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Maestría en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés

“Exploring a dual language charter school in California through the perceptions of parents,
teachers, and students”

TESIS

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Resumen

El presente trabajo de titulación tiene como objetivo explorar las percepciones de la comunidad escolar sobre un programa de educación bilingüe implementado en el sur de California. Se adoptó una metodología cualitativa con la finalidad de entender el objeto de estudio por medio de las voces de los participantes. Asimismo, se llevó a cabo un estudio de caso instrumental. Para la recolección de datos se emplearon tres técnicas: entrevistas semiestructuradas, un marco de investigación narrativa, y un cuestionario.

La escuela en la que se realizó la investigación se identifica como *charter*. Este tipo de escuelas pertenecen al sector público del sistema educativo de EE. UU. por lo que reciben subsidio del estado dependiendo del número de estudiantes inscritos. Sin embargo, tienen flexibilidad en su currículo, por lo que no es necesario seguir todas las regulaciones impuestas por el distrito escolar. La particularidad de la escuela *charter* objeto de esta investigación es la implementación de un programa de doble inmersión. En EE. UU., éste se refiere a un tipo de programa bilingüe en el que hablantes nativos del inglés y de otra lengua (español, en este caso) reciben instrucción en ambos idiomas. Además de promover el bilingüismo, la biliteracidad y la multiculturalidad, se espera que los estudiantes logren la obtención de altos logros académicos.

Los resultados de esta investigación indican que los padres esperan, en su mayoría, que sus hijos sean bilingües y biliteratos al momento de egresar de la escuela. No obstante, maestros y alumnos perciben la necesidad de darle un mayor énfasis al área de español. En conclusión, a pesar de que este programa de doble inmersión se considera exitoso, es necesario una reevaluación por parte de la escuela que considere las voces de maestros, padres de familia, y estudiantes.

Dedicatoria

To my beloved daughter, who had to bear my absences.

A mis padres, que han estado en mis logros, pero sobre todo en mis tropiezos.

To my sisters, who motivated this research through their experiences.

A Arturo, por acompañarme en este camino.

I love you. Los amo.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to acquaint the readers with my study, which aims to explore the participants' perceptions regarding the current state of a dual language charter school in southern California. It starts by explaining my motivation for conducting the study. Then, it describes the main problems or issues which make this research relevant to the area of bilingual education. Following the background and context of the study, the purpose and the research questions (RQ) are established. The chapter later discusses the gap in the existing literature and possible contributions of the investigation. Finally, it concludes with an overview of the content of the thesis.

1.2. Motivation

In this section, I state the motivation for conducting this study. My family had recently migrated to the United States in 2005. My parents sought educational opportunities for their daughters: a five, a seven, and a thirteen-year-old. I, the oldest one, started middle-school immediately. For a year, I spent most of the school day in English as a second language (ESL) class. It was transitional bilingual education. These types of bilingual programs aim to integrate minority language speakers into mainstream English education (Hall, Smith, & Wicaksono, 2011). That year I was prepared to be able to understand content classes in English, and I received temporary assistance in my first language (L1), which is Spanish, from my ESL teacher.

On the other hand, my sisters were in submersion ("sink or swim") programs, where they did not receive any assistance in Spanish and their L1 was not used in the classroom. However, this did not affect them the way that it did my parents, who were not proficient in English. My mom searched for schools that had an extended schedule and that allowed her to understand her children's education, if possible. She went to the school district offices where she was informed about a dual language charter school to be opened in August 2005. She met the soon-to-be principal of EJE Elementary Academy (EJEEA) and the principal's mother, who were the driving force behind the dual language program (DLP).

My parents enrolled my five-year-old sister in EJEEA because it only had from kindergarten to second grade. My other sister was enrolled one year later when EJEEA included

grades 3-5. Unlike me, my sisters received “literacy and content area instruction [...] through two languages” (Christian, 2011, p. 3) due to the DLP implemented at their school. I had always wanted to know what dual language education (DLE) involved. Now, as a researcher, I have the opportunity to understand DLE better. I can also explore how teachers, parents, and students perceive the DLP and the possible impact that it has had in their academic and personal lives. It is important to mention that I am not part of this research, and the data has been analyzed objectively, regardless of the fact that the motivation for this study arose from my personal experience.

1.3. Description of the problem

According to Gándara and Escamilla (2017), “the history of bilingual education in the United States has shifted between tolerance and repression depending on politics, the economy, and the size of the immigrant population” (p.1). Some policymakers and education experts (see Proposition 227 in California) have perceived minority or heritage languages as an obstacle for children and young adults to achieve high academic levels. However, the knowledge of these languages combined with English has also been observed as an advantage that might result in *linguistic capital* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This term refers to the benefits that an individual might obtain in speaking a certain language, variation or dialect. Consequently, linguistic capital might allow the students to succeed in the academic and professional spheres. In some cases, it also enables them to keep ties with their parents’ native culture.

Existing research (Christian, 2011; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Gándara & Escamilla, 2017; Lindholm-Leary, 2012; Mendoza, 2007) has shown that bilingual education and DLPs are most effective “with respect to achievement, attainment, and a number of other outcomes” (Gándara & Escamilla, 2017, p. 1) for children who speak a language other than English at home. This means that students might be more likely to succeed in school, as mentioned in the last paragraph. However, bilingual education was prohibited, and still is in some states of the U.S.A., such as California, where the present study was conducted.

The bilingual education programs that exist in the U.S.A. are of interest to those who advocate for and against them because they act as a model of the successes and failures that these might have and the causes. The outcomes of DLE in terms of language proficiency and academic achievement are relevant to education and language policy in the country. Nonetheless, it is the voice of the students, teachers, parents, and administrative staff that must be heard through research

in order to comprehend the relevance of bilingual education for the minority language population in the United States, but also for English native-speakers.

1.4. Purpose of the study

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the current state of a dual language charter school through the participants' perceptions. For the purposes of this research, perceptions are defined as the meaning that individuals attach to events, experiences, objects, etc. (Eggen & Kauchak, 2010). Expectations are linked to perceptions since humans also attach meaning according to the result that they anticipate from a certain experience. The RQ that guide this thesis are:

RQ1: How have the participants' expectations influenced their perceptions of the current state of EJEEA's DLP?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and students regarding the DLP implemented at EJEEA?

The participants of this instrumental case study include parents, teachers, and students of EJEEA. The qualitative data was collected through focus group interviews, individual semi-structured interviews, a narrative frame, and a questionnaire. In the following section, I explain how this research contributes to academic literature.

1.5. The gap in existing literature and potential contributions of the study

The present study contributes to the ongoing discussion on bilingual education and charter schools in the United States. The research focuses on its participants and how they experience and perceive the program, unlike previous studies which focus mainly on the description and implementation of DLE (Christian, 2011; Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Howard, Sugarman, Christian, Lindholm-Leary, & Rogers, 2007). Although the authors mentioned provide guidelines and definitions for policymakers and administrators, it is through this inquiry that the voices of those involved in the program (teachers, students, and parents) might be heard.

The present research also identifies areas where, according to the participants, the program could be improved. Thus, this study may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the

current situation of the DLP and lead to a critical self-evaluation of EJEEA's goals as a dual language charter school.

1.6. General overview

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 acquaints the readers with the study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature that provides the theoretical background to this research project. It comprises three main sections: charter schools as a school of choice, basic principles of bilingualism and bilingual education, and DLE in the U.S.A. Next, Chapter 3 depicts the methodological approach undertaken to conduct the research and describes the context and the participants of the study. Chapter 4 presents the themes that resulted from the data analysis and interprets different excerpts from the participants' responses. This chapter is divided into three main sections: the parents, the students, and the teachers. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the findings of the study, the contributions and practical applications, the limitations, and proposals for further research on the topic.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the fundamental theoretical concepts that support this thesis. First, I provide an outline of the American education system to understand the role of charter schools in it. I also include the history of the school where the study was carried out to provide the reader with a snapshot of the school context. Second, I review basic principles of bilingualism and bilingual education, such as biliteracy and the typology of bilingual programs. Third, I describe dual language education in the United States.

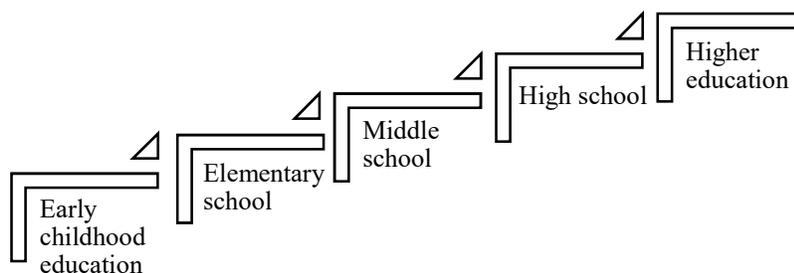
2.2. Charter schools: The school choice movement

In this section, I first provide an overview of the education system in the United States to familiarize the reader with the context in which the present study was conducted. Then, I explain what charter schools are and the controversy that surrounds them. I conclude the section by describing the specific context of EJEEA and how it came to be a charter school.

2.2.1. Education in the United States: An overview

The education system of the United States follows a pattern similar to those in other countries, such as Mexico. Usually, children start their formal education at around age five. Education is compulsory in most states until the age of 18. Figure 1 represents the main stages of the American education system.

Figure 1. *Structure of U.S. Education System.*



Early education in the United States encompasses nursery school, kindergarten, and sometimes, the first year of primary/elementary education. Early education manages “issues of maternity, health, day care and human development as well as formal education, and is widely recognized and licensed as a specialized career field in education” (USNEI, 2008, p.2). One of the main dilemmas that research in bilingualism addresses is the age in which children may be introduced to bilingual education. In EJEEA, the dual language program is since implemented kindergarten, which is considered early childhood education, and then it continues the five years of elementary school.

Elementary, middle school, and high school education consists of twelve years, and how they are allocated depends on the school district. For example, elementary education in some districts ends in fifth-grade. Middle-school starts in sixth grade and ends in eighth grade, while high school goes from ninth to twelfth grade. Regardless of how it is structured, secondary education starts in seventh grade. After high school, students decide whether they will continue with higher education. This consists of career or technical (vocational) education and higher education. The latter includes undergraduate programs, masters, doctoral and post-doctoral degree studies, as well as professional schools.

Although the U.S. Department of Education establishes the guidelines for general education policy, it “exerts limited influence on the content, learning outcomes or quality of education – these tasks have been delegated to the individual states, who are responsible for education at primary and secondary level, and partially at the higher education level” (EP-Nuffic, 2010, p. 5). This means that it is the responsibility of each state to provide quality public education for its inhabitants. Consequently, each state has its own Board of Education, which is further divided by local school districts. According to the state’s education policies, local school districts “are responsible for coordinating education policies, planning for changing educational needs in the community, and often even establishing programs and curricula” (Corsi-Bunker, 2015, p. 1). As this chapter progresses, the reader is able to perceive that California has had certain education policies which influence how the Department of Education and the school districts cater for the needs of a diversity of students. As a consequence, in the United States there are different types of educational institutions. The following lists some of the types of schools that are now available for different families:

Parents have a growing array of options in choosing a school, though the extent of the options varies from state to state. [...] the rapid growth of the charter school movement; the increasing number of states enacting scholarship and tax credit programs for students to attend private schools; the expansion of privately funded scholarship programs for low-income children; and the growing acceptance of homeschooling have all increased the choices available to families. (U.S. Department of Education, 2007, p. 1)

Families can choose between public schools, special education schools, virtual schools, advanced placement/international baccalaureate programs, nonpublic schools, religious private schools, secular private schools, homeschool, magnet schools, and charter schools. Each of them serves specific purposes depending on the needs and wants of the immediate community. In the next section, I explore charter schools to understand the purposes that they serve, and their relationship with alternative school practices, as well as the controversy that surrounds them.

2.2.2. Charter schools: What are they?

Charter schools in the United States are part of public education. They are: “publicly funded, open to all, and are chartered by public entities” (Lubienski, 2000, p. 2). The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2018) provides the following definition:

Charter schools are public, tuition-free schools that are open to all students. Often operated independently from the traditional school district, charter schools provide high-quality instruction from teachers who have the autonomy to design a classroom that fits their students' needs. They are led by dynamic principals who have the flexibility to create a school culture that fosters student performance and parent satisfaction. (para. 1)

Although the first part of the above definition is more objective, the rest could represent an idealistic view of charter schools as transformers of American education. A less biased view of these schools is present in Cookson's (1995) definition: “Charter schools are publicly sponsored autonomous schools that are substantially free of direct government control, but are held accountable for achieving certain levels of student performance and other specified outcomes” (as cited in Brouillette, 2002, p. 3). One of the expected results of a charter school is that the learners perform equally or higher than public school students in standardized testing, while achieving the goals of the institution's particular model of instruction.

To summarize, a charter school is that which receives public funding, but has the autonomy to implement programs and content that the administrators deem necessary according to the context of the institution and the needs of the stakeholders. In general, the aim of this type of schools is to find alternatives to traditional teaching practices. Regarding this, the National Alliance for Charter Schools (2018) claims that “charter schools aim to provide a range of options so that parents can choose the school that best fits their child” (para. 12). Consequently, these are schools of choice, meaning that students are not assigned to them depending solely on the district where they live, but parents choose to enroll their children because the institution caters to a specific need or want. Teachers also have the freedom to apply for a position in charter schools, provided that they fulfill all the necessary requirements.

This type of schools owe their name to the five-year charter or contract that the school must agree upon with a sponsoring agency, which could be a school district, a government agency, a non-profit organization, or a university. The charter consists of an arrangement between the school and the sponsoring agency to help students perform better in a certain knowledge area, and to account for this improvement.

According to Lubienski (2000), charter schools are viewed “as an integral part to redefine or reinvent public education” (p. 4). At least, that was their original purpose. In 1992, the first charter school in the United States opened its doors to 30 low income students. City Academy Charter School in St. Paul, Minnesota, was “initially designed for students who have dropped out of schools and whose homes were wracked by poverty or substance abuse” (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2012, para. 3). Thirty-five percent of the students were homeless, and traditional education had rejected them. City Academy has continued for 26 years and established the foundation for the charter school movement in the United States. However, charter schools are a controversial topic in the United States because they benefit from public resources, yet, they are exempted from state regulations about how to operate, “aside from health, safety and other specified regulations” (Brouillette, 2002, p. 5). As a consequence, these have led to intense debate because public school advocates believe charter schools to be a threat to access and equity in education. The following section discusses the current and ongoing debate about these institutions.

2.2.3. The charter school controversy

Even though the number of charter schools has grown exponentially since their creation, public education advocates have criticized them for several reasons. One of the claims is that there is no consensus on whether charter schools are improving the performance of students in certain areas of knowledge, such as bilingual education in the case of EJEAA. This claim finds opposing arguments (which are stated throughout this section) in various studies carried out in 43 states and the District of Columbia, which have included charter schools as part of the structure of their education system (Fryer, 2011; Lake, 2008).

