings, through an intense and prolonged contact with or immersion in the research setting.
- Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive, which means the research outcome is ultimately the product of the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data. (p. 38)

Based on these selected features and the nature of this study, the data may be considered emergent, meaning that new details that can be incorporated since they can provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of the phenomena in question. Both the techniques and my position as a researcher who is part of the family provided a thick description to support the qualitative nature of the study. The data was collected based on the continuous contact with the participants that allowed the proper immersion in the context, and finally, the immersion in the natural setting provided me with the sufficient elements to interpret the data.

Methodology

This is a case study looking at the data through an ethnographic lens. According to Gray (2013), the researcher chooses the methodology based on a combination of aspects: "whether the researcher believes that there is some sort of external 'truth' out there that needs discovering, or whether the task of research is to explore and unpick people's multiple perspectives in natural, field settings" (p. 25). Due to the nature of this study, the second factor can be applied, where the exploration of code-switching in a natural setting guided the choice regarding the methodology. Therefore, the reasons for combining the case study and ethnography will be described, and the features of each method that are meant to complete each other will be discussed.

Case Study

Regarding the case study nature of the project, Zainal (2007) states that "case study enables a researcher to examine the data within a specific context. In most cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study" (p. 1). In this case, the geographical area is Puerto Rico, and the participants are the three members of a family who are part of an interesting phenomenon that has been increasingly the focus of many researchers which is code-switching. In this regard, Zainal (2007) mentions that "case studies, in their true essence, explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships" (p. 2). Based on this argument, the analysis not only provides an understanding of the case of each participant but how the phenomenon impacts them as a family unit.

Mills, Eurepos, and Wiebe (2010) claim that "in the results, the objective is to understand and interpret thoroughly the individual cases in their own special context, and to find information concerning the dynamics and the process" (p. 66). This argument benefits the study since each participant's situation was analyzed as well as its impact on the family as a unit. The fact that the number of participants is limited allows me as the researcher to draw connections within the family to understand how code-switching is present. In this regard, case studies provide a cause, as opposed to only a description of the situation, which can be useful when the aim of the researcher is to establish a relationship between the phenomenon and the context where it occurs (Gray, 2013).

Yin (1984) notes that there are three categories of case study: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies. This project constitutes an exploratory case study since it is set to explore a phenomenon that serves as a point of interest to the researcher. This decision allows the researcher to address the emergent approach that was taken and be able to respect the direction that the study dictates. Since three cases are evaluated, different outcomes can be expected.

Ethnographic Lens

The case study has been explained as the principal method for this project. However, some elements of ethnography are taken into consideration to strengthen the results. The phenomenon that this study aims to focus on is the code-switching of my family, who is currently living in Puerto Rico. During the data analysis, I addressed how it is precisely this cultural setting which has triggered the switches between English and Spanish. The ethnographic lens that this study presents is based on the idea that the phenomenon in question occurs in the context the participants live in. Heigham and Croker (2009) point out that "the aim of ethnographers is to painstakingly develop an understanding of the particular cultural worlds which people build and live in and explain them to people outside those worlds" (p. 93). The case studies of the participants are deeply grounded to the context they live in, therefore certain aspects of the ethnography help to address the study properly with the objective of constructing a cultural portrait of my family (Heigham & Croker, 2009).

Dörnyei (2007) explains that the principal objective of most ethnographic research is to offer a "thick description of the target culture. That is, a narrative that describes richly and in great detail, the daily life of the community as well as the cultural meanings and beliefs the participants attach to their activities, events, and behaviors" (p. 130). The most relevant aspect of this argument is how the ethnographic lens provides this study with the tools to address those cultural meanings and beliefs that the participants have developed around the code-switching that they have incorporated in their discourse since arriving on the island. Moreover, it is through the observation of the participants, and the ethnographic field notes that the thick descriptions of the participants can be attained.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) state that ethnography "involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research" (p. 1). This description perfectly describes the process that was followed in the data collection of this study, where my close relationship with the participants benefited the data collection process. Regarding this aspect, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) denote that "the ethnographer enters into a social setting and gets to know the people involved in it; usually, the setting is not previously known in an intimate way" (p .1). This particular study differs from the last part of that description since the context is not new for the researcher. However, the familiarity that the researcher has with the context represents a significant advantage, allowing me to get access to the participants and their dynamics, that was favorable to the analysis.

The most essential aspects of the case study and the ethnographic methods were combined to provide the proper procedure that guides this study. The techniques used will be described, analyzing their characteristics that were crucial to ensure the quality of the data provided by the participants.

Techniques

The following sections address the techniques that were implemented in this study to achieve the objectives of the study and answers to the research questions. Two main techniques were used: observations and interviews. However, to ensure the quality and quantity of the data, the observations were implemented through ethnographic field notes and audio recordings of the conversations to capture samples of the code-switches of the participants.

Observation

There are two main sources of evidence regarding the implementation of a case study: direct observation of the events being studied, and interviews of the participants involved in those events (Yin, 2003). I will address the implementation of the observations since it provides the initial access to the basic aspects of the study, such as the dynamics of the participants as a family and how the code-switching occurred. Mulhall (2002) offers ideas about the benefits of using observations that are relevant to this study: "it provides insight into interactions between dyads and groups, it illustrates the whole picture, it captures context/ process, and informs about the influence of the physical environment" (p. 307). Based on these characteristics, observations in this study provided access for the researcher to not only the participants individually but their daily lives and interactions as a family, providing more consistent data. The observations recorded in the field notes also provide information about the context and other elements that might be relevant to consider.

Due to the ethnographic lens that the study uses, participant observation was used. According to Bell (2005), this type of observation "involves the researcher participating in the daily life of an individual, group or community and listening, observing, questioning and understanding (or trying to understand) the life of the individuals concerned" (p. 186). Since the participants were my family, being a participant observer not only was convenient to ensure the thick description that was needed for this study, but it also provided me with the opportunity to question aspects that, at the moment, were important to make the ethnographic field notes richer.

Reis and Judd (2000) mention that "observational methods may be used whenever the behavior of interest is clearly defined and available to external observers" (p. 138). In this case, the participants' interactions were observed and recorded using audio recordings. In this regard, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) also address this idea by stating that:

> Research is an active process, in which accounts of the world are produced through selective observation and theoretical interpretation of what is seen, through asking questions and interpreting what is said in reply, through writing fieldnotes and transcribing audio- and video-recordings, as well as through writing research reports. (p. 18)

This argument is particularly relevant since some of the techniques mentioned by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) are used to record the observations of this study. In the next section, I will explain the role of field notes and audio recordings and their implementation.