Some authors have recognized charter schools as a way of improving education in America. Nonetheless, they are also seen as a way to privatize education. As mentioned before, charter schools are privately managed and are “free of bureaucratic regulations” (Lubienski, 2003, p. 396). In 2017, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) released a report. In it, the NAACP urges their chairman, Leon Russell, to “make this [the report] a living NAACP action plan with a mandate and roadmap for saving America’s public schools by advocating for public quality education in every sector” (p. 3). This report was a result of the association’s 107th National Convention, held in July 2016. In this convention, the NAACP called for a moratorium on the expansions of charter schools “until there is accountability and transparency in their operations” (NAACP, 2017, p. 4). Public school advocates are concerned that some charter schools have become private institutions funded by the government using taxpayers’ contributions. Consequently, they demand that these schools demonstrate what they are doing to help improve education in the U.S.A.

The association’s concerns for the privatization of education in the United States emerged from the presidential election of 2016 when now president Donald Trump declared that 1.4 billion dollars would benefit the school choice program. This would allow disadvantaged students to go to public, private, or charter schools (Camera, 2017). This declaration instilled discomfort with public education advocates. According to them, any school in the United States should provide the same quality education for all its students, and providing more funding for schools of choice, such as charter schools, would only widen the gaps that exist between public, private, and charter schools.

Several studies describe the beneficial effects of charter schools in teaching and learning (Bulkley & Fidler, 2003; Mehan & Chang, 2011). However, they have not only found opposition from public education advocates, but public opinion is in general divided. Supporters of charter schools point out that these institutions have “higher test scores and graduation rates as [...] proof of charter schools’ superiority” (Perkins, 2017, para. 5). They also believe that these schools respond to the community by providing programs that match their needs and wants, as public schools “are failing the children who attend them, thus causing parents with limited resources to search for a funded, quality educational alternative for their children” (NAACP, 2017, p. 6). Although charter schools might provide more academic opportunities to those who have access to them, others might still not have equal opportunities. This is why some parents and activists struggle to bring children across America a quality education through public school.

On the other hand, opponents believe that charter schools are taking the funds that should be allocated to public institutions; also, not all children might have access to their neighborhood’s charter school since learners from other parts of the city can attend there (NAACP, 2017). The NAACP held hearings with multiple advocates of public education, but also of charter schools to draw out their report. During these hearings charter schools were accused of ““cherry-picking” students, counseling out the difficult students, manipulating funds related to average daily attendance (ADA) once students were no longer in attendance, and re-segregating the public school system” (NAACP, 2017, p. 6). Although the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2018) states that they “are open to all students” (para.1), they have been accused of excluding them. The result is unequal access to formal education, which is contrary to the original goals of charter schools, which was to provide more educational opportunities for different sectors of the population.

Concerning the issue of student exclusion, Simon (2013) states that “charters [schools] aggressively screen student applicants, assessing their academic records, parental support, disciplinary history, motivation, special needs and even their citizenship, sometimes in violation of state and federal law” (para. 2). They might ask the students to write an essay, have an interview, and ask parents how they plan on contributing to the school *if* their children get accepted. The question remains whether this is happening in some or most charter schools. The general landscape for these institutions does not seem to be accurately portrayed. One must explore each charter

school to understand this phenomenon. Thus, more research is needed in this area in order to comprehend charter schools and their impact on families across the United States.

The report that the NAACP presented in 2017 shows that charters schools can, in fact, be a solution to some of the problems that students, parents, and teacher face in public schools. Regarding this, Ungar (NAACP, 2017) mentioned the following

Can charter schools be part of the solution? Absolutely. But that solution must be intentional, well-planned growth that takes into account the health and sustainability of the entire public education system, including the so-called traditional public schools that educate 90% of our country's students. (p. 30)

Although there are opposite views on the role of charters schools in the American education system, researchers, public school advocates, and charters school supporters still have not agreed on whether the existence of these schools of choice in the communities is beneficial or not in the academic development of the children. The particularities of each institution should be considered to understand how they serve their community and contribute to the improvement of education in the United States, if so. In the next section I explore the reasons why EJEEA became a charter school.

2.2.4. EJE Academies Charter School

I have decided to include the historical background of EJEEA in this chapter since it is necessary to understand that it became a charter school due to the prohibition of bilingual education in California.

2.2.4.1. Historical context of the school

In 2004, Ballantyne Elementary was closed due to budget cuts and its low performance in statewide standardized testing. This school had 521 students enrolled. The majority of parents, teachers and students were against its closing. Hence, the school community came together to find a solution to keep their school open. A number of students were assigned to other institutions in the surrounding the area and were offered transportation. However, the schools where they were sent to were also underperforming and overcrowded.

Since most of the students in Ballantyne School were Hispanic, parents wanted to provide quality bilingual education for their children. However, in 1998 Proposition 227 banned bilingual education in public schools, unless parents had a written waiver that allowed them to enroll their children in a bilingual program (Orellana, Ek & Hernandez, 1999), which meant ESL classes. English learners were transferred to immersion programs and could not stay there for more than a year.

As a consequence of this ban on bilingual education in California, Ballantyne Elementary parents, teachers, and students wanted to find alternatives to achieve bilingualism and biliteracy in the students. The concerned parents turned to El Cajon's advocacy group Excellence and Justice in Education (EJE). According to Eva Pacheco, EJE's executive director, "the closing of Ballantyne Elementary was a 'wake up' call for parents to take a closer look at the quality of education their children are receiving in the [El Cajon Valley School] district" (Sanchez, 2004, para. 16). If the school was closed because it was underperforming in standardized testing and did not receive sufficient state funding, then EJE as an advocacy group could be able to find solutions that would address the low-income and Hispanic families' needs concerning their children's education.

EJE was founded in 1991 by parents to promote bilingual education in El Cajon. This organization also "educated and empowered parents; teaching them to demand a just education for their children" (EJE, 2017, para. 1). They established advisory committees at different schools in El Cajon as well as in the San Diego County Office of Education. In 2004, as Ballantyne Elementary parents were in search for a solution, EJE advocacy group decided to open their own school to be able to serve low-income families and promote bilingual education. They presented a charter school project to the El Cajon Valley School District. In August 2005, EJE Elementary Academy became "the first independent, community led, 90-10 dual language (Spanish-English) school in [San Diego] county" (EJE, 2017, para. 1).

It has been previously stated that charter schools receive harsh criticism. However, in San Diego, specifically in El Cajon, a charter school became the only option to ensure that students received bilingual education in the first 90:10 dual language program in the county. As schools of choice, charter schools offer parents the opportunity to decide what and how their children learn. EJE is well known for the success of its bilingual program (CCSA, 2015; San Diego County,

2006) and has attracted the attention and interest of families who want their children to become bilingual. In the next section I explore bilingual education in the United States.

2.3. Basic principles of bilingualism and bilingual education

In this section, I present some basic principles and concepts regarding bilingualism and bilingual education, such as biliteracy, minority and heritage language, dominant language, and types of bilingual education programs, in order to better understand dual language education is and the DLP implemented at EJEEA.

2.3.1. Defining bilingualism

A considerable amount of literature has shown that most people in the world speak two or more languages (Ansaldò, Marcotte, Scherer, & Raboyau, 2008; Bathia & Ritchie, 2006; Crystal, 2012; Edwards, 1994; Fabro, 2001; Grosjean, 2008; Hall, Smith, & Wicaksono, 2011; Romaine, 1999a). Thus, research on bilingualism and multilingualism has increased exponentially over the last four decades. A variety of fields, such as sociology, education, psychology, and applied linguistics, have provided definitions for this phenomenon. For the laymen, dictionaries offer the most common definition of bilingualism. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines it as “1: the ability to speak two languages 2: the frequent use (as by a community) of two languages 3: the political or institutional recognition of two languages” (Bilingualism, 2018).

As Baker (2001) points out “Since a bicycle has two wheels and binoculars are for two eyes, it would seem that bilingualism is simply about two languages” (p.1). However, it is a much more complex phenomenon that requires in-depth analysis. Although the prefix “bi” indicates two, various authors have defined it as the ability to speak two or more languages (Bloomfield, 1933; Grosjean, 2015; Hornberger, 2003; Myers-Scotton, 2006; Romaine, 1999b). Nevertheless, I find multilingualism or plurilingualism to be the appropriate terms to describe the phenomenon of people speaking *more* than two languages. The division between multilingualism and bilingualism does not make the latter any less complex. I use the term bilingualism in this thesis, since most of my participants speak English and Spanish only.

Research has sparked a debate due to the vagueness of the term bilingualism (Edwards, 1994). One of the main concerns regarding bilingualism is “who is bilingual?” There is a general

belief that an individual must have equal proficiency in the two languages he/she speaks. Regarding this, Grosjean (2008) mentions that literature has usually identified as a “real” bilingual as someone “who is equally and fully fluent in two languages. He or she is the “ideal,” the “true,” the “balanced,” the “perfect” bilingual” (p. 10). Only taking into consideration these individuals would imply that those who can communicate in two languages, but have a better command of one of the two, would not be considered bilingual.

According to Grosjean (2008), researchers have focused on measuring the bilingual individual’s command of both languages by giving them tests designed for a monolingual person. This type of tests expect two monolinguals to be fully integrated into one person, meaning that an individual’s proficiency in either one of the languages must be the same. Grosjean (1989, 2008) has referred to this as the monolingual or fractional view on bilingualism. What these tests measure is a person’s linguistic competence and not their linguistic performance. The first one refers to what a speaker knows about the language (Spada & Lightbown, 2010), such as the correct use of the grammar and vocabulary, while the second refers to the speaker’s actual use of the language (Chomsky & Halle, 1965).

Concerning this, Grosjean (2008) states that these tests “rarely take into account the bilingual’s differential needs for the two languages or the different social functions of these languages (what a language is used for, with whom and where)” (p. 11). Consequently, he acknowledges that a holistic view on bilingualism should be considered (Baker, 2001; Grosjean 1989, 2008). This view “holds that the bilingual is NOT the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals; rather, he or she has a unique and specific linguistic configuration” (Grosjean, 1989, p. 3). The holistic view on bilingualism perceives the bilingual as “an integrated whole” (Baker, 2001, p. 9). Each bilingual will use his/her language in different domains (contexts), for different purposes, and with different targets (people) (Baker, 2017).

The holistic view considers that, sometimes, bilinguals will not be able to perform “flawlessly” in a linguistic situation in one of their languages, but they should not be considered any less bilingual. Valdés (2005) suggests that “individuals seldom have access to two languages in exactly the same contexts in every domain of interaction” (p. 415). Since bilinguals also use their languages for specific purposes, sometimes they will be more proficient in a particular area. For example, Hispanics living in the United States, who were raised under a Spanish-only rule at

home, but whose formal education was only in English, might not have the same level of proficiency in Spanish in a formal education setting. I say spoken because reading and writing in both languages would also mean that they are biliterate.

Given that bilingualism and the dichotomies that exist within the term have become a controversial topic over the years, I have decided to define bilingualism in the United States as the possibility to communicate in two languages, which could be a minority/heritage language and English, or a foreign language and English. This research also takes a holistic approach on bilingualism, which means that the individual will be considered bilingual if he/she uses both languages regularly in various situations. One of the results of bilingualism in children is language brokering, which is discussed in the following section.

2.3.2. Language brokering

Recent research has found that monolingual immigrant parents whose children are bilingual might depend on them to communicate in a variety of situations (Kim, Hou, & Gonzalez, 2016). As a result, these children could be considered language brokers. According to Tse (1995), this concept refers to “interpretation and translation between linguistically and culturally different parties” (p. 180). More concretely this refers to children who interpret for their family members when the latter are not able to understand a language.

Research on language brokering generally focuses on children and adolescents (Tse, 1995; McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Weisskirch & Alatorre, 2002). According to McQuillan and Tse (1995), language brokers “are usually involved in informal negotiation for one or both of the parties for which they serve as a liaison, mediating communication rather than merely transmitting it” (p. 195). An example of this would be a child of a Hispanic immigrant who does not speak English, communicating with an English sales clerk what the parent wants. In this case, he/she would only be brokering for one party. However, if the sales clerk has something to say to the parent, such as explaining the discounts of the season, the child would have to broker for both parties.

Language brokering might have different effects on children. Weisskirch and Alatorre (2002) reported that some children, especially boys are uncomfortable brokering. These authors also report on the stressful and difficult situations that children and adolescents might have to

mediate. In reference to this, Buriel, Perez, DeMent, Chavez, and Moran (1998) maintain that the meaning making negotiations in which children participate change:

traditional intergenerational authority relationships [...], and these children become involved in the daily crosscultural transactions between their parents and U.S. society, such as arranging medical appointments, filling out job applications, disputing phone bills and credit card charges, and dealing with schools and the legal system. (p. 1)

Children and adolescents do not only become interpreters of the language, but also, of the culture. For this reason, researchers have studied whether language brokering contribute to an early maturity of the child. Buriel *et al.* (1998) affirm that these “adult like experiences” are a factor on the acceleration of cognitive and socio-emotional development of the brokers. They also report that students who broker tend to perform better academically than does from immigrant families who do not. Love and Buriel (2007) report several advantages and disadvantages for children and adolescent language brokers. As a source of pride, Tse (1995) identified that language brokering boosts adolescents’ independence and maturity levels because they are immersed in situations that do not correspond to their age, such as doctor’s appointments. This promotes feelings of social efficacy since they are able to interpret and also help their parents, and other adults to communicate in different social situations. Since children and adolescents broker the language as well as the culture, they become bicultural individuals, for whom the process of acculturation might have been less difficult due to the constant interaction with the host country and their native cultures. Love and Buriel (2007) also note that language brokering impacts family relations positively because children and adolescents are more emotionally connected to their parents, and other family members who depend on their interpretations. It has also been proven the chances of academic success increases for students who broker (Buriel *et al.*, 1998).

Nonetheless, there are also disadvantages to language brokering such as family conflict due to certain feelings of frustration, and embarrassment. Children and adolescents might feel that they cannot handle certain communicative situations either because they do not have enough knowledge of the situation, or because they would rather do something else. These results might seem contradictory; however, this is because adolescents are usually the ones who benefit from this bilingual practice. The studies reviewed by Buriel and Love (2007) indicate that language brokers should reach a certain level of maturity and acculturation in order to see any benefits from this

practice. Language brokering is a common practice among first-generation immigrant parents and their bilingual children who speak the minority and the dominant language, two concepts that are explored in the following section.

2.3.3. Minority/heritage and dominant languages

Minority/heritage and dominant languages are two concepts that I mention throughout this thesis. It is necessary to explain what they refer to and how some applied linguists have defined them. Richards and Schmidt (2010) describe heritage/minority language as the term used “to refer to the language a person regards as their native, home, or ancestral language” (p. 260). Hall *et al.* (2011) describe it as “the language of a minority community viewed as a property of the group’s cultural history and is often in danger of loss as third generations grow up being un- [unexposed] or underexposed to the language” (p. 180). Hence, the concept of heritage language refers to the linguistic aspect of a person that links him/her to his/her cultural, historical, and ethnic background.

Even though not explicitly, some authors have referred to heritage language and minority language as concepts that describe the same phenomenon (Guardado, 2017; Hall *et al.*, 2011; Valdés, 2005). Valdés (2005) points out that “the term heritage language has been used broadly to refer to nonsocietal and nonmajority languages spoken by groups often known as linguistic minorities” (p. 411). Linguistic minorities are groups of people who have a different language than the one that is spoken by the largest percentage of the population in a particular territory. In the United States, where English is the dominant language, minority languages include Spanish, Mandarin, French, Vietnamese, among others.

According to the example in the last paragraph, a dominant language would be the one that the majority of the inhabitants of a country or region speak. Richard and Schmidt (2010) describe it as a language that “has more prestige (higher status) in the country, is favoured by the government, and/or has the largest number of speakers” (p. 317). In some countries, such as Mexico and the United States, the use of the dominant language has caused the attrition and death of a variety of minority, heritage, and indigenous languages (Knab & Hasson de Knab, 1979; Silva-Corvalán, 1991). In the case of Mexican-Americans, which represent most of my participants, Spanish language attrition is common (Silva-Corvalán, 1991). The concept refers to the process of losing a language due to the every day use of an additional language. Language death means that one of the languages has been completely forgotten (Crystal, 2012).

The maintenance of minority language and the resistance to a dominant language has been a decisive factor in the creation of bilingual and multilingual education programs around the world. In this this thesis, minority and heritage language are used interchangeably. In the next section I explain the term biliteracy, which is one of the aims of some bilingual education programs.

2.3.4. Biliteracy: Reading and writing of two languages

The most popular definition of literacy is the ability to read and write (Crystal, 2008; Richard & Schmidt, 2010). Richard and Schmidt (2010) and Crystal (2008) define different types of literacy: academic literacy, functional literacy, computer literacy, graphic literacy, community literacy, critical literacy, cultural literacy, electronic literacy, and biliteracy. This last term refers to the ability to read and write in two or more languages (Crystal, 2008; Hornberger, 2003; Moll, Saez, & Dworin, 2001; Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

García, Barlett, and Kleifgen (2007) point out that literacy is much more than just reading and writing. The authors state that “literacy practices are enmeshed within and influenced by social, cultural, political, and economic factors, and [...] literacy learning and use varies by situation and entails complex social interactions” (p. 1). At the present time, people are obliged to learn different types of literacies, as described in the first paragraph.

In her continua of biliteracy, Hornberger (2003) proposes a model that is comprehensive and flexible in order to offer a guide to the education community for bilingual education programs that cater for the different needs and backgrounds of bilingual learners. The purposes of using Hornberger’s model is to “break down the binary oppositions so characteristic of the fields of bilingualism and literacy and instead draw attention to the continuity of experiences, skills, practices, and knowledge stretching from one end of any particular continuum to the other” (Hornberger, 2003, p. 156). This definition is in sync with the holistic approach to bilingualism mentioned in the first part of this section.

Hornberger (2003) implies that bilingual education and biliteracy do not focus exclusively on teaching and learning in two languages, but on the experiences of learners which contribute to their application of the knowledge they acquire. Learners include other types of literacies in their bilingual education, since they have to be able to use their languages to communicate their needs in different fields. However, Baetens (2009) notes that “not all bilingual education programs

promote biliteracy” (p. 152). For instance, in some schools, one of the languages might only be used orally. The same author lists four types of literacy in bilingual education depending on the expected goals and outcomes:

Table 1. *Types of literacy in bilingual education* (adapted from Baetens, 2009).

| Type of literacy | Description |
|-------------------------|--|
| Monoliteracy | Literacy is promoted only in one of the two languages. |
| Receptive biliteracy | Students understand the written and spoken minority language, but not all of them can produce it. |
| Partial biliteracy | Writing skills in the minority language are not a priority. |
| Full biliteracy | Students read, write, speak and understand both languages. Native-like proficiency is not expected for more than one language. |

Whether curriculum designers choose one of these types of biliteracy depends on the linguistic outcome goals of each institution, the model of the bilingual education, the context, parents’ wants, children’s need, etc. Different bilingual education programs are explained in the next section.

2.3.5. Bilingual education and types of programs

Bilingual education has been defined as “the use of a second or foreign language in school for the teaching of content subjects” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 54). This means that the second or foreign language is considered a medium of instruction, rather than the outcome or a focus on the language itself. Content classes refer to history, mathematics, sciences, among others, which are taught in both languages. However, this is a narrow definition of bilingual education since it does not specify how the language is used in the classroom and at home, or the purposes that it serves.

According to García (2011), students in a bilingual education program might already be speakers of both languages, speakers of the majority language, or speakers of the minority or heritage language depending on the context where the program develops. In the case of the United States, bilingual education programs usually have speakers of both languages: the minority or heritage language, and the majority or dominant language. García (2011) considers bilingual education not only to learn content in two languages and to become biliterate, but as “a way of providing meaningful and equitable education [sic], as well as an education that builds tolerance

towards other linguistic and cultural groups” (n.p.). García also states that this is what differentiates bilingual education from language-teaching programs. The sole goal of the latter is to learn an additional language. Although, in some contexts, language teaching and learning can also be considered part of bilingual education.

Due to the characteristics of bilingual and multilingual communities around the world, a variety of bilingual education programs have been created. Mackey (1970) claims that “any single definition of bilingual schooling would be either too wide or too narrow to be of any use in planning and research” (p. 597). Consequently, he considers that what is actually needed is a typology of these schools. He has identified 90 types of bilingual education programs. According to him, the criteria used for his typology is observable and quantifiable:

Such criteria may be found in the pattern of distribution of languages in (1) the behavior of the bilingual at home, (2) the curriculum in the school, (3) the community of the immediate area within the nation, and (4) in the status of the languages themselves. (Mackey, 1970, p. 597)

Mackey (1970) also claims that the distribution of the two languages throughout the learning environment is the basis for a typology of bilingual education. The use of the language depends on a plethora of variables, such as language politics, linguistic needs, linguistic desires, regional necessity, international status of a language, among others. In order to establish a typology, Mackey (1970) describes five types of learners in bilingual education programs. These are presented in Table 2, along with an example of each:

Table 2. *Types of learners* (adapted from Mackey, 1970, pp. 597-598).

| Type of learner | Example |
|--|---|
| Unilingual home: language is school language (U+S) | A first-generation Mexican immigrant student in the United States who only speaks Spanish at home and receives instruction in Spanish and English. |
| Unilingual home: language is not school language (U-S) | A first-generation Mexican immigrant student in the United States who only speaks Spanish at home, but receives instruction in English, and a third language. |
| Bilingual home: languages include one school language (B+S) | A Mexican-American student who speaks Spanish and English at home and receives instruction in English and a third language. |
| Bilingual home: languages exclude school languages (B-S) | A student who speaks Spanish and Chaldean at home, but receives instruction in English and a fourth language. |
| Bilingual home: languages include both school languages (B+SS) | A student who speaks English and Spanish at home and receives instruction in both languages. |

The participants of my research represent the types of learners in the first and last place of the table. The examples for children U+S and B+SS fit the descriptions of the students who attend EJEAA. It is necessary to understand the linguistic context at home to structure the typology of bilingual education, since the language use of the student does not necessarily correspond to that of the school's curriculum. Mackey (1970) establishes two types of curriculum, single medium and dual-medium, depending on the use of the languages. Single-medium schools serve children whose home language is not the school language, area language, or national language (Mackey, 1970). In dual-medium schools, or what is now called DLE, the home language and a second language are used to convey knowledge. Christian (2011) affirms that DLE "attends to the maintenance and development of the native language along with the second" (p. 3). Hence, the children receive instruction in two languages. This research is concerned with DLE, which is addressed later on.

Another way to understand the common organization of bilingual education is by using the three-part framework established by Hall *et al.* (2011). These frames are: language-based, content-based, and context-based. However, observing bilingual education from any of the three frames does not mean that the other two will be excluded, on the contrary, the three of them can be considered to explore a program in-depth.

In the language-based frames, the bilingual program is analyzed "in terms of language use and language outcomes," (Hall *et al.*, 2011, p. 179). It focuses on the way that students and teachers use the languages in school. In language-based frames, there is a distinction of the use of the languages between strong and weak forms. Strong forms refer to programs where both languages are used relatively symmetrically for instruction. In weak forms, one of the two languages is not used enough, or is mostly used to clarify information, give instructions, or for personal communication.

Regarding the outcomes of the language-based frames, these are subtractive or additive. The first refers to those programs in which the students' mother-tongue has little use or not used at all as a medium of instruction. Consequently, the student's proficiency in his/her mother tongue diminishes as time passes. In contrast to subtractive programs, additive programs "aim to support and extend the student's home language and additional language(s) through the systematic and

sustained use of both/all as languages of instruction” (Hall *et al.*, 2011, p. 181). In subtractive bilingual programs the use of the language is weak, whilst in additive it is strong.

In content-based frames, intercultural communication and content learning are the focus (Hall *et al.*, 2011). Instruction addresses the aims of the curriculum through the target language or both languages. Language is not the focus of the lesson, but the medium to learn and teach a subject. This frame recognizes previous knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of the learner.

The last frame, context-based, considers the learners and the school’s context “in which programmes are designed, enacted and evaluated” (Hall *et al.* 2011, p. 188). These contexts can be divided into macro- and micro-levels. Macro-levels refer to the national perceptions of bilingualism, the stance of the government, and the language and education policies of a nation. At the micro-levels, experts examine the local conditions in which a program operates. These might be socioeconomical, cultural, political, geographical, among others. These micro-levels help describe whether a program falls under “folk” or “elite” bilingual education. These three frames are summarized in Table 3:

Table 3. *Frameworks for understanding bilingual education* (adapted from Hall *et al.*, 2011).

| | Use | Outcomes |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Language-based frames | Strong forms Weak forms | Subtractive Additive |
| Content-based frames | Culture | Curriculum |
| Context-based frames | Macro-levels | Micro-levels |
| | Ideological Pragmatic | Elite routes Folk routes |

According to these three frames, EJEEA implements a bilingual program where the use of the languages is strong. It can also be considered additive bilingual education since it aims to maintain the learners home language. EJEEA carries out a content-based syllabus since students learn subjects, such as math and science, in English and Spanish. Regarding the macro-levels, until recently, bilingual education in California had been prohibited. Yet, due to the presence of language minorities in the state, learners can now receive instruction in two languages (Proposition 58, 2016). Because EJEEA’s DLP is directed towards language minorities, especially Hispanics and low-income families, the education that it offers might be considered folk bilingualism.

Romaine (1999b) suggests that “the study of early childhood bilingualism has been [...] biased towards the study of ‘elite’ rather than ‘folk’ bilingualism” (p. 61). She states that research has focused mainly on the study of kids that have the opportunity to access bilingual education, in the language they choose, rather than those whose circumstances force them to become bilingual. An example of “elite bilingualism” would be children in Mexico who attend private bilingual schools to learn English. Folk bilingualism might refer to children who migrate with their parents, and who already speak a heritage language, which forces them to learn the common language or dominant language of their host country.

So far, I have described some of the criteria that can be considered in the design, implementations, and evaluation of a bilingual education program. Numerous variables can be taken into account to better understand the aims of bilingual education around the world, such as target students, the school context, the teachers, the community, the status of the languages, among others (see García, 2009). Although different authors have provided analyses of the structure of bilingual education types and models (Baker, 2001; García, 2009; Mackey, 1970), I have decided to use the categorization established by Hall *et al.* (2011) which integrates the three-part framework previously described. The types of education programs are summarized in Table 4:

Table 4. *Types of bilingual education programs* (adapted from Hall *et al.*, 2011).

| Type of program | Characteristics |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Submersion | L1 not allowed in the classroom Shift to the dominant language Weak form Subtractive |
| Transition bilingual education | Temporary assistance in the L1 Shift to the dominant language Weak form Subtractive |
| Maintenance bilingual education | L1 maintenance Bilingual program adapted to students linguistic and cultural needs Strong form Additive |
| Immersion | Teaching and learning of content in both languages Strong form Additive One-way (most students share their first L1) Two-way immersion (similar number of speakers of both languages) |
| Community language teaching | Minority languages are taught Response to the oppression of the dominant language Strong form Additive |

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Heritage language programs | Heritage language are taught to younger generations Aim is to communicate with older generations, understand their historical and ethnic backgrounds, and maintain their language Strong forms Additive |
|----------------------------|--|

The DLP implemented at EJEEA is a maintenance education program, and there is two-way immersion. The latter “involves students from two language communities in a single classroom or academic programmes.” (Hall *et al.*, 2011, p. 185). EJEEA has native Spanish speakers, as well as English native speakers. The goal at EJEEA is for Hispanic students to maintain their native language while developing English as second language or as a first language also. It cannot be affirmed that the bilingual program at EJEEA was adapted to the cultural needs of the students because most of the culture-related events are influenced by the Mexican community. If students from other Hispanic groups attend the school, their cultural needs might be overlooked. EJEEA implements a strong form of DLP, since both English and Spanish are supposed to be equally used by the time students get to fifth grade.

This section has discussed some variables that researchers have taken into consideration to classify the types of bilingual programs that exist today. However, there are a variety of frameworks that may be used to analyze bilingual education programs. In the next section I explore dual language education which integrates characteristics of some of the programs listed above.

2.4. Dual language programs in the United States

In this section, I first discuss language minorities, diversity and policy in the education system of the United States. Then, I focus on Hispanic education and explore DLPs in this country.

2.4.1. Language minorities, diversity and policy in the American education system

In contrast with Canada, which has two official languages, the United States has no official language. However, it does have a national language. A national language is that which “has a connection with a country, state, or other territory, typically the language that is most widely used throughout that territory, has the most speakers, and is closely associated with national identity” (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 385), such as is the case of English in the United States. This can also be identified as a *de facto* language. These are language practices of a given jurisdiction, with

little or complete disregard to the *de jure* language policies, which are those officially documented in writing, such as in the constitution or legislation (Johnson, 2013).

However, the Center for Applied Linguistics in the United States (2018) points out that each U.S.A. state or territory has the freedom to establish its own official language or languages. In Puerto Rico, English and Spanish are co-official languages, while in Hawaii the official languages are English and Hawaiian. Despite this, most states continue imposing monolingualism on their minority language students.

The late 1950s and the 1960s represented a period of change in the U.S., and other countries around the world. The Space Race started between the United States and the Soviet Union due to the launching of Sputnik in 1957. Around the same time, hundreds of Cuban immigrants were fleeing to the United States because of the revolution in their country. This resulted in the creation of one of the first bilingual programs in the United States, the Coral Way School, in Miami, Florida. Pellerano, Fradd, and Rovira (1998) state that, as the oldest public bilingual program, Coral Way School “is recognized as a model for bilingual education. Its curriculum promotes enrichment and language development while building in the languages students bring to school.” (p.1). This model of bilingual education allowed Cuban children to be competent in English while retaining their competence in Spanish.

One of the political and social events that made bilingual education a priority for the U.S. Education System was the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case in 1954, which ruled against segregation at schools. Due to this ruling, the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* declared that nobody could be excluded from any program funded by the U.S. government. Not giving minority language students the access to quality public education, had denied them the rights to equal academic opportunities. The *Elementary and Secondary Act of 1969* permitted school districts across the nation to establish bilingual education programs.