Field Notes

As stated before, field notes play an important role when doing an ethnography. In the case of this study, they were used as a way to record the data that was observed. Patton (2001) mentions that "field notes contain the description of what has been observed. They should contain everything that the observer believes to be worth noting" (p. 302). In this sense, field notes play a vital role when analyzing the context and every aspect that might have affected what occurred during the observation.

Mulhall (2002) provides a relevant idea when using this technique:

> Most researchers would agree that it is important to record field notes as closely as possible in time to when events were observed. For some, this means writing an account at the end of each day, whilst others attempt to record events as they occur in situ or by retiring to a discrete location directly following the observation period. Still, others delay the writing of a comprehensive field note until they have left the study site completely. (p. 311)

She explains that there are merits to all these approaches, such as ensuring the details of the observation when taking notes as soon as possible. However, she also highlights that long-term reflection allows the researcher to have time to reflect on what was observed in order to identify patterns. In this regard, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) consider that the researcher should write the notes as soon as possible after the observed action because the quality of the notes might diminish rapidly with time and can lead to the loss of details. Preferably, the researcher should take notes during the observation, yet this might not always be possible. The authors conclude that "it is a grave error to allow the material to accumulate without the reflection and review of the researcher" (p. 191). They also address the reflective factor of the notes stating that "the construction of analytic notes and memos therefore constitutes precisely the sort of internal dialogue, or thinking aloud, that is the essence of reflexive ethnography" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 192). The ethnographic notes used throughout this study were recorded after the behavior was observed to ensure the rich details. Some notes were written at the end of the day as an overall result of the observations as a way of giving the research time to reflect.

Regarding the types of ways of taking notes, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) mention that "in attending to ongoing scenes, events and interactions, field researchers take mental note of certain details and impressions" (p. 19). When the researcher makes a brief written record of these notes they are called 'jottings'. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) point out that "jottings translate to-be-remembered observations into writing on paper as quickly rendered scribbles about actions and dialogue" (p. 20). By being a participant-observer, jottings were used to record quick details like words or short sentences to use them in the reflection at the end of the day. They were also used to describe the setting in which most of the audio recordings took place.

Patton (2001) states that field notes are descriptive and they should contain "the descriptive information that will permit you to return to an observation later during analysis and, eventually, permit the reader of the study's findings to experience the activity observed through your report" (p. 303). Based on this argument, different codes were used to identify the type of entry that was recorded to facilitate the organization of the data. As previously established, some entries serve as a reflection of the situations that were observed, and other notes that were used to describe relevant aspects that impact the data. Patton (2001) also argues that field notes should also contain what people say: "direct quotations, or as near as possible recall of direct quotations, should be captured during fieldwork, recording what was said during observed activities as well as responses garnered during interviews, both formal and conversational" (p. 303). This idea was also considered since the audio recordings were used less frequently, some entries of the field notes were applied to record what the participants said or even some sudden switches they did.

Spradley (1980) proposes the following aspects as a guide to take field notes:

> space (the physical place), actor (the people involved), activity (acts that the participants do), object (the physical things that are present), act (single relevant ac-

> tions that participants do), event (a set of related activities that people carry out), time (the sequencing that takes place over time), goal (the objectives people are trying to accomplish), and feeling (the emotions felt and expressed). (p. 78)

Some of these aspects were recorded in jottings throughout the data collection process, such as mentioning the individuals that took part in the conversation, the time, the feelings, and space. Instead of the goal as Spradley (1980) suggests, the topic of the conversation was recorded since these criteria would be more relevant for the analysis of the data.

Audio Recordings

The observations were also validated through audio recordings, which provided examples of the code-switching of the participants by documenting their interactions. Mills, Eurepos, and Wiebe (2010) discuss the benefits of using this technique in case studies:

> the use of audiovisual recording for case studies is the provision of infinitely rich detail of transient events—records that can be analyzed, reanalyzed, and annotated by one or many researchers. Present digital technology puts audiovisual recording methodology in easy reach from the standpoints of raw data collection, access, and sharing. (p. 34)

Since this study is grounded on a sociolinguistic perspective, the audio recordings provided rich details of the conversations. The field notes enriched the transcripts from the conversations, as well as the details mentioned in the interviews by the participants. The main objective of this technique was to record natural data from the family interactions, where clear examples of the participants' switches were easily captured. This approach facilitates the ethnographic lens since the participants are recorded in the context where the phenomenon in question is occurring.

Approximately nine hours of conversations were recorded in different contexts where the participants interacted mainly with each other. Because of the close relationship that I have with the participants, both the audio recordings and the ethnographic field notes helped me to remain as objective as possible.

It was necessary to not only present the data through the perspective of myself as a member of my family but also it provides evidence that depicts what I experienced from the position of the researcher. In the next section, I will address the interviews that were used as a second technique, where the participants address relevant issues of their experience regarding code-switching.

Interviews

Regarding how the techniques of this study were used to complement each other and strengthen the results, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) point out that "there are distinct advantages in combining participant observation with interviews. In particular, the data from each can be used to illuminate the other" (p. 131). In this sense, many elements that the participants mention were supported with the recorded observations, both in the field notes and audio recordings. Yet, interviews were also implemented in the study. This technique served as a powerful tool to hear the participants' voices and how they experience the phenomenon that this study addresses.

Heigham and Croker (2009) offer an interesting argument in favor of interviews: "it is not simply a matter of using questions and answers to elicit information that we then go on to analyze but a data collection method that offers different ways of exploring people's experience and views" (p. 183). By eliciting answers that explore these two last aspects, the interviews provided relevant data from the participants, especially regarding their perceptions of using English and Spanish, their experience with the use of English, and their motivation to code-switch, among others.

Patton (1990) offers three main types of interviews: the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. Originally the idea of the study was to implement open-ended interviews. However, during the data collection process, Puerto Rico was hit by the hurricane Maria, which severely affected the communication with the participants. I decided to use a structured interview to be able to obtain the answers from the participants and continue with the aim of the study. According to Heigham and Croker (2009), this type of interview uses "a long list of exact questions, called an interview schedule, which the interviewer asks with scrupulous attention to precise form and order, and it yields answers that can be compared across respondents" (p. 184). Even though this approach did, in fact, represent a more rigid way to gather more data, the advantage of being able to compare the answers among the participants was particularly beneficial. They were analyzed as individuals but the implications that the code-switching has on them as a family were also addressed in the study.