Five years later, in 1974, the Office of Civil Rights issued a memorandum following the Supreme Court decision in the *Lau vs. Nichols* case, which argued that there were no equal opportunities in San Francisco for children of the Chinese community, since they had to attend schools where instruction was not in their home language. That same year, the *Elementary and*

*Education Act*¹ offered its first definition for bilingual education: “instruction given in, and study of, English, and, to the extent necessary to allow a child to progress effectively through the educational system, the native language (Sec. 703[a] [4] [A] [i])” (as cited in Wiese & García, 1998, p. 5). In 1978, this definition was extended by adding that “instruction in English should ‘allow a child to achieve competence in the English language’ (Sec. 703 [a] [4] [A] [i]).” (as cited in Wiese & García, 1998, p. 7). Bilingual education today is widely accepted in the United States and a number of bilingual education programs have been established throughout the country. In the next section, I focus on dual language education.

2.4.2. Dual language education in the United States

Bilingual programs reflect the socio-political and historical context of a country. DLE in United States started as a response to the multiple ongoing social changes that were arising in the decade of the 1960s. To understand DLPs, Genesee and Lindholm-Leary (2008) define it “as schooling at the elementary and/or secondary levels in which English, along with another language are used for at least 50% of academic instruction during at least one school year” (p. 2). This means the use of two languages in the teaching and learning of content.

Howard *et al.* (2007) refer to dual language education as “any program that provides literacy and content instruction to all students through two languages and that promotes bilingualism and biliteracy, grade-level academic achievement, and multicultural competence for all students” (p. 1). The authors distinguish three different types of DLPs depending on the student population: developmental bilingual programs, two-way immersion programs, and foreign language immersion programs.

In the United States, DLPs could be Spanish-English, French-English, Cantonese-English, amongst other combinations. In these cases, the partner language refers to any other that is not English. In developmental bilingual programs, most or all students are native speakers of the partner language. In two-way immersion there are approximately the same number of native speakers of the partner language and the dominant language. In foreign language programs, most or all students are speakers of the dominant language. As mentioned in the previous section,

¹ Also Bilingual Education Act, Pub. L. No. (93-380), 88 Stat. 503 (1974).

EJEEA implements a two-way dual immersion program. This type of program includes students from two different language backgrounds in the classroom (Hall *et al.*, 2011).

The DLP implemented at EJEEA follows a 90-10 model. Table 5 represents the daily percentages of instruction at EJEEA:

Table 5. *90-10 two-way dual language program model* (adapted from EJEEA, 2017).

| Grade | Percentage of instruction in the partner language | Percentage of instruction in English |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Kindergarten | 90 | 10 |
| 1 st | 90 | 10 |
| 2 nd | 80 | 20 |
| 3 rd | 70 | 30 |
| 4 th | 60 | 40 |
| 5 th | 50 | 50 |

The DLP implemented at EJEEA was modeled after other 90-10 programs that have existed several years. One of the them is the Alicia Chacón International School, portrayed as an “exemplary two-way immersion program” (Howard, 2002, p. 19). Howard’s (2002) positive description of the program is based on its “adherence to the defining criteria, achievement of the primary goals, and demonstration of key components” (p. 20) concerning the two-way DLP. She conducted a longitudinal study of “students’ language, literacy, and academic achievement outcomes in English and Spanish” (Howard, 2002, p. 20). There are more studies such as Howard’s that demonstrate the effective implementation of two-way dual immersion programs through the study of learners’ academic achievement and language proficiency (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Howard & Christian, 2002; Lindholm-leary, 2012).

The main aim of DLE is that students learn an additional or second language effectively by adding to the students’ personal, economic, cognitive, and social repertoire. Genesee and Lindholm-Leary (2008), as well as other linguists (Baker, 2017; García, 2009; Hall *at al.*, 2011), classified these programs as additive bilingual education, which was explained in the previous section. DLE additive programs aim to reach high levels of proficiency in the partner and the dominant language.

According to Howard *et al.* (2007), DLPs “are strongly influenced by the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, U.S. Department of Education, 2001)” (p. 1). However, the past administration of the United States government changed it to Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA), which Barack Obama signed in 2015. ESSA has returned “educational authority from the federal government to the state and local level” (Fránquiz & Ortiz, 2016, p. 1). The NCLB Act established that:

[...] annual achievement objectives for ELLs [English Language Learners] and enforce[d] accountability requirements. The rationale for including these students in highstakes tests is to hold them to the same high standards as their peers and to ensure that their needs are not overlooked. (Coltrane, 2002, as cited in Howard *et al.*, 2007, p.8)

This means that ELLs were considered at a disadvantage; consequently, schools included some type of bilingual education to help them pass standardized exams. According to Fránquiz and Ortiz (2016) the Every School Succeeds Act:

[...] keep[s] a strong focus on supporting the needs of the increasing number of Emergent Bilingual students across the United States. The new law ensures the inclusion of these students in a state’s accountability system, reporting on Emergent Bilingual students with disabilities as well as reporting on newcomer students and on long-term Emergent Bilingual students. The law confirms the importance of standardized entrance and exit procedures for state language support programs to ensure Emergent Bilingual students receive continuity of services. (p. 1)

It may seem that different linguistic needs are addressed in this new law. Nonetheless, the authors do not mention how this will be accomplished. Bilinguals are still seen as a burden to the State, and they need to keep track of them to understand whether they need more support to develop their English skills, but not their first language. Yet, these changes at the national level must be taken into consideration in the creation and implementation of DLPs, just like the No Child Left Behind Act was considered to delineate the Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education of the Center for Applied Linguistics (Howard *et al.*, 2016). Nevertheless, this is only one variable that should be considered in the planification, design, and implementation of DLPs and other bilingual education programs.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed three major themes: charter schools, bilingualism and bilingual education, and DLE. Charter schools, although a controversial topic in the U.S.A due to the precedence of their resources and their autonomy, were the only option for a group of parents and activists who wanted to provide bilingual education for their children in southern California. Bilingual education, in this study, is portrayed as a holistic phenomenon, meaning that individuals are not perceived as two monolinguals, but as integrated bilinguals who use their language in different contexts and for different purposes. I also explained dual language education and how two languages are used in order to provide content language education for native Spanish and English speakers. The literature reviewed in this chapter aids the reader by providing key theoretical concepts that are employed throughout the analysis of the data in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the rationale for the selection of the research paradigm, methodology, data collection techniques, and data analysis. I also describe the research context, the participants, the access to the research setting, as well as the ethics.

3.2. Qualitative paradigm

Qualitative inquiry has been a predominant approach to research in the area of applied linguistics because it allows the investigator 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 paradigm because I intend to explore a DLP which I already knew from my sisters’ experiences. 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). Social world refers to the everyday events in which personal interactions with others and the world around us are the focus (Richards, 2003). 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, the parents, teachers, and students construct their meaning of 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 contact with bilinguals most of the time 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 DLP implemented at 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 participants of a research. In this case, I am concerned with studying individual knowledge of the DLP, in order to expand on collective knowledge regarding bilingual education, specifically DLE.

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.

3.3. Case study

Case study has 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 case study methodology when the researcher's purpose is to gain deep 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 explorations of the phenomenon through a case study. As mentioned previously, this 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 U.S.A as a whole (United States Census Bureau, 2016). Access to free bilingual education in El Cajon provides a medium for Hispanic parents to be involved in the education of their children. 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 DLE.

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 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). DLPs 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 DLE (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Lindholm-Leary, 2008).

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 organization, etc.). 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 because it examines the DLP implemented at EJEEA through the perceptions of parents, teachers, and students. Although the case is of interest to me as a researcher, I believe it will provide insight into DLE 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 DLE has in minority/heritage speakers academic and personal lives, as well as those concerning bilingual education in general.

3.4. Data collection techniques

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 the 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 reflexivity. 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 totally avoided, constant reflexivity allow 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 her personal beliefs and contributes to a critical interpretation if the data and discussion of the findings.

This section discusses the rationale for the selection of the data collection techniques carried out in this research in the order in how data was collected. These techniques were semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire, and a narrative frame. The use of these 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 DLP.

3.4.1. Interviews and semi-structured interviews

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 RQs, collecting, and analyzing the data. A second option would be reviewing data with participants to avoid bias. Since I did not have access to them after the data collection, I decided to reflect upon my own perceptions of EJEEA and of 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 own knowledge of a phenomenon. Qualitative researchers often recur to interviews because it "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, etc. 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, as cited in Dörnyei, 2007, p. 134). 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 carried out with the participants were about language preference at school, and at home, number of children enrolled at EJEAA, reasons why parents chose the school, and thoughts about the dual language program, among others (see Appendix 1). Other questions arose from the participants’ answers, such as the language that the students use with their teachers, their favorite subjects, parents’ lives before migrating to the U.S.A., among others. Since the function of the questions was to function as a guide, not all of them follow the exact order in which they are organized in Appendix 1, with exception to the first question, but were asked depending on the responses of the participants.

These interviews were held with 73 students and 20 parents from June sixth to June 15th, 2017. The interviews were recorded with two devices: a tablet and a cellphone. The participants were invited to speak the language they were comfortable in, whether it was 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 were carried out with the students and three group interviews with parents plus nine individual interviews also with the parents. Besides parents and students, I also had teacher participants. Due to time constrains, other techniques were employed to collected data from this group. In the following section, I explore the use of questionnaires in my research.

3.4.2. E-mail open-ended questionnaires

The second technique used are e-mail open-ended questionnaires. 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, among others. Questionnaires must be designed in relation to the RQ or problem (Hernández, Fernandez, and 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 (see Appendix 2). 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 experiences. The responses of the teachers were used to understand their experiences as bilingual teachers at EJEEA, which they narrated in the frame described in the following section. Thus, I do not interpret the data provided in the questionnaires but use it as a reference. This data is summarized in Table 6:

Table 6. *Teachers’ factual information.*

| Participant pseudonym | Lolbel | Daisy | Martha |
|---|--|--|---|
| Place of birth/nationality | Long Beach, CA | Torrance, CA | Chula Vista, CA |
| Languages spoken | Spanish, English | English, Spanish | Spanish, English |
| How languages were learned | Spanish at home, learned English at school | Spanish at home and school, English when in U.S. school in the fifth grade | Spanish first language, learned English at school |
| Years of teaching | 13 | 5 | 3 |
| Teaching qualifications | Multiple-subject bilingual credential | Bilingual teaching credential | Bilingual teaching credential/ Masters in language arts |
| Years teaching at EJEEA | 9 | 5 | 3 |
| Grade currently teaching | 5th | 6 th , 7 th , and 8th | 6 th |
| Previous experience working in a DLP | No | No | Yes |

3.4.3. Narrative frame

The third data collection technique implemented in this study was a narrative frame to collect data from the three participant teachers working at EJEEA, even though this technique is commonly used in narrative inquiry. 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 construction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories. (p. 2)

In order to understand the stories of the teachers regarding their experiences and perceptions of the dual language charter school where they work, a narrative frame was designed. According to Barkhuizen and Wette (2008), this data collection instrument is based on frames, which provide a “skeleton to scaffold writing” (Warwick & Mallot, 2003, as cited in Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008, p. 375). Narrative frames help participants when they do not know what to write about a particular situation or topic. Regarding this, Barhuizen 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 (see Appendix 3). 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, bilingualism and biliteracy, among others.

I decided to recognize the experiences of the teachers by providing them with a space where they are able to express themselves about their professional practice and their perceptions of the DLP implemented in their school. The voices of the teachers need to be heard because they are a key component of the DLP. They have prepared 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).

3.5. Data analysis

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/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” will be 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 are three datasets within the corpus: the data collected from the parents, the data collected from the students, and the data collected from the teachers. An analysis of each dataset was conducted to gain a more comprehensive analysis 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. In this study, the data was coded as shown in Table 7:

Table 7. *Data coding.*

| Code | Description |
|-------------|--|
| IIPS-SANDRA | Individual Interview Parent Spanish-Participant’s Pseudonym |
| IPE-VINCENT | Individual Interview Parent English- Participant’s Pseudonym |
| GIP3-ESTELA | Group Interview Parent (interview #-)Participant’s Pseudonym |
| TQ-LOLBEL | Teacher Questionnaire-Participant’s Pseudonym |
| TNF-LOLBEL | Teacher Narrative Frame-Participant’s Pseudonym |
| GIS1-ALEX | Group interview students (interview #-)Participant’s Pseudonym |

- 3) **Organize the data thematically:** the themes and categories were identified and color coded. This information was arranged in a chart using Word 2013. An example is shown in Table 8:

Table 8. *Example of a thematic analysis of data.*

| Source | Theme: Bilingualism and biliteracy | Categories |
|--------------|--|--------------------|
| IIPS-Lorena | <i>Ya ahorita en donde quiera ocupas dos idiomas. Ya no es un lujo, es una necesidad.</i> | Linguistic capital |
| IIFE-Vincent | They'll have two languages and they'll be able to do twice as much linguistically as everybody else. | Linguistic capital |

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

According to Cowie (2009), there are three stages in the interpretation of data: descriptive, interpretative; and argumentative stages, 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 message of the participants regarding the current state of the DLP implemented at EJEEA. In the third stage, 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 DLP, 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 is more appropriate for this study since the same phenomenon that the DLP represents 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.

3.6. Setting and participants

As stated in Chapters 1 and 2, 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. Table 9 summarizes the population of students in the 2015-2016 school year:

Table 9. *Student enrollment by student group (School year 2015-16)* (reproduced from EJE 2016, p. 3).

| Student Group | Percent of Total Enrollment |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Black or African American | 4.8% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 0.2% |
| Asian | 0.6% |
| Filipino | 0.2% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 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 9, 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 the 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. Fifth-grade grade was chosen because the DLP 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, as previously mentioned in Chapter 2. The three teacher participants were a fifth-grade teacher, a sixth-grade teacher, and a teacher who works with sixth to eight grade students from EJE Middle Academy.

3.7. Access and ethics

The aim of this section is to ensure that the participants of the present study were “honored, respected, and protected from harm” (Rallis & Rossman, 2009, p. 264), and explain how access to EJEEA was achieved. 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 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, permission from the school administrators was sought. 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 his/her 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 (see Appendix 4) and another for

the teachers (see Appendix 5). 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 of them 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 ethical issues were discussed in this section. The responses of parents, students, and teachers gathered from the interviews and narrative frames were not changed to respect their opinions. However, qualitative data can be open to different interpretations, which is why the analysis must be conducted in an unbiased and critical manner.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the paradigm and methodology that I decided to adopt in this research. The data collection techniques that support this instrumental case study are semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and narrative frames. Different sections explained the suitability of these techniques for the purposes of the study. The chapter also described how the data was organized, coded, and analyzed through thematic analysis. I included a description the participants

and the context of the study and discussed the ethics, as well as the procedures followed to gain access to EJEEA.

Chapter 4 Data analysis

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the interpretation of the data collected. It is divided into sections which explore the expectations and perceptions of parents, students, and teachers. Their responses relate to EJEEA as a dual language charter school and other aspects of bilingualism and bilingual education.

4.2. The parents: EJEEA as a school of choice

I start by discussing parents' perceptions about EJEEA as a dual language charter school. Their valuable responses highly contributed to the development of this thesis. The content of the following sections relates to parents' reasons for choosing the school, their beliefs about bilingualism and bilingual education, their perceptions of the faculty and staff, among other issues.

4.2.1. Choosing a school: Parents' reasons for choosing EJEEA

When I set out to conduct the present research, I conjectured that the primary reason why parents chose EJEEA was the DLP implemented in this institution, since the majority of its student population is Hispanic. However, parents choose schools for a variety of reasons such as the closeness of the school to the students' home, the school's academic performance (the standardized test scores), among others. In order to understand how participant's expectations influence their perceptions of EJEEA, parents were asked the reason why they enrolled their children there. Elizabeth² mentions that she chose the school for her child because:

Tiene muy buenos grados y es bilingüe. (GIP1-Elizabeth)

When Elizabeth was asked what she meant by “*buenos grados*” (good grades), she mentioned the academic performance of the school, which is generally measured by the results of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). The report indicates

²

All the names presented here are pseudonyms.

that 48% of the students meet or exceed the state standards in English Language Arts, and 33% meet or exceed in Math (SARC, 2017). EJEEA has been granted a variety of awards. In 2013, it received “the Honor Roll recognized by the California State Legislature for Academic Excellence” (SARC, 2016, p.1). The School Accountability Report Card indicates that some other parents have also been enticed by the reputation that EJEEA has created for itself. Narda mentions that she decided to enroll her child because:

A mí me parece una escuela muy buena porque les dan los dos idiomas (inglés y español). El español ya lo saben de casa, pero no lo saben escribir totalmente. (GIP2-Narda)

She believes the school is good because both languages are taught. She does not explicitly state that she has enrolled her children in this schools because she wants them to learn how to write; however, it can be inferred from her mentioning that they already produce the language orally, but that they do not know how to write it. This relates to the concept of literacy addressed in Chapter 2. EJEEA includes a full biliteracy model since students are expected to acquire productive (writing and speaking) and receptive (reading and listening) skills in both languages. Another mother, Sonia, chose EJEEA for the following reasons:

Yo por el idioma. Me gusta el español y me gusta que lo escriban bien. Tengo familia que habla inglés, y no saben escribir el español. Se comen las “haches”, los acentos, etc. Quería que mis hijas lo hicieran bien, porque el idioma de uno es el español, y sus abuelos no hablan inglés. Entonces, el que les escriban cartas correctamente a sus abuelos les gusta. Básicamente fue eso, el idioma. Después nos dimos cuenta de que la escuela es buena. (GIP2-Sonia)

Sonia and Narda are aware that their children are able to communicate in Spanish. They believe that the system that the school has implemented will aid their children in the acquisition and development of their skills in both languages. If they think the school is good due to the DLE that it provides, then they could be expecting their children to be proficient in both languages. Nonetheless, two-way immersion in DLE does not expect native like proficiency in both languages, but rather to create a linguistic repertoire for students to use in appropriate the domains (contexts) and targets (people).

Other parents, such as Maria, would like her child to improve her speaking in Spanish since she considers it to be *mocho*, or broken, a typical adjective used for those who do not speak a language properly. Her reasons for enrolling her daughter in EJEEA are stated below:

Yo lo decidí más por el idioma, porque mi niña hablaba español muy mocho. Era difícil para ella hablar español, el inglés era más fácil. Mi esposo y yo lo discutíamos. Él decía que puro inglés y yo decía que bilingüe. Me la recomendaron en una escuela en la que yo estaba. Mis compañeras me la recomendaron porque era muy buena. Y la verdad que si es muy buena, básicamente porque es bilingüe. (GIP2-Maria)

Maria and her husband had to come to an agreement regarding the type of school where they would enroll their daughter. Her husband believed that enrolling her in a monolingual school would be better. However, Maria thought that it was difficult for her daughter to speak Spanish and that EJEEA would provide a learning environment where she could properly acquire the language. Maria's husband might have thought that it was not necessary to enroll her daughter in a bilingual school because she already received enough exposure of both languages, at school and at home. However, the exact reasons why the father did not want his daughter to attend a bilingual school are not known. Maria perceived her daughter's Spanish to be broken and was trying to find solutions. Some Hispanic parents do not think their children should learn Spanish because they already know English, and it is enough if they live in the United States. Nonetheless, Maria expects that through formal education her daughter can overcome the difficulties that she faces as a Spanish-speaker.

Besides the acquisition of Spanish, some parents want their children to develop and maintain a bond with their culture as Latin Americans, specifically, as Mexicans. The following two women want the same for their children; nevertheless, they have opposite reasons. The first woman mentions the why she chose the school for her son:

Mi hijo no habla muy bien español. Habla más inglés. Entonces sabía que esta escuela es bilingüe y que apoyan mucho a los niños que son aprendices de español, [...] Como has de ver soy latina. Soy mexicana. Toda mi familia es mexicana. Todos somos bilingües. Pero a mi hijo desde un principio se le dificultó mucho el español. Yo no quiero que el pierda

sus raíces. Él es nacido aquí. Pero, aunque él es nacido aquí, viene de familia mexicana y yo no quiero que pierda el español y que no olvide, pues, de dónde venimos. (IIPS-Eva)

EJEEA, as her school of choice, is an opportunity for her son to learn Spanish, the language that all her family knows and uses. Eva thought the difficulties that her child presented in the acquisition of the language prevented him from becoming attached to his background as a Mexican. Therefore, biculturalism was an aspect that Eva consider. Her son was born in the United States, but his family comes from Mexico and Eva, as his mom, does not want him to forget his origins. Most parents are afraid that their children will lose their mother language if the family does not provide them with opportunities to continue learning Spanish. English is the dominant language in the United States, and the children will learn it and will eventually be more proficient in this language due to the constant exposure and use. This happens due to immersion, which is why EJEEA has chosen to implement a two-way immersion program in which students from minority and majority language homes share their life and academic experiences. Biculturalism would not be an outcome at EJEEA had it chosen to implement one-way immersion (see Table 4, Chapter 2).

Another mother, Sandra, chose the school for the same reasons as Eva. However, her family situation is different. She stated that her extended family does not live in the United States and that she is the only one that has taught her son and daughter Spanish. In consequence, she chose the school so they would continue speaking the language that she grew up with. Sandra states EJEEA was her choice of school because:

Para mí es muy importante que conozcan mi idioma. Mi marido es americano. Toda mi familia está en México. Yo soy la única que está aquí, y aquí a fuerza el idioma principal va a ser el inglés. De alguna manera quería que conocieran un poco más, primero mi idioma y algo de la cultura de nuestro país que en cierta manera se los enseñan aquí. También escuché que es una muy buena oportunidad, más que nada uno como padre sabe muy bien que ya estando aquí van a perder el idioma de la mamá. Entonces, hasta ahorita de todas maneras sigue predominando el inglés, pero lo saben leer, saben leer en español, lo saben escribir, lo hablan muy mocho, pero ya eso es parte de que yo les dedique más tiempo. (IIPS- Sandra)

Sandra is aware that her children have to learn English because it is the dominant language in the United States, but she also wants them to speak Spanish. In addition to what her children learn at EJEEA, she is the only one who would be able to help them improve their Spanish, because her husband does not speak Spanish either and none of her family members live in the U.S.A. Therefore, she believes that the Spanish that her children speak will improve if they go to this school. Nonetheless, Sandra acknowledges that she needs to dedicate time to her children so they will not speak broken Spanish. She is conscious that her children's bilingual education is not only the school's responsibility, but also hers, because that is what she wants for her children. Children's linguistic development and maintenance DLPs requires more attention from parents and their surrounding community in order to attend students' language shift, and to prevent language loss.

García (2009) considers that in bilingual education, where language maintenance and development is a priority, "language minority children, as well as language-majority children, have different degrees of proficiency in the home language and all need to develop academic proficiency in that language, not just maintain it as it is spoken at home" (p. 117). This means that some children will need more support than others regarding second language acquisition at school, because their parents might not be able to instruct them in the language skills necessary to achieve academic success.

Through the analysis of what some of the parents have mentioned so far about their children speaking a broken language, in this case Spanish, I can infer that they idealize the bilingual education that their children receive. They might perceive bilingual education from the fractional view explained in Chapter 2. Regarding this, a parent mentions that she considers herself a "half" bilingual due to the following reasons:

Somos medias bilingües porque tener el inglés perfecto es prácticamente imposible porque nuestro primer idioma es el español [...]. La práctica cuenta mucho, y la pronunciación. Cuando estás practicando se te da la fluidez. (GIP5-Lupita)

This comment shows that, for this mother in particular, until they are proficient in both languages they will consider themselves bilingual. Since this was a group interview, most of the

mothers who were there agreed with Lupita. They project their own beliefs of bilingualism onto their children's education.

Not all of the reasons parents select the school relate to language. Another motive includes parents wanting their children to acquire the values that they were taught in their countries of origin. In regard to this, Luna comments that:

Yo estuve viendo otras escuelas. En esta escuela en particular, el ambiente me gusta, por eso deje a mis hijos aquí. Somos mayoría gente latina. Tenemos los mismos valores, las mismas costumbres y eso me encanta. (GIP2- Luna)

Perhaps this mother, as well as others, wants the process of acculturation to be easier for her. The same way it was easier for my mom to have her children in a school where she could relate to the experiences of other parents, teachers, and administrative staff. EJEEA, as a dual language charter school, not only helps maintain and develop the minority and the dominant language, but it also “reflect[s] community cultural values” (García, 2009, p. 125). EJEEA has activities and cultural events related to Mexican culture; therefore, Mexican parents feel welcome and at home as mentioned by Sara:

Me gustan los eventos que hacen aquí porque tienen que ver con mi cultura, la mexicana. Me hacen recordar de dónde vengo, y me gusta que mi hijo aprenda sobre mi país. Aquí hacen el festival del Día de la Madre, hay baile folclórico mexicano, entre otras cosas. (GIP3-Sara)

The cultural activities listed by Sara are also a way for her child to learn about Sara's culture of origin: a culture that many minority language speakers cannot experience first-hand. Therefore, EJEEA's events represent a way for the children to understand their culture, in the case of Mexican and Mexican-American children.

Although created as a two-way immersion program, more than 80% of the school population is Hispanic. Therefore, every day EJEEA's growing Hispanic population leads to one-way immersion. Regarding this Sandra maintains that:

Me gustaría que hubiera más mezcla. Principalmente es un apoyo para nosotros los latinos o mexicanos que venimos de otra parte. Pero si me encantaría que hubiera más

mezcla, más cultura para que nuestros hijos vieran todos los tipos de diferentes culturas o tipos de gente que hay. Si estamos como muy cómodos, muy a nuestro modo, a nuestra cultura, se siente el ambiente como si estuviéramos en nuestro país en cierta manera. (IIPS-Sandra)

EJEEA represents a space for Hispanic families to regain their agency as a language minority in the United States (García, 2009). But this might imply that other ethnolinguistic groups are unintentionally excluded at EJEEA, or that Hispanics at this school are self-segregating. This means they separate from other ethnic groups because they do not share the same values, as mentioned previously by Luna. This can go against the school's mission which is to integrate their students to a global society. Unfortunately, this might not be happening because there is not enough contact with other cultures, values, and experiences.

The opinions presented thus far belong to first-generation immigrant parents from Mexico. These show that they would like their children to continue speaking their mother tongue as mentioned by Eva, Sandra and Sara. They believe that the DLP implemented at EJEEA will aid with the expectations that they have for their children in regard to learning or improving their Spanish. Nonetheless, parents from the majority-language group also chose to enroll their kids in EJEEA due to the DLP, as shown below:

I knew my children were going to go here because my goddaughter just finished 8th grade here. She started in kindergarten. It is a great school. They teach in two languages, and the structure and everything is great. I'd been volunteering before I was even a parent to a student. (IPE-Vincent)

Vincent mentions that his involvement in the school, since even before he had children of his own, was what motivated him to enroll his children there. He knew the way the school operated. His goddaughter became biliterate and bilingual, and he wants the same for his children. Vincent was the only male parent interviewed. This might be because most of the mothers who participated in the study affirm that they are housewives or work part-time. They also claim that their husbands are not usually there because they have to work full time.

Sherry, a non-Hispanic, asserts that EJEEA is the only school who would take her daughter, who has a medical condition that forces her to take medication throughout the day. Even though

this was the primary reason to choose the school, she claims that the DLP implemented at EJEEA also represented an opportunity for her daughter:

I wanted her to have the Spanish immersion availability in life. (IPE-Sherry)

When Sherry talked to the staff and explained her daughter's medical condition, she was immediately attracted to the environment in which her daughter would be involved and the attention that she would receive. Sherry believed that her daughter would be in a school where her education and well-being would be secured. Once her daughter started school, she realized that her impressions about it were correct. The data regarding this matter are presented later in the chapter.

Thus far this section has presented the opinions of parents regarding their choice of school. The most common motive was the DLP. However, the proximity to their homes also appears to be a reason for having chosen the school:

Alexis: ¿y usted vive cerca de aquí?

Sonia: Si, a diez minutos de aquí.

A: ¿Las demás viven cerca?

Todas: Si.

Sara: Yo a cinco minutos. (GIP2)

Some commented that they did not select EJEEA based on the proximity to their homes. One of the parents said she drove from another city:

Me queda lejos. No vivo por esta área, me queda bastantito retirado, pero hay gente que viene de San Diego, he escuchado de aún más lejos que yo. (IIPS- Rocío)

Considering that the school implements the DLP and provides other services for low-income families, it should not be assumed that all parents seek bilingual education for their children, although this is the most common response. Nonetheless, it seems that it attracts mostly first-generation immigrant parents whose mother language is Spanish. It was stated in the Chapter 3 that 52.8% of the students are English learners. According to what was discussed in this section, Hispanic parents believe that EJEEA provides their children with opportunities to maintain their mother language and also their culture. In the case of the two non-Hispanic parents, both say that

they choose the school because it implements a dual language program. EJEEA was the only school that would take Sherry's daughter, and Vincent had been involved in the program since his goddaughter was a student; which is why it was relatively easy for him to gain access. The next section will describe the difficulties that the parents have to face to enroll their children in the program.