Regarding the characteristics of a structured interview, Opdenakker (2006) claims that:

> Although the advantage can be that the interviewee does not hesitate in giving a socially undesirable answer, but the chance of a spontaneous answer to a question is smaller, because the interviewee has more time to reflect on the question. And spontaneity can be the basis for the richness of data collected in some interviews. It depends of course on the research questions if this reflective behavior is a disadvantage or not. (para. 32)

In the interviews carried out for this research, the reflective aspect played an important role. It provided the participants with time to think about their own processes regarding their English use and other aspects that require reflection, such as their perceptions towards the code-switching.

The questions were sent by e-mail to the participants, and they were provided with the option of answering in English, Spanish, or both. Two follow-up interviews were conducted to address or clarify relevant answers from the first interview. I will now proceed to discuss the process of reflexivity in the next section.

The Importance of Reflexivity

The close relationship that the researcher and the participants have might be perceived as problematic and likely to present biased results. Darawsheh (2014) points out that "qualitative methodological approaches view researchers as part of the research world, and who are immersed in generating and interpreting data" (p. 564), perpetuating the idea that the social sciences are not capable of offering adequate and valid results like other fields. However, some authors propose the process of reflexivity to ensure more systematic and consistent results. Darawsheh (2014) defines reflexivity as "the continuous process of self-reflection that researchers engage in to generate awareness about their actions, feelings and perceptions" (p. 561). In other words, the researcher is more conscious about the actions that guide the research based on the idea that every decision has been informed by constant reflection.

Bourke (2014) points out that "it is reasonable to expect that the researcher's beliefs, political stance, cultural background (gender, race, class, socioeconomic status, educational background) are important variables that may affect the research process" (p. 2). However, being aware of the impact that the researcher has on a study provides the first step to influence how the results are presented. In this regard, England (1994) states that "a more reflexive and flexible approach to fieldwork allows the researcher to be more open to any challenges to their theoretical position that fieldwork almost inevitably raises" (p. 82). To show transparency and achieve the objectives, it is relevant to address the challenges of the research itself and the process that the researcher goes through as well. Regarding the positionality of the researcher, England (1994) considers that "we need to integrate ourselves into the research process, which admittedly is anxiety provoking in that it increases feelings of vulnerability" (p. 87). In this case, my dual role as a researcher and family member required a constant reflection through the ethnographic field notes, where not only I described my previous knowledge of each family member that was pertinent to the study but also, I recorded new findings regarding my approach as a researcher.

Now that the methodological aspects of the study have been outlined, in the following section, I will discuss more details about how the data was collected beyond the techniques that were implemented and previously addressed.

Data Collection Process

The data was collected over the course of four weeks during July and August. Due to the nature of the study and the easy access, both formal and informal contexts were used, such as family and social gatherings and work environments. The contexts included home, offices, driving, restaurants, the beach, family trips, family activities, etc.

Approximately 15 conversations were recorded throughout this time using a tape recorder and a cell phone simultaneously to ensure a backup recording. Each recording lasted between thirty and ninety minutes. Field notes were constantly taken during the observations, where I would specify important aspects of the conversation, such as the context, participants, dates, and other relevant ideas. The reflective notes were taken to comment on relevant thoughts that might be helpful in the analysis of the data. I will now briefly mention the most relevant findings of the study that were favored by the individual case studies with the ethnographic lens.

Motivation Behind Code-switching and its Relationship with Identity

As previously established, it was precisely the context which triggered the phenomenon of the participants. Nonetheless, I found how the participants showed a distinct motivation for code-switching, which in turn is related to the sense of belonging that each family member experienced. Both my father and brother seemed to be motivated by their specific work field, which is deeply technology-based. Moreover, the age where my brother arrived on the island represented a relevant incentive to acquire this practice of code-switching as well as imitate his peers. My mother and brother shared both the media and pop culture which was part of their lives. For my mother, her family helped her to trigger these switches.

Furthermore, I concluded that each of the participants established a new identity upon their arrival in the island. The three of them found different ways to navigate their new context by incorporating English into their daily discourse. Even though some of their motivation varied, the result was the switches that were commonly used by Puerto Ricans. This revealed how code-switching is a practice that is embedded in history and is the heart of the island.

An Approach to Translanguaging?

The snapshots that were individually presented of each participant allowed me to outline their own case studies, which also facilitate the distinction of the most relevant aspects of their linguistic practices. In that sense, both of my parents' use of English and Spanish coincide with the literature pertaining to code-switching (Garner-Chloros, 2009; Holmes, 2013; Macswan, 2004; Meisel, 1989; Poplack, 1985; Romaine, 1995; Woolard, 2004). Together the interviews and observations denote the fractional view of bilingualism described by Baker and Wright (2017). For my mother and father, the perceptions of their switches seemed to be rather negative, where maintaining the purity of the language is important to them, most likely based on their age and life experiences.

On the other hand, my brother's case study provided meaningful information; the age at which he arrived in the island represented a detail that became relevant in the data analysis. I argued that the manner in which my brother communicates did not necessarily coincide with the practice of code-switching, but one proposed through translanguaging. It was precisely Baker and Wright (2017) who discuss this approach that correlated with my brother's: "translanguaging recognizes that the languages we use integrate, change and adapt to new learning and new situations, with effects on identity and experiences" (p. 99). My brother's arrival at age14 allowed the Puerto Rican context to shape my brother's identity and the way he communicates, which led to the adoption of both languages and the creation of one particular linguistic repertoire (Otherguy, Garcia, & Reid, 2015). Nowadays, he not only feels comfortable when he 'languages' back and forth between both codes, but based on the data, he has also embraced this practice as part of who he is.

Conclusion

The chosen methodology outlined throughout this chapter was key to structure a congruent study that aligned with the established objectives. Furthermore, the brief analysis of the findings offered an answer to the research questions to understand the motivation of each family member and the interplay between code-switching and identity. The analysis of each participant also favored the identification of emerging themes which helped to make connections among the participants to be able to address the implications that code-switching has in the family.

On one hand, it is relevant to mention that both my roles as a family member and researcher allowed me to offer a particular perspective of the phenomenon of code-switching. Capturing each invidual snapshot was important to delimit each case study and understanding their dynamic as a unit.

Also, the study of the context and its history benefited the understanding of this practice, which provided the intended ethnographic lens. However, ethnography requires both time and thorough understanding the context and how its culture came to be. This is something to consider for future ethnographers; yet this is where its richness and value brings to research.

Reflection Questions

1. What are the pros and cons of carrying out studies where the researcher uses his/her family in bilingual studies?
2. What would you consider is the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research?
3. What are the aspects to take into consideration when trying to replicate a study?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology presented in this chapter?