4.2.2. Waiting lists

Being this the first public charter school on the east side of San Diego to implement a 90:10 DLP (EJE Academies Charter School, 2017), and because of the success that has been televised (San Diego Insider, 2004), parents wait to be able to enroll their children at EJEEA. Elizabeth was aware of the acknowledgement and awards that the school has received by El Cajon Valley School District. She was also mindful of the long waiting lists that are a consequence of the bilingual program and of EJEEA's academic performance:

Yo ya sabía que había lista de espera. La niña está aquí desde quinto, ella también aquí hizo la middle-school. Yo la tenía en otra escuela cuando me cambie. Ella salía en junio y yo en enero vine a hacerla sign-in, o sea como cinco meses antes, por lo mismo, porque yo sabía que había lista de espera. (GIP1-Elizabeth)

However, not all parents realized how patient they had to be in order to provide their children with bilingual education. The long waiting lists represent a problem for people who cannot enroll their children in this school because there are not available spaces. Some of them even felt discouraged when they heard about the lists:

They told me my daughter needed to be put on a waiting list of like three-hundred people at the time, and I was kind of discouraged and like "Ah... I find the perfect school and now I'm put on the waiting list," but like three months later she was called. (IPE-Sherry)

Sherry had to wait three months to enroll her daughter in EJEEA. Out of ten schools that she visited, this is the only school that accepted her daughter who needed to take medication throughout the day:

I came in, told them her special needs and what has to happen. She takes meds during the day and I talked to some of the people from the office, and I just had that desire, that need

to put her in here because they were so happy, so friendly, and so... they were just so loving.
(IPE-Sherry)

She was told to wait even though her daughter's medical condition prevented her from being accepted in other schools. However, there were parents who were delayed even longer. Eva enrolled her son at another school when he was in kindergarten, but had already put him on EJEEA's waiting list, and it was until fifth-grade that the school had an opening for her child:

Como hay lista de espera de tantos niños que quieren entrar aquí, pues lo tuve en lista de espera y hasta quinto grado fue que me hablaron. (IIPS-Eva)

The waiting lists reflect the needs of these minority groups that are not addressed by the educational system in California, specifically in El Cajon. Parents try to find quality education for their children that also enables them to access something that is usually directed towards the upper classes, bilingual education. The parents are aware that their children might not find a place immediately, but they consider it worth it:

La verdad esta es una escuela tan buena que ahorita todavía hay muchos alumnos que están en la lista de espera. Ojalá hubiera más programas de estos. (GIP1-Elizabeth)

As a charter school, EJEEA has to continue looking for funding that will enable it to maintain its doors open to more students. The parents continue coming, but they do not find a space for their children right away. The children that cannot find an opening have to go to monolingual schools, with submersion or transitional programs for minority language students. When EJEEA finally becomes an option for them, the child might struggle to adapt to a new learning environment where he/she needs to use two languages. Despite the demands for DLPs, EJEEA is the only one in the city of El Cajon, and its population continues to grow. Children who have siblings enrolled in the school are prioritized and their place is secure:

Con el niño ya no batallé porque como era su sibling, ya no batallé tampoco. (GIP1-Elizabeth)

Students who are never given the opportunity to attend these programs could be denied an education that would provide them with bilingual skills. The waiting lists reflect the need for more bilingual programs to be implemented in schools in El Cajon, and other cities in California. Now,

with Proposition 58 in California, more bilingual schools might become a reality. The next section discusses data regarding perceptions on bilingualism and bilingual education.

4.2.3. “*Una persona bilingüe vale por dos*”: Bilingualism as linguistic capital

As previously discussed, most parents mention that they want their children to be biliterate and bilingual. Consequently, I decided to ask them why they want this for their children. Their responses were similar, and a common theme emerged. Parents consider the knowledge of two or more languages as linguistic capital when they refer to employment and academic opportunities. This concept of linguistic capital refers to the linguistic repertoire that benefits students in a variety of situations, such as in the academic and professional spheres as described in Chapter 1.

To explain her desire for her children to learn two languages, Eva related events about her professional life which motivated her to encourage her children in the process of being bilingual:

Cuando yo terminé la escuela -soy asistente dental registrada- entre a trabajar en una oficina dental. Después, encontré una mejor oportunidad laboral. Apliqué para el trabajo y sin querer una compañera mía aplicó para la misma posición. Sin saber, las dos fuimos a aplicar para la misma posición. Al principio pareciera que le habían dado la posición, pero ella le dijo al doctor “Voy a consultarlo con mi esposo para asegurarme antes de darle una respuesta final”, entonces yo fui y me hicieron también la entrevista y me dieron la posición. Entonces yo llegué muy contenta a la oficina y le dije: “Ya encontré otro trabajo” y ella me dice “¡Ay yo también!” Nos dimos cuenta de que era la misma oficina, la misma posición. Entonces después del trabajo fuimos las dos y le preguntamos al doctor que había pasado, que a cuál de las dos había contratado, y él le dijo “Bueno tú me dijiste que ibas a consultarlo con tu esposo, que después me dabas una respuesta final. Después vino ella y aplicó para la posición. Ella no tiene ningún inconveniente ella me dio el sí inmediatamente.” Entonces ella dijo “Si, pero yo le pensaba hablar hoy en la tarde.” El doctor al final le contestó “Oye sabes qué, ella es bilingüe y tú no, lo siento.” Me dieron a mí el trabajo por ser bilingüe entonces. Yo sé que cuando hablas más de un idioma vales por dos. (IIPS-Eva)

She realized through this experience that being bilingual provided better job opportunities. Her perceptions of bilingualism were reaffirmed, leading her to believe that a person who speaks

two languages has double the opportunities. Other parents also see in language academic and professional opportunities for their children. A common belief regarding linguistic capital was that being bilingual opens doors. An example of this recurring theme is shown below:

Yo quiero que mis hijos sean bilingües porque a ellos los dos idiomas les van a abrir muchas puertas, porque ahora a donde quiera que vayamos, ya hay personas que hablan dos idiomas, o incluso tres idiomas, y eso es muy importante. Yo le digo a mis niños que les va a abrir muchas puertas en los trabajos, porque una persona bilingüe vale por dos. (GIP2-Sonia)

This mother also believes that her children will find more job opportunities when they become adults. She also affirms that a bilingual person *vale por dos*, worth double. Another example of this perception of bilingualism as giving a person value is shown below:

Porque al saber dos idiomas valen por dos. Se pueden desenvolver más fácilmente, encontrar un trabajo si hablan español e inglés. (GIP2-Sara)

The *vale por dos* phrase is repeated in the last quote by another parent. She thinks that speaking English and Spanish will allow their children to communicate and easily find a job. The belief that a person will have more employment opportunities if they know at least two languages is constantly found throughout the interviews with the parents. They also mention that speaking two or more languages is not a luxury, but a necessity:

Ya ahorita en donde quiera ocupas dos idiomas, ya no es un lujo, es una necesidad. (GIP1-Elizabeth)

These parents live in a competitive world, and most of them come from a minority-language group. According to Baetens (2009), “U.S. Spanish continues to be minoritized, although Spanish has long been a language of global standing, and it is becoming ever more popular in Europe and other parts of the world” (p. 143). Spanish in the United States has been perceived by some as a language that belongs to lower-income classes, immigrants, people with little to no formal education. But these perceptions do not apply to many Hispanics in the U.S.A. They prefer EJEEA so their children are able to read, write, and speak in two languages. According to their perceptions, these languages become a tool their children will use to achieve in their futures, whether in the

academic or work fields. Therefore, they will function in a society that demands these skills due to the rapid globalization. Regarding this, García (2009) claims that “bilingualism is used to educate profoundly and globally, giving parents, both minority and majority, options that had not previously been available” (p. 117). Bilingual education in California had not been available to the masses until recently, with Proposition 58 (see Chapter 2); now, parents have a choice and support in raising their children bilingually.

Vincent considers that a benefit of speaking two or more languages is being able to communicate while traveling:

They'll have two languages and they'll be able to do twice as much linguistically as everybody else. I mean, they can travel the world in the Latin American community and have a basis for Spanish. (IIPS-Vincent)

Vincent has little knowledge of Spanish. He mentioned that his grandparents spoke the language, but that he never learned it. He believes that it will be easier for his children to travel around the Latin American community since their linguistic resources will allow them to communicate effectively. In the following section, I explore some of the strategies that parents use in order to foster bilingualism and biliteracy in their children.

4.2.4. Raising bilingual-biliterate children

Even though speaking two languages is important, parents also expect their children to read and write them correctly. They want them to be biliterate. They feel that their children learned to speak Spanish at home but enrolling their kids at EJEEA means that they will have an opportunity to learn proper Spanish grammar and orthography. In this sense they mention that:

Mis hijas tienen que leer todos los días en español. Tiene que leer, leer, leer y leer, y yo hago que me lo lean en español y a su papá le lean en inglés. Ellas tienen que llegar a hacer tarea y terminarla para que sigan con lo que quieran hacer (jugar ver televisión) pero antes la tarea. (GIP2-Sara)

Sara claims that reading in both languages is something that her daughters must do every day before doing any other activities, such as watching television or playing games. This shows that literacy in both languages is valued in their household.

Despite the fact that many parents appreciate the efforts of the teachers to instruct their children in two languages, some have noticed a gap. Such is the example of Lorena who points out that not all of the teachers are fully fluent in Spanish; consequently, there may be a gap in the child's knowledge. She states that:

A mis hijos les hace falta saber escribir en español. Los maestros los corrigen, pero no saben totalmente cómo debe ser escrito el idioma. Les hace falta aprender más. A veces me toca ver que el idioma principal de algunas maestras no es el español, entonces si dicen algo mal o lo escriben mal, el niño lo capta. Pero sé que la maestra que tienen es muy buena, es excelente, todo es como debe de ser, la cosa es que los niños no quieren aprovechar, esa es otra cosa, pero están muy muy bien. (IIPS-Lorena)

Bilingual teachers need to have thorough knowledge of both languages in order to prepare bilingual students. Yet, in some cases the student does not achieve a proficient level in one of the two languages, usually Spanish, according to some teachers. This will be discussed later on in the chapter. Lorena mentions she is afraid that if the educator makes mistakes when teaching the language, the children might reproduce the same mistakes. She knows that it is up to the students to take an advantage of the opportunity that EJEEA provides for them to learn to speak, read and write in two languages. It is important to note that not all of the children at EJEEA speak both languages at home (see Table 2, Chapter 2). Some of the children only know Spanish or English upon their arrival at EJE Elementary Academy. In consequence, some of the students are in the process of learning one or the other. Also, some parents believe that it is important to provide additional support at home in Spanish reading and writing in their mother language. Sandra affirms that she helps them with some of the following activities:

Yo los ayudo a practicar las letras y a leer. Leen mucho mis hijos, lo único que necesito hacer es que lean en voz alta, se devoran los libros y eso lo agradezco mucho a la escuela. A veces los pongo a practicar la escritura, no todo el tiempo, dependiendo mis energías, si no tengo energías se me olvida y ya los dejo. (IIPS- Sandra)

Although parents try to help their children to improve their Spanish, sometimes they do not have the time or energy to do it. According to Sandra there are some after school programs that assist children with their homework or with any subjects they might be having difficulties with,

especially when it is in a language they are learning. Regarding this issue Lorena expresses her struggle:

Yo estoy batallando un poco en cuestión de la ortografía en ambos idiomas, porque están por ejemplo en inglés, mi hijo lo escribe a como le entiende, pero la maestra y el programa que tienen después de escuela lo apoyan mucho. (IIPS-Lorena)

In the case of her child, he has difficulties with English because his pronunciation is different from its writing. The child writes English the same way that he understands it, as he would do in Spanish. Lorena mentions that she has lived in the United States for twenty years and she has spoken to her children in Spanish since they were born. The process of learning content classes in two languages has been difficult for her children, but they are becoming bilingual and also biliterate.

The predominant theme in this section was how parents encourage and support their children in developing bilingual and biliterate skills. In the next section, I explore parents' perception of faculty and staff.

4.2.5. Parents' perceptions of faculty and staff

In the previous section, Sherry described the way she and her daughter were treated when they asked for information about the school. The friendliness of the staff that she met was a major motivation for her to choose this school for her daughter. According to her, these positive attitudes have continued in the time that Sherry's daughter has studied at EJEEA. To expand on this topic, she mentions that:

The education here is fabulous I would never change it. I think all the teachers are fabulous. They're terrific. The principal is terrific, very understanding, very loving, very giving. They understand that I don't know Spanish at all and so they always pull me off to the side and explain what's going on, that way I was never left out. (IPE-Sherry)

Not only have the teachers shown consideration and affection to her daughter, but they have also supported Sherry when she needs it. Even though she is a native English speaker, Sherry appreciates that she is taken care of in an environment where a language she does not know, Spanish, is commonly used for different purposes. She thinks the faculty and staff do not have to

help her understand; nonetheless, they do, and she appreciates that. Other parents share Sherry's opinions towards the faculty and the staff that work at EJEEA. Rocío, a Hispanic mother, mentions the following regarding this topic:

Los maestros siempre están dispuestos. El ambiente aquí es muy familiar. Tiene uno acceso a los maestros, a la directora. (IIPS-Rocío)

Rocío mentions that she feels welcome and at home when she visits her children's school because she has contact with the teachers and the principal. Sherry also commented about the personality of the principal and described her as an understanding, loving and giving person. Lorena, another participant, feels happy because she recognizes the teachers as dedicated to their jobs and as professionals. She comments on this in the following extract from her individual interview:

Me siento muy contenta porque los maestros son muy dedicados, muy profesionales y siempre están dando su tiempo extra. Eso pues nos gusta porque [...] siempre tienen las puertas abiertas para los papás, puedes venir cualquier día, no tienes que avisar, tú puedes venir y ser voluntario, o simplemente observar a los niños, y cómo están implementando las clases los maestros. Eso también como papá te da un poco más de confianza con tus hijos y sabes que tienes más contacto con ellos. Los dos pueden trabajar en conjunto para lograr una mejor educación hacia tus hijos. (IIPS-Lorena)

The open doors at the school and the classroom demonstrate that the parents' participation is relevant at EJEEA. The teachers allow the parents to be active participants in their children's education. During the interviews, it was observed that the parents went into the classrooms to observe or aid. More parent involvement will be discussed in the next section.

Another aspect that has had an impact on the perceptions that the parents have of the teachers is the way that the children are treated. Some parents have already mentioned how caring, loving and friendly the staff and faculty members seem to be. Additionally, parents are satisfied knowing that all children are known by name, as shown below:

Aquí los conocen. Aquí les llaman por su nombre y en otras escuelas les llaman: "Hey, niño," y aquí no. Miss Lolbel, Miss Gómez, les hablan por su nombre y apellido. Igual a

mi esposo cuando viene, lo reciben, lo saludan en la oficina y... ¡Qué bueno que vino señor Figueroa, gracias por visitarnos! La amabilidad. (IIPS-Rocío)

Not only do parents like their children being humanized and not just seen as a number, but they also appreciate the way that the teachers and administrators greet the students and themselves when they arrive at school. Regarding this, one of the participants says the following:

Me gusta cómo reciben a los alumnos todos los días, les dan un abrazo y eso al niño le gusta también porque pues agarra confianza con los maestros. Cuando un niño tiene un problema, mis hijos van personalmente con un maestro a decirle qué pasa o un inconveniente que tuvieron, ya sea con el compañero o con quien sea. Eso también es muy bueno, porque los maestros se involucran con la familia completa. (GIP2-P4)

The relationship between parents and teachers has encouraged the active participation of the parents in their children's education. But, according to literature (Ramírez, 2003), Hispanic parents' participation is not commonly seen in monolingual schools. One is inclined to believe that Hispanic parents have taken a more active role at EJEEA because they are able to communicate using their L1. This provides equal participation for everyone. According to some studies (Alanís & Rodríguez, 2008), active parent participation in the DLPs is a critical feature that contributes to the success and sustainability of the program. Therefore, the following section will analyze parent involvement at EJEEA.

4.2.6. Parental involvement in school activities

One of the common issues that schools have is the lack of parent involvement. However, a considerable number of parents do volunteer work at EJEEA. Vincent, a parent who helped in many school activities before he had children of his own, mentions that:

I think parent involvement has an impact on your children no matter where they go to school. I think what makes this school great is they don't only allow it, they encourage it. I think every school should demand it. (IIPE- Vincent)

Vincent stated above that EJEEA encourages the participation of parents at school. Additionally, Lorena mentions that the school asks families to volunteer thirty hours annually. As a researcher, I had to investigate whether this is true, since none of the other parents mention it. In

agreement with Lorena's statement, the Community Immersion and Involvement clause of EJE Elementary Academy Single School District Plan (2016) affirms the following:

Each parent/family is strongly encouraged to play an active role in their child's education. It is our school belief that parents must share in the responsibility and accountability of their child's academic success. All EJEAE parents are committed to contribute thirty hours of volunteerism annually. (p. 14)

The clause, however, does not state that this volunteer work is compulsory. The clause from the document cited verifies the information provided by Lorena in the following extract from her interview:

Lorena: Siempre estoy aquí, trato siempre de venir de voluntaria. Siempre hago mis 30 horas e involucro a mi esposo, a mi mamá, a todos. Casi siempre en los eventos venimos.

A: ¿Tienen que hacer 30 horas?

Lorena: Mínimo son 30 horas.

A: ¿Por niño?

Lorena: Por niño. Entonces tengo 2 así es que casi todo el tiempo, pero me gusta mucho venir de voluntaria porque son muy accesibles los maestros. (IIPS-Lorena)

Regardless of what Lorena mentions, the Community Immersion and Involvement clause does not specify whether the thirty hours of volunteerism are to be completed for every child that is enrolled at EJEAE. It would be nearly impossible for parents who have more than two children enrolled in the school to comply with 60 or more hours of volunteer work. Lorena also mentions that she considers parents to be more participative at EJEAE than in other schools:

Siento que están mucho más involucrados aquí. No sé a qué se deba, pero si hay más involucramiento. Yo me sorprendo de que vamos a las juntas hay hasta 30 a 40 papás o más en clase. Se ve cuánto interés de los papás hay y por eso yo pienso que tiene mucho que ver con el éxito de la escuela. (IIPS-Lorena)

Some studies have shown that the distance between the American culture and the cultures of the partner language, in this case Spanish, have been barriers that impede the parents from approaching the school; therefore, these cultural barriers inhibit their active participation (De

Gaetano, 2007; Turney & Kao, 2009; Valdes, 1996). Some parents maintained that EJEEA provided an environment similar to Hispanic culture, especially Mexican culture. The language, values, festivities, and other cultural aspects implemented at EJEEA have overcome, to a certain extent, the barriers between the American and Hispanic cultures.

In continuation with the analysis of parent involvement, it is vital to mention that although parents are encouraged to do volunteer work in the school for thirty hours, the work schedules of many prevent them from completing the indicated hours. Such is the case of Eva:

Pues en realidad, mira yo trabajo tiempo completo, pero mi hermana es quien me cuida a mis hijos. Es como la segunda mamá de mis hijos. Ella me ha ayudado con mis hijos desde que ellos tienen 3 meses de nacidos. Ella se involucra aquí. Por ejemplo, ella va a las juntas, asiste a paseos, o cositas así. No exactamente tanto aquí porque aquí mi hijo nada más tiene medio año. Pero si las maestras piden algo, no sé, van a tener una fiestecita y piden juguitos o cosas así, siempre tratamos de participar y traer lo necesario. (IIPS-Eva)

This is the case of many parents who work full time and do not have the time or energy to be able to do thirty hours of volunteer work, plus the homework assignments of their children and the responsibilities that being a parent entail. However, Eva's case shows that there are no consequences for those parents who do not have time to fulfill the thirty hours of service. Nonetheless, her sister is actively engaged in the school's events and activities because parents and family involvement are highly encouraged. I list here some of the activities that the parents perform as part of their volunteering according to what they mentioned in the extracts analyzed throughout this section: helping teachers to hand out material to students, grading homework and exams, going on fieldtrips, creating or putting together material, being part of parent teacher committee, and organizing events, etc.

Most of the parents who were interviewed are stay-at-home moms or work part-time. This might be the reason why they are able to comply with the thirty hours of work. Sandra's interview was carried out while she worked in the photocopy room. She was there fulfilling some of her time as a volunteer. Regarding parents' involvement, Sandra, a stay-at-home mom, mentions that she feels that it motivates the children, and it makes them feel good. Unfortunately, not all of the parents are involved in the school activities because of their work schedules:

Yo siento que ayuda mucho al menos al niño lo motiva, los hacen sentirse muy bien, hay muchos niños que por desgracia sus papás no pueden venir porque van a trabajar. (IIPS-Sandra)

In this sense, Mary mentions that she works full-time but she still has to find the time to get involved in the school activities:

Procuro ir a los eventos que son de noche. Después de mi hora de trabajo. Ya que en la escuela tienen actividades más tarde. Como una de mis hijas estuvo aquí cuando la escuela se cambió de Chase a Cuyamaca (donde está actualmente la escuela) mi esposo y yo ayudamos con la mudanza. Ahora con mi otra hija, tratamos de estar ahí una vez que hemos terminado nuestro trabajo. Sin embargo, a veces nos es imposible. Pero eventos como kermeses, que son en la noche, permiten que los papás realicemos las horas de servicio. Como mi hija tiene que quedarse después de escuela, debido a mis horarios, ella les ayuda a sus maestras con diferentes actividades como engrapar coas, organizar material, etc. (GIP3-Mary)

Mary struggles to find time to fulfill the thirty hours of work. She has to volunteer her free time to the school whenever is possible, but her daughter also helps the teacher, and this contributes to her parents' hours. However, Mary mentions that:

Ayudar en la escuela es más que nada en un compromiso moral y no un contrato con la escuela. Los maestros, y sobre todo la directora, son muy conscientes de que trabajamos y que no podemos estar aquí todo el tiempo. Además, no tenemos familia que nos ayude a completar las horas y eso lo saben las maestras. (GIP3-Mary)

According to Mary, being involved in the school is not something that the school makes her do, but rather it is a moral responsibility that she has with her children and the school. Nevertheless, Sandra believes that some parents who do not work still do not actively participate in their children's education. She states that:

Hay otros que los papás no trabajan y no vienen, es tanto ahí el papá. Pero hay unos que por más que quisieran estar con sus hijos y no pueden, pero hacen el sacrificio. (IIPS-Sandra)

Nonetheless, unless other parents declare that they do not get involved in school activities, this is just one mother's perception.

Parents' active participation in their children's school also has an impact in their education. Sandra opines that the children like to see their parents, even if they do not show it:

A los niños les gusta ver a sus papás, aunque se hagan los fuertes, aunque digan: "Yo no ocupo a mi papá." Les da gusto que sus papás vengan y los despidan. Que vengan a las clases un ratito o los acompañen en sus viajes de la escuela. (IIPS-Sandra)

Other parents share Sandra's perceptions of children's feelings towards the participation of their parents at school. They think that they have a positive impact on their children:

Yo también noto que cuando uno viene de voluntaria, los niños se ponen muy contentos, se ponen orgullosos y se sienten motivados de que sus mamás vengan a sus salones. (GIP2-P3)

The parents did not mention exactly what they see in the children's attitudes that lead these mothers to assert that the students are pleased with their constant presence in the school. Even so, parents think that they should be actively engaged in school activities and their children's education. Norma considers that:

Si ellos [los padres] pueden venir a ayudar en algo después del trabajo, a los niños les encanta. Pero si es muy importante que se involucren en lo que puedan. A veces se podrían llevar trabajo si quisieran. Pero uno nunca sabe si están cansados o si tengan el tiempo para apoyar. Pero siento que, si apoya mucho que el niño se sienta bien de ver a sus papás alrededor, y si el niño te deja todavía ir a la clase -yo ya no voy a la clase de mis hijos- pero si veo que todavía a mi hija le da gusto verme, aunque a veces se vuela de más. A veces yo he dejado de ir porque se me vuelan entonces no quiero que se desconcentren y dejen de prestar atención en la clase porque esta uno ahí. (GIP6-Norma)

Even though Norma completely agrees with parental involvement in school, she has found it to be counterproductive in some occasions. According to what she said, her presence in her children's classroom has become a source of distraction for them; consequently, she decided to stop visiting their classes. She wants her children to be attentive in class, and she considers her

removal from the classroom to be necessary for them to be able to concentrate. Teachers and staff must consider this situation in order to take action and set schedules for parents to visit, because somebody going in and out of the classroom may be a source of distraction for children. Perhaps, an open house once a month would be better than allowing parents to be present in class whenever they want.

Overall, parents' perception of their involvement in the school is positive. Many of the participants are stay-at-home moms or part-time workers that have the time to dedicate to school work and activities. Some of them believe that they are more actively engaged in EJEEA's projects and activities than parents at other schools. According to them, that could possibly be due to the attitudes of the staff and the teachers, as well as the school environment and culture. The use of their L1 in school has also had an impact on the way the students, parents, teachers and staff interact on a daily basis. Parents who do not speak one of the two languages, English or Spanish, are able to communicate with almost everyone in the school. Hence, they can participate more, not only in activities and by doing work, but in the decision making of the school, since parents are the ones who struggle to open EJEEA, in 2005. However, there are parents such as Eva and Mary, that may struggle to find the time to comply with the thirty hours of volunteer work. After school events and work that can be completed at home, are the only ways that they can become involved. A negative aspect of parent involvement during school hours, is that children may get distracted from academic work. Although this is not mentioned by the participants, constant observation might also hinder students' and teacher's performance in school and create tension in the classroom. The next section details the students' perceptions of the language practices they are subjects of at school and also at home.

4.3. Being bilingual children

This section of the chapter discusses the analysis regarding the students' experiences in EJEEA as a dual language charter school.

4.3.1 Children's language use

I start by discussing the students' language use at school and at home which is an indicator of whether they, as bilinguals, are integrating both languages to their everyday lives. Concerning this issue, the majority of the students claim to use mostly English at school, including Hispanics whose first language is Spanish. One of the reasons why these children have decided to use English

at school is because some of their classmates do not understand Spanish and because they believe English to be an easier language to learn and with which to communicate. Johnathan, Sarah and Ismael (GIS2) claim the following:

Johnathan: I like using English because most of my friends talk English. 'Cause it's an easier language for me to speak.

Alexis: What about you?

Sarah: It's an easier language for me to speak.

Ismael: That, it's an easier way to talk and like communicate with your friends.

Sarah: Yeah! We talk more easier to other people. (GIS2)

Since students were interviewed in groups of five, classmates' opinions might have had an influence in the way they responded. However, in another group interview, students provided similar responses. Francisco states that the language they mostly use with their schoolmates is English because:

Not a lot of people like speaking Spanish, except if you're really mexicano. (GIS1-Francisco)

However, Francisco, along with other students, believes that the reason why they mostly use English at school is because, by the time they get to fifth grade, they start using more English, instead of Spanish, even though the allocation must be 50-50 in fifth grade. This student explains that:

Since we're learning more English, we speak a little more English. (GIS1-Francisco)

This claim could mean that the allocation of the languages at EJEEA is not carried out as established in Chapter 2. Teacher's use of the language in the classroom also influences the way students interact and the language they choose to use. Arturo narrates that:

My teacher sometimes she's like talking English when the class is in Spanish and then she just pauses, and she starts speaking Spanish again. (GIS11-Arturo)

One of the main premises of DLE is that languages should be kept separately (Cummins, 2005). Since EJEEA follows an additive bilingual framework, they usually follow a rigid separation of languages. Regarding this García (2009) notes that “in the United States, two-way bilingual education programs also tend to have a policy of strict language separation on the grounds that concurrent language use ends up favoring the majority language” (p. 292). In agreement with this quotation, the following statements indicate that English has become the students’ dominant language:

I mostly forget words in Spanish. (GIS4- Esteban)

I speak Spanish only at my house with my parents. (GIS6-Tinna)

We forget to speak Spanish. (GIS6- Jess)

I didn't know much English, so my mom brought me here and I started speaking English more than Spanish so now I'm forgetting Spanish. (GIS4-Donna)

I learn English when I came to this school. I mostly talk English now. (GIS2-Franco)

As previously mentioned, some of the students’ first language is Spanish, but once they have been immersed in the American culture and education system, English becomes their main language. This is not the case for all, as some students also claim that Spanish is the language they use at home:

It's more weird seeing me speak English at home than Spanish. My whole family, their first language is Spanish. (GIS7-Gerry)

I speak Spanish at home because that's also my first language. I talk English here because it's the only place where I can talk English. (GIS2)

Family language policy plays a crucial role in students’ use of either English or Spanish. Family language policy refers to “explicit and overt planning in relation to language use within the home among family members, and provides an integrated overview of research on how languages are managed, learned, and negotiated within families” (King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008, p. 1). This highly contributes to children’s second language acquisition. One of the outcomes that parents expect from EJEEA is that their children become both bilingual and biliterate, but it is at home

where Hispanic students could reinforce and practice their Spanish skills. According to Houwer (2007), parental input is crucial to the retention of the home language. The studies reviewed by this author indicate that “non-English home language retention was highest when both parents used language X at home” (Houwer, 2007, p. 412). Hence, parents should actively participate in their children’s bilingual education.

The EJEEA as a dual language charter school could strengthen the home language for Hispanic students, and these children could encourage their non-Spanish speaking friends to use the language more often at school, since the latter do not receive much Spanish language input from other sources. Even though some students do not use Spanish at home, they recognize the value of becoming bilingual. In the following section, I review their responses regarding this topic.

4.3.2. “You can get a better job”: Bilingualism as linguistic capital

In section 4.4., I explored the parents’ perceptions of bilingualism as linguistic capital. Students’ comments regarding the value of speaking two languages were similar to those of the parents. Most of them believe that being bilingual will provide them with better job opportunities. Natasha states that:

I think it’s pretty cool to speak two languages, because when I grow up I want to be a doctor and my mom says: “Come on, speak English and Spanish”. And it’s true, when you speak two languages you get pay more, you get a better job, you have more opportunities.
(Natasha, GIS14)

Natasha’s perceptions of being bilingual might be influenced by her mother. However, she thinks that making an effort to speak both languages will provide her with varied opportunities in the future. A second student who would like to become a doctor considers that:

I want to become a doctor when I grow up, and sometimes there is people that doesn’t speak English and I want to help them. (GIS13-Melany)

This excerpt could mean the Melany has lived experiences where she has seen individuals who are not able to communicate in certain situations such as a doctor’s visit. Therefore, her perception of a bilingual has become that of someone who is able to communicate with more people

and to help them achieve effective interactions. A third student perceives the knowledge of two languages as linguistic capital. Regarding this, Juan considers that:

There's more opportunities if you speak two language than if you speak only one language. Doctors, for example, need to speak more languages. (GIS5-Juan)

Apparently, students' closest reference to the use of two language as professionals have been doctors, since they continuously mention their need to speak a second language. There were also students who could relate the use of a second to other employments or career:

I want to become a soccer player because they earn tons of money. But I want to play for the Real Madrid, so I have to speak Spanish, and English for when we go to other countries. (GIS8-Emilio)

I think how it's gonna help us is for if you wanna be a cook or, for example, a cashier. You could talk to people in English, or Spanish if they don't know English. That really does help. And if you're good with both languages your job would be easier. (GIS5-Joseph)

Some of these students' comments demonstrate that they see the economic advantages of bilingualism. The perceptions of the students and parents are justified by research. The Canadian government, which has established two official language (English and French), has carried out a literature review. Regarding the economic advantages of being bilingual, the document notes the following:

Bilingual individuals derive a number of benefits from their language skills: insurance against layoffs, higher wages and rates of employment, higher paying occupations and industries, greater labour mobility. Furthermore, there are earnings benefits for immigrants to learn, and use, the language or languages of the host country, but also to actively maintain their mother tongue. (Government of Canada, 2016, p. 8)

Although Canada could be considered a bilingual country (depending on the region), the advantages of speaking two language do not only apply to English-French bilinguals, but also to the immigrant community which has decided to continue speaking their mother tongue along with one or both of the Canadian official languages. A similar phenomenon might be happening in the United States. This country has no official language, as reviewed in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, the

use of English is accepted, but also necessary in a myriad of situations, including schooling. The prohibition of bilingual education in some states observes the negative aspects of having minority language children in their institutions, such as lower performance in state testing. On the other hand, parents, teachers, and students who are bilingual or encourage bilingualism have identified the advantages of speaking two or more languages. Natasha considers that being bilingual is significant:

Because most people are only able to speak Spanish, and other people are only able to speak English, but to speak two languages it makes you, well it doesn't make you important, but it makes you to be able to communicate with more people. Since there's really nice people in the school you can communicate with them better. For example, if someone speaks Spanish you can communicate with them, and if they speak English you can communicate with them, too. (GIS14-Natasha)

Through her experiences, Natasha has identified that the majority of the people in her context are monolinguals. Seeing that there are people in her own school that only speak one language allows her to understand that being bilingual is and will continue to be useful. Joseph also considers that being bilingual:

It's gonna help us is for if you wanna be a cook or, for example, a cashier. You could talk to people in English, or Spanish if they don't know English. That really does help. And if you're good with both languages your job would be easier. (GIS5-Joseph)

Thereby, these students' reflections state that if one wants to be able to communicate with monolinguals, one should also learn their language, and not necessarily the other way around. This is a reflection of their tolerance and respect towards linguistic differences.