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Chapter 7

Tracking the Use of Narratives and Its Adeptness in Qualitative Data Analysis

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Introduction

This chapter discusses the implementation of Narratives as a resourceful technique for analyzing qualitative data. With the aim of illustrating the various advantages that it offers when executing a qualitative study, I describe and comment on the procedural components of a research that I carried out using this technique. The methodology here described was thoroughly implemented to frame a study which objective was to examine, from a multiangular perspective, a case that derives from the phenomenon of migration. Specifically, the case of a group of returnee English language teachers established in Mexico (their home country) and bonded by their common decision to raise children bilingually.

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During the initial design of the study, my intention was to learn about the strategies that these parents implemented to help their children to acquire the English language. Nonetheless, once that the data was analyzed, I changed the study's orientation to examine the returnee parents' perceptions in relation to a) their transnational experience, b) difficulties in implementing their practices to raise bilingual children, and c) aspects of identity reflected on their perceptions/attitudes.

Framing the Study

During the review of literature stage, I learned that in the context of Guanajuato in 2014, Guanajuato is ranked in the first place of Mexican returnee migrants by state of residence at the time of return, during the period of the years 2009 to 2014 (Serrano & Jaramillo, 2015). This originated a growing trend of returnees seeking to enter the profession of EFL teaching, from which some of them become parents aware of the importance of sharing their bilingualism with their children. For this reason, I considered it necessary to study this group at the family level.

An Intrinsically Qualitative Study

Once that I moved on to the methodology design stage, I had the awareness that due to the existent link between the complex migration experience and my target population, I had to use techniques that allowed me to gather a continuum range of information as to be able to analyze their trajectories. Therefore, the nature of my study required me to adopt a qualitative type of research. Creswell (1998) defines the term as 'an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducted the study in natural setting' (p. 15).In this way, I decided to start by collecting the participants' narratives to provide a detailed description of their perspectives regarding the phenomenon of returnee migrants raising bilingual children in the state of Guanajuato.

Since I had clearly delimited the characteristics of my study's participants, I was knowledgeable that the returnee migrants living in Guanajuato represented a specific group of people whose experiences might determine their behavior and decisions. I connected this information with Holloway's (1997) assertion that qualitative research focuses on "the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live. It aims to understand the social reality of individuals, groups and cultures; to explore the behavior, perspectives and experiences of people" (p.2). This means that qualitative researchers study certain phenomena in their natural settings, attempting to interpret them from the participants' perspective, considering the meanings they attach to them. In this sense, I decided to use the exploration of my participants' migration experiences and some aspects of identity that they reflected, as elements that would support my understanding of their decisions regarding language use within the family context.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) add that qualitative research "involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (p. 2). From this statement, I considered it convenient to approach the investigation as a case study and ultimately decided to use autobiographies, interviews, narrative frames and questionnaires as appropriate tools to obtain such information. My main purpose in using four different techniques was to obtain rich and detailed descriptions of their lived experiences.

Finally, Qualitative research attempts to "interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). In that sense, it is essential for the researcher to maintain the essence of the participants' voices. Accordingly, my motivation to choose the qualitative paradigm was that it allows the researcher to inquire about the meaning that participants give to a certain issue. I wanted to look at the participants' background as migrants in the U.S. to understand their perceptions and attitudes about their children's language use from their current perspectives as returnees. Moreover, it allows the researcher to identify different variables concerning a certain issue while hearing the participants' voices. In my study, the participants' context was influenced by their different roles, such as being returnees incorporating into society, their job as EFL teachers, and being heads of family. As a result, their experiences in these different facets had influenced their family decisions in relation to language use.

Understanding the Phenomenon: An Exploratory-Descriptive Study

Since the objective of the study is to acquire a new insight into the phenomenon of returnee migrants raising bilingual children, I had to implement an exploratory and descriptive study. According to Schutt (2011), exploratory research "seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meanings they give to their actions, and what issues concern them. The goal is to learn 'what is going on here?' and to investigate social phenomena without explicit expectations" (p. 445). In other words, the researcher delves into a phenomenon and allows data to indicate the direction that the research should follow. Furthermore, Ruben and Babbie (2009) add that exploratory research often relies on techniques such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, case studies or pilot studies. Such techniques seem to go hand in hand with one of the conditions of exploratory research, which is not having prior expectations, since "they seldom provide conclusive answers to research questions, but they merely point the way toward an answer" (p. 41). In my case as a researcher, the use of diverse techniques in exploratory research allowed me to examine the phenomenon to help tracing a route of knowledge about it. Concerning this study, I sought to gain familiarity and experience with the phenomenon in order to learn from it to continue inquiring on the topic in future studies. Bearing in mind these aspects, I chose case study as the method to approach the research.

Additionally, I intended to look at the attitudes and perceptions that the returnee migrant parents had developed about their bilingualism regarding their language use within the family context and as part of a monolingual community. This objective tied in with Ruben and Babbie's (2009) idea of conveying a sense of "what it is like to walk in the shoes of people being described, providing rich details about their environments, interactions, meanings, and everyday lives" (p. 42). In fact, the narratives provided by the study's participants would allow me to obtain such an insight into their daily interactions.

Focalizing the research: Instrumental Case Study

Since the study addressed the contemporary phenomenon of return migration in Guanajuato and its impact in the family context regarding language planning and use, I understood that having a group of participants with such a specific group of characteristics required to implement a case study as the methodology to follow. Concerning this method, Zainal (2007) sustains that it enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context. This method selects a small geographical area or a limited number of individuals as the subjects of study. Another characteristic of case studies is that they investigate contemporary real-life phenomena through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events and their relationships. Yin (2003) defines this research method "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). In relation to the role of theory in case studies, Harling (2012) proposes that "it should give direction and structure to the initial set of questions the researcher asks" (p. 3). The researcher's role is to "react to the data received during questioning, using theory to filter and organize the data received" (p. 4). This is a critical factor that I consider in this study, allowing participants to freely express their perspectives through semi-structured interviews and autobiographies in which they share their own experiences.

Furthermore, when considering the characteristics of my participants, I decided to approach the research as an instrumental case study. Stake (1995) distinguishes the instrumental case study as the type in which the researcher selects a small group of subjects to examine a certain pattern of behavior. Moreover, the instrumental case study is carried out to provide a general understanding of a phenomenon using a particular case. In developing new theory or testing out existing theory, it allows researchers to use the case as a comparative point across other cases in which the phenomenon might be present. The instrumental case should be primarily about the extension of experience. This is best facilitated through a qualitative research approach emphasizing richness rather than generalizability (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). One way to achieve the latter is to gather information through different instruments.

An instrumental case study research design aims to understand a theoretical question or problem. The case study is used as an instrument to obtain greater insight into the theoretical explanation that lies beneath a given issue (Algozzine & Hancock, 2016; Stake, 1995). It is necessary to remark on the fact that while implementing an instrumental case study, the researcher should bear in mind that he/she needs to provide a rationale for using a particular case (Harling, 2012). Instrumental case studies attempt to identify patterns and themes and compare these with other cases. In this way, I could use the instrumental case to explore in-depth a phenomenon and then compare this case with other cases, so that the reader can see the transferability of the case findings (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). I chose an instrumental case study approach because the focus of my study was centered on a group of people with particular characteristics, living in specific conditions and specific places: The returnee migrants bringing up bilingual children in Guanajuato. In the investigation, details of the experiences of this particular group of parents contributed to the understanding of the uniqueness and complexity of the case and may serve to illustrate the potential viability of imitating the parents' practices in the family context (Stake, 1995). Moreover, I sought to learn about the different aspects that could be linked to the practices of returnee migrants educating their children in a bilingual manner.

Narrative Analysis

In order to make sense of the participants' stories, I used narrative analysis. In the human sciences, it refers to a family of approaches to diverse kinds of texts, which have in common a storied form. Narrative inquiry uses stories to describe human action. In this method, the phenomenon is called ”story” and the inquiry ”narrative”. This type of analysis would allow me to understand my participants' experiences. My role as inquirer then consisted on describing the lives of individuals, collecting and telling stories about people's lives, and write narratives of their experience (Hatch & Wisniewski, 2002). When narrators tell a story, they give narrative form to experience. In that sense, the focus of this research was built on oral narratives of personal experience.

Following this pattern, I processed the data under a thematic analysis. Riessman (2005) explains in the thematic analysis the emphasis is on the content of a text, ”what” is said more than “how” it is said, the “told” rather than the ”telling”. Regarding the process of analysis Riessman, comments that: “Investigators collect many stories and inductively create conceptual groupings from the data. A typology of narratives organized by theme is the typical representational strategy, with case studies providing illustration” (p. 2). Considering this process, I gathered, organized, and compared the narratives from the participants to select the themes that emerged in common among the participants.

The Participants

In order to select the participants for this study, they had to fulfill three main characteristics: being returnee migrants, working as EFL teachers, and being parents bringing up bilingual children. There were two reasons for establishing the conditions to select this study’s participants. First, because of the convenience factor (it resulted easier to get access to participants belonging to my professional social network). Second, because I wanted to compare my experience with other EFL teachers who are also returnees (to learn if they have any advantage to use the L2 with their children). Once I established direct contact with the participants, I asked for permission to interview their spouses as well (See appendix A).The participants came from seven families where at least one of the parents is a returnee migrant and EFL teacher. In the case of the first family (Sergio and Jessica), the mother is also an English speaker and they homeschool their three children. All their kids are Mexican. The second family (Enedina and Andrés) are both returnee migrants and EFL teachers. Their two older children were born American and only the youngest is Mexican. In the case of Maricela, she has a teenager born in the U.S. Another family, (Ramón and Cassandra), consists of two EFL teachers raising a three-year-old son, although only the father is a returnee migrant. In the case of this couple, only Ramón is a returnee migrant. Likewise, Alejandra is a returnee migrant and an EFL teacher, her spouse Aarón has an intermediate knowledge of English. They both have a four-year-old daughter. Alondra is a single mother of two sons, they are both Mexicans. Finally, Rosa is a mother of a two-year-old. As it can be seen, each family possesses unique characteristics having in common that they all have at least one member who is a returnee migrant currently working as an English teacher.

Gaining Access

A fundamental step in the methodology is gaining access into the target group of people. I found out that it was convenient for me to take advantage of my professional networks in order to contact and get participants for my study. Feldman, Bell and Berger (2004) maintain that "developing contacts is an important part of preparation. The networks that provide these contacts may have been developed for a number of years" (p. 6). First, I looked for participants within my professional network finding four participants who study at the University of Guanajuato Campus Guanajuato (two of them in the BA program and another two in the master's program). Second, in order to find more participants, I contacted the coordinator of the BA program at Campus Yuriria. This person acted as a *"gatekeeper"*. This term is defined by Saunders (2012) as the one used in social analysis to refer to the person who provides access to a social role, field setting or structure. Sixsmith, Boneham, and Goldring (2003) contend that dealing with gatekeepers can have great benefits because they have local influence and power to add credibility and validity to the project by their acceptance of it. Similarly, the coordinator gave me entry into a network of returnee migrants living in Yuriria, Guanajuato where I could gain two more participants for my research. As Feldman, Bell and Berger (2004) add "Initial contacts may provide a wealth of assistance from information to entry into important network" (p. 7). In the same way, a colleague introduced me to a couple who are raising bilingual children in the city of Irapuato, Gto. In addition, Seidman (1998) asserts that introductions from other community members can assist in even out inherent power relations as a known person introduces the researcher to the participant, since the researcher might be perceived as a "friend of a friend". In effect, I gained access to a seventh participant thanks to this friend in common.

Data Collection Techniques

In this section, I explain the process that I followed to collect the data. I start by providing a description of the data collection techniques administered to the participants, as well as a theoretical justification for making this choice. In addition, I describe how each technique was devoted to a specific function.

Previous to the collection of data, I obtained the consent from participants, who signed in agreement to the terms of their contribution to this study (see Appendix B).

Questionnaires

As a first step for collecting the data, I decided to collect the participants' demographic information through a questionnaire (see Appendix C). As Ross (2005) points out, a questionnaire is a survey technique used to collect data from individuals about themselves. The author notes that "a questionnaire is said to be standardized when each respondent is to be exposed to the same questions and the same system of coding responses" (*ibid,* p. 3). With this questionnaire, I was able to obtain information about the participants' educational background, number of years living in the U.S., age at the time of migrating, age at the time of returning, and number of years living in Mexico since the return. Information about the number of children and their nationality. The questionnaire also served as a filter to determine the characteristics of the participants' couples. In this sense, I found three types of partners: 1) the ones who are both returnee migrants and EFL teachers, 2) the ones who are neither returnee migrants nor EFL teachers, and 3) the ones who are EFL teachers but not returnee migrants. Since the purpose of the autobiography was to learn about the participants' background as migrants and their insertion as EFL teachers, I decided to omit this step for those partners who are not returnee migrants nor teachers.

It was stated previously that the participants of this study are part of seven families in which at least one of the parents is a returnee migrant working currently as an EFL teacher. As a first step, I decided to collect the participants' demographic information through a questionnaire (see Appendix C). As Ross (2005) points out, a questionnaire is a survey technique used to collect data from individuals about themselves. The author notes that "a questionnaire is said to be standardized when each respondent is to be exposed to the same questions and the same system of coding responses" (*ibid,* p. 3). With this questionnaire, I was able to obtain information about the participants' educational background, number of years living in the U.S., age at the time of migrating, age at the time of returning, and number of years living in Mexico since the return. It also asked for information about the number of children and their nationality. The questionnaire also served as a filter to determine the characteristics of the participants' couples. In this sense, I found three types of partners: 1) the ones who are both returnee migrants and EFL teachers, 2) the ones who are neither returnee migrants nor EFL teachers, and 3) the ones who are EFL teachers but not returnee migrants. Since the purpose of the autobiography was to learn about the participants' background as migrants and their insertion as EFL teachers, I decided to omit this step for those partners who are not returnee migrants nor teachers.

Autobiographies

As the next step of the study, to look at the participants' background as returnee migrants, I asked them to write an autobiography in which they had to narrate their experiences as migrants in the U.S., as well as the process of reinsertion, and their initiation as EFL teachers. Bold (2011) notes that autobiographical data consists of accounts about the communicant's own life. These accounts are provided from the participants' perspective.

In order to guide the writing of the autobiography, the participants received a list of aspects as suggestions to include in it (see Appendix D). Such aspects included mentioning the reasons for migrating. Once they established in the U.S. the requested topics were: describing their experience learning English, home language use, and other language-related incidents. In addition, describing the reasons for the return to Mexico and describing their process of incorporation as EFL teachers. The last aspect consisted of explaining how they made the decision of raising their children bilingually. They had the freedom to choose the language to write the autobiography.

For the couples who are EFL teachers but are not returnee migrants, I asked them to write about their experience learning the English language in Mexico, becoming an English teacher, also commenting on their decision as a family to bring up bilingual children. The participants' autobiographical accounts served to study the possible influence of living abroad in their current practices and family language decisions and planning.

Narrative Frames

After collecting the autobiographies, I asked the participants to complete a narrative frame. Barkhuizen (2011) defines this technique for data collection as:

> A written story template consisting of a series of incomplete sentences and blank spaces of varying lengths. It is structured as a story in skeletal form. The aim is for participants to produce a coherent story by filling in the spaces according to their own experiences and their reflections on these. (p. 402)

Narrative frames elicit content that relates to the researcher's research question. Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) explain that "A well-designed frame will ensure that the content is at least relevant, and when combined with the responses of other respondents will produce substantially more content" (p. 376). In the same way, narrative frames allow the researchers to guide the participants in answering the information that is needed, even though it might also become a constraint when they need to expand on their descriptions.

Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) explain that narrative frames are useful to provide an introduction when the research is unfamiliar to the researcher (regional, social, cultural, or educational wise), by means of these frames, the researcher can be able of obtaining preliminary information to, later on, expand with other techniques, such as interviews and field observations. Bearing this aspect in mind, I used the narrative frames as a preamble to conduct the participants' interviews and to have a starting point to guide the questions. Such narrative frame was designed to seek to obtain an idea of the possible relation between their experiences as migrants in the U.S. and their current language ideologies as parents (see Appendix E).

Semi-structured Interviews

Once I collected the participants' data from the other instruments (questionnaires, autobiographies, and narrative frames), I proceeded to read them in order to prepare the questions for a semi-structured interview, which was the last step of collaboration from my participants. Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2011) describe that "semi-structured interviews use a detailed guide to focus on life-chapters, critical life episodes, or specific self-defining memories" (p. 60). I decided to use this type of interview for my research because it gave the participants the freedom needed to expand on their opinions and as a researcher, I could obtain rich information for exploring testimonies more in-depth. It is worth mentioning that I gave my participants the opportunity to decide the language in which they wanted to take the interview. This decision also allowed me to observe the language in which they feel more comfortable to use. In like manner, I analyzed the data and presented it preserving the language that each participant chose, thus ensuring that their narrative conserves the essence of their words.

Correspondingly, Lapan *et al.* (2011) state that "semi-structured interviews use a detailed guide to focus on life-chapters, critical life episodes, or specific self-defining memories" (p. 60). Under those circumstances, the participants are guided through the questions to avoid deviation from the scope of discussion. I interviewed each participant individually, and they had the opportunity to choose their preferred language to answer the interview (English or Spanish). The purpose of the interview was to clarify and expand information about their background when needed. In addition, I wanted to delve into their current ideologies towards language, their future expectations for their children regarding language and education, making special emphasis on their current practices, and strategies to support their language development. It is important to remark on the fact that the interviews were recorded with the participants' consent (see Appendix B), and subsequently transcribed to continue with the process of analysis.

Triangulation

In order to get a more complete perspective on the studied phenomenon, I triangulated the data through the implementation of different data collection techniques. Denzin (1978) refers to triangulation as the combination of two or more theories, data sources, methods or investigators in one study of a single phenomenon to converge on a single construct.

Triangulation is typically a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings. Mathison (1988) elaborates this by saying: "Triangulation has risen an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation in order to control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology" (p. 13). Patton (2002) supports the use of triangulation by stating 'triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches' (p. 247). The main way in which triangulation strengthens a study is through allowing the researcher to obtain data from different sources in order to compare and evaluate how consistent they are.

Babour (1998) argues that although exceptions when triangulating data may lead to disconfirmation of the hypothesis, they also can be used to modify the theories. In the view of the latter, I decided to use each instrument for a different purpose to triangulate the data. In the case of the questionnaire, it provided information about the participants' migration records as well as the characteristics of their families. Likewise, I used the autobiography to obtain their stories and learn about their background as migrants in the U.S. The narrative frame allowed me to briefly observe whether the participants could see a relation between their experiences and their decisions related to family language planning. Finally, with the interviews, I was able to learn about their current practices to educate their kids in a bilingual way and projections for their future.

Data Analysis

Analysis consists of "segmenting the data and reassembling them with the aim of transforming the data into findings. The elements are examined for patterns and relationships sometimes in connection with ideas derived from the literature, in order to provide an interpretation" (Boeije, 2009, p. 94). In order to facilitate the analysis, I examined each participant's data and categorized it by topics so that it allowed me to identify similar patterns from one story to the other, and so I got to establish the findings for this research.

Data Coding

Boeije (2009) explains that coding consists of "categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data. When coding, the researcher distinguishes themes or categories in the research data and names them by attributing a code" (p. 95). In order to provide an interpretation of the data, I identified the themes that emerged throughout the analysis to, later on, establish connections with the information contained in the literature. Additionally, I used codes to label the excerpts selected for discussion in the data analysis chapter. Table 2 shows the codes used to analyze the data.

Table 2. Samples of codes used in the data analysis chapter

Code	Meaning
Esmeralda/INT	Esmeralda's interview
Esmeralda/NFM	Esmeralda's narrative frame
Esmeralda/QNR	Esmeralda's questionnaire
Esmeralda/ABY	Esmeralda's autobiography

Biograms

In order to examine each participant's trajectory, I used biograms. Mas García (2007) defines a biogram as "a way of analysis and data ordering in the form of a map of life, that allows to relate different elements and aspects of the life story on a chronological basis" (p. 2). Also, the construction of biograms can potentially allow the information collected at the family level to become the basis for larger-scale interventions using the idea of "templates" or "typical experiences". The fact that the biogram grid includes both time and space dimensions, it offers the possibility of mapping the individual's changing view of their resources and vulnerabilities. Below I present part of one participant's biogram as an example a part of one of the participants' biogram.

Table 3. Sample of biograms used in the data analysis (Alejandra's biogram)

Chro-nology	Age	Phase	Events	Comments	Emotions	Associations / Metaphors
1992	-	US	Born in Sn. Diego California			*My parents brought me to Mexico since I was a newborn. (Alejandra/ABY)*
1997	6	MX	Starts her education	Elementary school in Mexico		*All of my schooling was done in Spanish. I went to public schools only. (Alejandra/ABY)*
1997	1	MX	Regular visits to the U.S.	She made short visits to the States	Familiarized	*My dad worked in the U.S. for certain periods of time. I went on vacation. (Alejandra/ABY)*

In this study, biograms have played an essential role to carry out the data analysis. They have been used to summarize the research instruments' data onto the grid led to mapping not only the participants' individual trajectory, but also the evolution of their identity throughout the years and throughout their transitions from one country to another.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues emerge when a research is being conducted. At some point in the research there is the possibility of conflict between the interests of the study and the rights of the participants (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001). In this section, I explain the ethical considerations observed during the implementation of the present study.

Capron (1989) states three principles to guide research: respect for people, beneficence, and justice. Regarding the first principle, the author defines respect for people as the recognition of participants' rights. Here one can mention “the right to be informed about the study, the right to freely decide whether to participate in a study, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty” (Capron, 1989, p. 95). Right after contacting the participants, I explained to them the objective of the study and the details of their participation process. Moreover, I let them know about their right to withdraw from the research at any time that they decide to do so.

The second principle is beneficence, seeking good for others. In this principle, it is the obligation of the researcher to protect the participants’ privacy, for that reason the use of pseudonyms is recommended. Concerning this study, I decided to change the participants’ names using pseudonyms to protect their identity. Furthermore, Dresser (1998) mentions that participants should be informed about the purpose of research and the use of their data, including those instances in which the research results will be published. Within the text of the consent form, I also explained that the oral interviews would be recorded and transcribed for the research purposes.

Finally, the principle of justice refers to fairness. The researcher must consider vulnerability of the participants and their contributions to the study. Kvale (1996) claims that the participants might be affected by the interview. The personal interaction between researchers and participants might imply the opening of ”old wounds and sharing of secrets” (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001, p. 94). For such reason, this research focuses only on those aspects that, while being personal, are relevant to explain the issue of identity formation.

Some reflections

As I have shared in this chapter, during the development of the study there were some events that taught me important lessons to consider, for such a reason, I would like to invite readers to reflect on three main aspects: 1) Pursuing an initial objective for the research, should not mean that the researcher must stick to a rigid idea. Researchers should maintain a receptive attitude, in order to be able to identify the new venues that the data might yield. 2) Researchers should bear in mind the concepts of efficacy, efficiency and cost-benefit. The latter especially during the planning stage, in which the researcher must choose and/or design the data collection techniques. It is essential to identify that the instruments are not creating an effect of redundancy, or even that they might overwhelm the participants and cause them to drop out of the study. In this sense, the researcher should seek to successfully collect the data with as less resources as possible. 3) It is essential to always observe ethical considerations and maintain a clear communication with the participants. After having stated these three points, researchers should reflect on their own study considering its own particularities and objectives. In case that one of these aspects is not being observed, there are possibilities that the study needs to be rethought to make the necessary adjustments in order to successfully carry out an effective research process.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the methodology implemented during my study on returnee English teachers and parents raising bilingual children in Central Mexico. Since my initial interest was focused on the returnee parents/teachers' stories, I established from the beginning that the medium to analyze their experiences should be based on the use of narratives. They allowed me to listen to their lived experiences, and make sense of them to identify connections and patterns to explore this phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is important to take the time to carefully scheme every feature of the research process to address the issue from different perspectives. In this sense, through the implementation of diverse data collection techniques, I was able to triangulate the information to compare and contrast their attitudes and perceptions. In regards to this step, the researcher should evaluate whether there is a real need to use different techniques for data collection, to avoid falling into redundancy and overwhelm the participants. As I have shared here, often, the initial objective of a research might be modified after analyzing the data gathered from the participants. For this reason, an advice for novice researchers seeking a deep understanding of a given phenomenon is to always maintain an attitude of openness and flexibility that allows them to let the data speak by itself and mark the orientation of the findings.

In the same manner, it is essential to follow a strict consideration of the ethical issues of this study. In this chapter, I explained the process of informing the participants about the characteristics of the study and the requirements of their participation. Additionally, I described that participants were protected from identification and informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Having described these procedures, I can provide evidence that the study has been conducted competently and observing sensitivity to ethical issues. The before mentioned considerations are central constructs to ensure credibility for the study (Heigham, & Croker, 2009).

Reflection Questions

1. Do you have a clear and solid target or research question to base your study on?

2. How can you ensure that your willingness to analyze this given phenomenon will not biase the research's findings?

3. Are you ready to interpose the ethical principles to your own research-interests?

4. How can you excel your research methodology's efficiency in terms of avoiding redundancy in the data collection techniques at the same time that you are able to collect significant data?

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Appendix A

Participants' Profiles

Participant pseudonym	Demographic information		Migration record			Job and education	
	Age	City of residence	Age a the time of migrating	Years living in the U.S.	Years in Mexico since return	Educational background	Teaching experience / Context
Sergio	35	Irapuato	5 / 18	6	12	BS Theology, ICELT[1]	12 years university
Jessica (Sergio's wife)	38		20	4	12	BS Theology	
Esmeralda	39	Yuriria	11	22	6	BA ELT[2] 7th sem.	5 years university
Andres (Esmeralda's husband)	44		20	15	6	B Law, BA ELT 4th sem., Teacher certificate	4 years university
Ramón	27	Dolores	27	20	7	BA ELT, studying MA ALELT[3]	7 years university
Alejandra	24	Irapuato	11	6	7	B Ed, studying MA ALELT, TKT[4]	2 years university
Maricela	46	Salvatierra	18	23	5	BA ELT 2nd sem., ESL certificate	5 years middle school
Alondra	38	Celaya	6 months	12	26	BA ELT 7th sem., TKT, other certificates	18 years elementary
Rosa	25	Silao	13	5	7	BA ELT 7th sem.	4 years university

[1] ICELT: In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching from the University of Cambridge.
[2] BA ELT: Bachelor of Arts in English Language Teaching.
[3] MA ALELT: Master of Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching.
[4] TKT: Teaching Knowledge Test from the University of Cambridge.

Appendix B

Informed Consent Letter

Dear Participant,

I invite you to participate in a research study entitled: "Raising a bilingual child: The accounts of EFL teachers/parents with a transnational background". I am currently enrolled in the MA in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching at Universidad de Guanajuato in Campus Guanajuato. The purpose of the research is to evaluate the level of professional development that English as a foreign language teachers in the state Mexico have.

If you agree to participate in this project, your collaboration will consist on:

a) Answering a short questionnaire via e-mail. (Please return the questionnaire after answering it, to the e-mail perlah85@gmail.com).

b) Writing an autobiography in which you will narrate your experiences as a migrant, your incorporation to the EFL profession.

c) Responding to an interview with questions related to your views regarding the bilingual development of your child(ren), as well as your background as a migrant.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You may decline any questions you don't wish to answer. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. No one other than the researchers will know your individual answers to the questionnaire and interview. Furthermore, you may withdraw from the study at any time without being questioned about the reason. If you do this, all information from you will be destroyed.

The results from this study will be used for academic purposes and may be published in an article. At no time, however, will your name be used or any identifying information revealed. If you require any information about this study, or regarding your rights as a participant in this research, please contact Perla Villegas at perlah85@gmail.com

Thank you for your assistance in this important endeavor.

Sincerely yours,

PERLA VILLEGAS TORRES
Researcher

I have read the above information regarding this research study and give my consent to participate in this study.

____ (Name)

____ (Signature)

Appendix C

Questionnaire for Participants

Demographic information			
Name:	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.	**Birthplace:**	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
Age	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.	**Civil Status:**	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

Migration record	
Years of residence in Mexico (before migrating to the U.S.)	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
Age at the time of migrating to the U.S.	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
1. Years of residence in the U.S.	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
2. Age at the time of the return	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
3. Years of residence in Mexico since the return	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

Educational background	
4. Do you hold a bachelor's degree? (Specify in what area):	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
5. In case that you are still studying indicate in what semester:	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
6. Do you plan to get a higher degree? (Specify the area)	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

Teaching experience / Context	
7. Number of years teaching:	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
8. Are you currently teaching?	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
9. In what sector do you teach?	○ Public ○ Private
10. What level do you teach?	Elija un elemento.
11. Teaching qualifications	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
Children information	
12. Are you educating your children bilingually?	○ Yes ○ No
13. Number of children:	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
14. Sex and ages of the children:	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
15. Place of birth of your children	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
Partner information	
16. Is your partner a return migrant?	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
17. Does he/she speak English?	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.
18. Is he/she supporting your children bilingual development?	Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

Appendix D

Instructions for Autobiography

Instructions: Please write an autobiography with a length between 2-4 pages. I recommend you to write it by parts and then read it again several times so that you can remember new details and add them later on. You will have 2 weeks to complete it. When you are satisfied with the final product, please send your autobiography to the email **perlah85@gmail.com**

Please consider the following:

Basic points to include in your autobiography,

If you agree to participate in this project, your collaboration will consist on:

1. Mention the place where you were born, how old were you when you and your family migrated to the U.S. and the reasons for making that decision.

2. Explain how was your experience in learning the English language; talk about experiences with classmates or teachers (some critical incidents as product of your Mexican origin).

3. Explain what were the dynamics for choosing what language to use at home when you lived in the States; whether there was a dominant language (English or Spanish); or whether there was a rule in the family to use one language or the other.

4. Describe what were the reasons for the return to Mexico, what was the impact that it had on you , how was the experience of this return (also mention if there was a period in which you were moving constantly between the countries), and what was the most difficult part of this adaptation.

5. Talk about your motivation to become and English teacher, how do you decide to enter the BA in TESOL.

6. Mention how you became an English teacher and how this decision has influenced your life.

7. Describe how you decided to raise your children as bilinguals.

Appendix E

Narrative Frame

ARTICIPANT PSEUDONYM:

Instructions: Consider your experiences living in the U.S. and later working as an EFL teacher, and how they have influenced your decision to raise your child(ren) as bilingual(s), consider the following indications to develop your story:

(1) Read the whole page BEFORE starting to write.

(2) Write a coherent narrative; i.e. link each idea to the next like you would in a story.

(3) Add as much lines as you need.

I remember once when I lived in the United States, I had a difficult time trying to
Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

The main problem was that
Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

I found the solution when
Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

It would have been helpful if in that time
Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

What I learned from those difficulties was that
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Being an English teacher helps me to
Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

In relation to this experience I want for my child(ren) to
Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

To me being bilingual means
Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

As a parent a major constraint though, might be that
Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

For the future of my child(ren) being bilingual will imply
Haga clic aquí para escribir texto.

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This book, ***Research Methodology in Applied Linguistics: A Practical Resource for Graduate Students***, presents seven original studies of young researchers who conducted their research projects in diverse contexts. These projects were part of the thesis requirements of the MA in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching at the University of Guanajuato. This text is well due in the Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching professions. It takes as a focus the methodological approaches a number of graduates used to develop a wide range of research studies. Each chapter provides an overview of the reasons why a particular methodology was used and how the authors made their decisions and justified them. Each account of the use of their methodologies brings the issues under research to life and provides a detailed account of the benefits and potential drawbacks. Also, they address problems to be thought about and overcome with the use of the particular approach in question. The authors provide their own experience in a particular research context, but at the end of each chapter, they have included a series of questions to help the reader to reflect and question their own research processes. This book is a valuable contribution to knowledge and a guide for all undergraduate and graduate students in the areas of Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching. Readers can find this collection an invaluable aid and guide when trying to undertake a journey on research.

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