Some first and second-generation immigrant children have also been raised by parents/family members who have not acquire English as their second language, and this impacts the way they perceive being bilingual and receiving a bilingual education. The perceptions that the school community at EJEEA shares regarding bilingualism are a product of their experiences. Students' seem to acknowledge the opportunity that their school provides them to become bilinguals and/or improve their skills in both languages, which I discuss in the next section.

4.3.3. “Not many schools are bilingual”: EJEEA as a bilingual school

As established in Chapter 2, EJEEA was the first school in El Cajon, CA, to provide bilingual education to Hispanics, and low-income families. One aspect that characterizes EJEEA is its history of struggle to find the resources and means to implement the DLP. These struggles include becoming a charter school in a state where bilingual education was still prohibited, and underachieving institutions were closed. Due to the different murals around the school (see Appendix 6), and a sense of belonging, students have learned the history of their academic institution. However, the most notable difference that students see between EJEEA en other elementary schools is the bilingual education they receive:

I think this school's different because not so many schools are bilingual. (GIS7-Tania)

When I was little, I went to another school. I don't remember the name, but all we would do is talk English, and when I came here, I learned another language. (GIS7- Oscar)

Cesar had previous experience going to another school. Therefore, it might have been easier for him to identify the differences between his last school and EJEEA. His view could also be less biased given that numerous children have been enrolled at EJEEA since they were in kindergarten. Another student states that:

In other schools you don't have like teachers that talk Spanish. So, last year I had a teacher that didn't talk Spanish, and from coming here it was a big difference, 'cause they talk like Spanish and English. (GIS10-Desiree)

Teachers are an invaluable human resource for bilingual schools. They are the ones who interact with their students in a daily basis and a considerable amount of the language input that the students receive is from their instructors. Therefore, what Desiree mentions is relevant to this study since it demonstrates the importance of the teacher in second language acquisition. According to García (2009),

teachers' communicative practices in school normally include the use of multiple multilingual practices that maximize learning efficacy and communication; and that,

in so doing, *foster and develop tolerance towards linguistic differences, as well as appreciation of languages and bilingual proficiency* [sic]. (n.p.)

Teachers at EJEEA, as an influence in students' academic lives, could implement practices in the classroom that encourage their students to continue using the target language outside of school, and take advantage that the students *like* becoming bilingual. Regarding this, Julian and Patricia claim the following:

What I like about this school is that it is bilingual, and we can learn in two languages because some people don't know Spanish or English and we have the opportunity to learn.
(GIS6-Julian)

I like the bilingual part because really not many schools have a bilingual class. For example, español. Most schools don't have that, and I guess we're lucky to learn Spanish.
(GIS4-Patricia)

Students have accepted bilingualism as part of their everyday lives. As stated before, García (2009) considers that bilingualism will help “develop tolerance towards linguistic differences” (n.p.), and learners at EJEEA seem to have achieved this, as some of them are tolerant to other students and family members. Joanna explains that:

[At EJEEA] they have students learn in different languages and cultures, so that people that don't understand Spanish can learn it. They can speak Spanish with other people, and use it with your dad, and you can translate for your dad and help him when he needs help.
(GIS8-Joanna)

Students, thereby, have found different advantages of being bilingual, including learning about other cultures and languages, and being more tolerant to classmates or people who do not have the same language skills. Being in a bilingual school has influenced the way they perceive the world, the way that they interact with others, and the way that they learn. Joanna mentioned that, once a person becomes bilingual, he/she could help their parents communicate by interpreting for them. Some other children mentioned similar situations. As a consequence, in the following section I review language brokering.

4.3.4. Children as language brokers and “teachers”

This section analyzes how children’s use of language and language preference at home reveals them to be language brokers. Their responses are evidence of how these students feel responsible for their parents’ acquisition of a language. Samuel mentions that:

I like that my school is bilingual since my parents are from Mexico and speak Spanish. I learn more English and Spanish every day, and I can teach my mom English because she wants to learn. (GIS5-Samuel)

Samuel’s mom does not speak English, and he says he could teach her. Having something that his mom wants might empower Samuel by making him feel more knowledgeable. Parents at EJEEA who admitted not to speak English did not mention this aspect. Apparently, for their children sharing their knowledge of English and Spanish with their parents is an important motive for them to continue developing both languages. However, in response to what Samuel mentioned above, Darren, a non-Hispanic student, said:

She [Samuel’s mom] has to go to school then, in order to learn English. (GIS5-Darren)

Darren’s short but powerful utterance reveals his attitudes towards children teaching their parents a second language. Children are already learning content that will allow them to obtain better employment and academic opportunities for themselves in the future. But children, such as Darren, might believe that parents also have to go to school, like kids do, if they want to acquire new knowledge. The only language that Darren’s parents speak is English, which might be a reason why he does not empathize with Samuel.

These kinds of responses emerged when the students were asked what language they spoke at home. Spanish speaking students were the ones who felt a need to teach their parents English. Lidia said the following:

In my house I speak Spanish, but sometimes I try to teach my parents English. (GIS6-Lidia)

She did not mention whether her parents asked her to teach them the language. However, she tries to do it by applying the knowledge that she has acquired at school. What Lidia said reminded Oscar that he also teaches English to his parents:

That's what I do when my dad has grammar errors because he didn't go to school here.
(GIS6- Oscar)

According to him, his dad has grammar errors because he did not go to school in the United States, which is what Oscar means by the use of the word “here”. He perceives that his dad lacks knowledge that Oscar possesses due to the bilingual education that he receives at EJEEA.

Children whose families do not speak Spanish have also become teachers to their parents. They are aware that they have linguistic capital that their parents do not. Dan, a non-Hispanic, says that:

I like knowing Spanish cause my mom wants to learn Spanish. So, sometimes I'll talk to her in Spanish and she can understand some words. (GIS4- Dan)

Dan would like to help her mom with one of her goals, and that is to learn Spanish. Dan was not as participative during the study as other children; however, when he was asked how it felt to learn in two languages, that was his immediate response. The children responses are an indication that their parents are a main motivation for them to learn and to use, or not, a language.

Hispanic children who attend EJEEA usually need both languages to communicate with their parents and other relatives. Regarding this José mentions that:

At home I'm the only person who is bilingual; we have my dad, but he only knows a little bit of Spanish since his mom knows a lot of Spanish. I'm the only one at home who has to translate for her, and my mom says I'm getting better. (GIS3-José)

José as a bilingual believes he is responsible for his grandmother understanding what is said. He has to translate for her because he knows both languages, but he feels satisfied with knowing that he is able to share his knowledge with the people around him.

Language brokering is phenomenon that has been explored by different areas of knowledge, such as psychology, education, bilingualism, and applied linguistics. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there is a variety of reasons for brokering, and this action might lead to advantages and disadvantages.

4.4. Teaching in a DLP

This section analyzes the responses of the teachers: Mrs. Lolbel, Ms. Daisy, and Ms. Martha. Through the data provided in the questionnaires and narratives frames, they illustrate their lives as bilinguals, and as teachers in a DLP. The analysis of the teachers' experiences allows the exploration of their perceptions of bilingualism and biliteracy.

Ms. Martha and Ms. Lolbel work in elementary section of the school, EJEEA; however, Ms. Daisy works in the middle school. This difference was a consequence of the withdrawal of some elementary teachers from the study. Ms. Daisy was willing to participate, and she provided valuable and meaningful responses. Both sections of the school shared the same infrastructure, and staff. The DLP is also implemented, but in different percentages.

4.4.1. Becoming a teacher

The experiences that the teachers have had as learners themselves are what usually motivate individuals to choose this profession. These can be both negative and positive. The negative ones might encourage these teachers to care more about their students and provide spaces for them to grow as human beings. The teachers who had positive experiences try to instill in their students' feelings of security, to inspire them, and to motivate them to continue learning. Ms. Daisy decided to become a teacher for the following reasons:

For many years throughout my educational experiences, I felt that my teachers were falling short when it came to challenging me or caring about me. I cannot say that I had many great teachers when I was a student. Ironically, I always loved school regardless. When I was a freshman in high school, I met a teacher that cared and challenged me. I immediately felt in love with his class. I loved it so much, I asked to have him as a teacher for three years straight. He became my mentor and biggest inspiration. When I moved on to college, I also had great professors that fostered my love for learning and that inspire me to become an educator as well. Now I strive to be that high school teacher and college professors for my students. I teach because I care about my students, their emotional needs, home environment and academic success. (TNF- Daisy)

Ms. Daisy's situation at school led her to seek an education that would truly boost her potential as a student. She sought in her teachers individuals who might inspire her to be a better version of herself. Ms. Daisy had the opportunity of finding these teachers when she was in high school, and later in college. By comparing both types of experiences, she concluded that she would become a caring, challenging, and encouraging teacher.

Ms. Martha's positive experiences as a teacher also motivated her to become one herself. Since a young age, she knew what profession she would choose. Regarding this she mentions:

I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. I decided to become one because I had an elementary (second grade) teacher that positively impacted my life. The way this teacher interacted with all of her students left an imprint in my life. She knew our personal life, and I could confide in her. I knew I wanted to have that same impact on someone as well.
(TNF-Martha)

More than sharing knowledge with her students, Ms. Martha aims to be someone that they can trust and approach when they need it. She would like to have an impact on her students' lives, just the way her teacher had a positive impact on hers. Ms. Martha, as well as Ms. Daisy, chose their profession because of their experiences as learners. In the following extract, Mrs. Lolbel mentions why she wanted to become a teacher:

I want to make sure students have someone they can relate to and someone that understands their families and their lived experiences. I also want to make sure that families have someone with whom they can communicate. (TNF-Lolbel)

Mrs. Lolbel, Ms. Daisy, and Ms. Martha want their students to view them as someone who comprehends the circumstances that they experience on a daily basis; therefore, this mutual understanding could lead towards better communication among the teacher, parents and the students. However, the students are second language learners, either in English or Spanish. This sets them apart because the teachers' qualifications and the approach that they adopt in their teaching practice is a determinant in the development of the students as biliterate bilinguals. Therefore, the participants' experiences as bilingual learners and bilingual teachers will be explored in the next section.

4.4.2. Being a bilingual teacher

The three teacher participants were raised in a bilingual and bicultural environment that encouraged the maintenance of their mother language, which is Spanish. Regarding this Mrs. Lolbel states:

I was never allowed to speak English at home, especially since my parents didn't speak any English. (TQ-Lolbel)

Several of the students at EJEEA have been through the same circumstances as Mrs. Lolbel. Their parents do not allow them to speak English at home, and some of them struggle with the linguistic and cultural differences that being bilingual implies. This struggle can be in either one of the students' languages. Consequently, Mrs. Lolbel decided to obtain her bilingual teaching credential because:

I want students to be able to communicate in their native language. My first language is Spanish, I grew up speaking only Spanish and therefore appreciated having someone I could communicate with at school. I want to ensure my students have the same opportunity and are able to communicate in Spanish or English. My intention from the beginning was always to teach at a bilingual school, therefore obtaining a bilingual credential was second nature. (TNF-Lolbel)

From what she says, it could be inferred that she was able to speak her first language at school when she was a student. Mrs. Lolbel's experience as a learner and as a teacher exemplifies the situation of bilingualism and language minorities in the United States, where there are few opportunities for students to use their native language. Mrs. Lolbel is aware of the situation. She hopes to provide a space for her students to be able to communicate in English and Spanish. Consequently, she wanted to teach in a bilingual school that offered a variety of opportunities for the students to use their mother language.

Ms. Daisy's experience as a bilingual learner herself also motivated her to obtain a bilingual teaching credential:

I decided to get my bilingual teaching credential because it was never a question. I am a bilingual student, who will always be an English Learner. (TNF-Daisy)

Even though she was born in Torrance, California, Ms. Daisy was an English learner herself. She learned Spanish at home and school and studied in Tijuana, Mexico from kindergarten to fourth grade. Ms. Daisy started learning English when she was in fifth grade when she moved with her family to the United States (TQ-Daisy). Regarding this experience she states the following:

Bilingual education is very popular right now in California, but this was not always the case. When I came to the States in 5th grade I was put in an English only class because I needed to learn the language if I wanted to be considered "American." (TNF-Daisy)

Mrs. Daisy experienced a moment where her lack of knowledge of English situated her in a position where she was considered “less” American if she did not speak this language. Although the number of bilingual schools in the United States has increased rapidly over the last decades (Lindholm-Leary, 2013), most minority language speakers, such as Ms. Daisy, are placed in submersion programs. These programs make little or no effort to accommodate to the learners’ language needs (Hall, Smith, & Wicaksono, 2011). Ms. Daisy’s experience as an English learner motivated her to become a bilingual teacher who would prioritize her students' linguistic needs.

As opposed to Ms. Daisy, Mrs. Lolbel’s childhood school experiences as a bilingual student in the United States were positive:

I was very fortunate, particularly during the primary years of my education. I had teachers that spoke Spanish and acknowledged my home language and culture. Unfortunately, as I got older that did not always happen, especially in high school. (TNF-Lolbel)

Unlike Ms. Daisy, Mrs. Lolbel had the opportunity of acquiring English at a young age as her second language. She had a positive experience regarding the use of Spanish at school because she might have felt that she was able to communicate with other people besides her parents. The language that she first learned was not only spoken by her family, but by more people whom she interacted with on a daily basis. Her positive experience might have led her to believe that if she became a bilingual teacher, then she would represent for her students what her Spanish-speaking teachers meant to her. However, during her secondary education, the use of Spanish at school started to decrease. She mentions that,

I consider myself bilingual, although I think academically I can write and speak English better than I can in Spanish. (TQ-Lolbel)

She might not feel equally proficient in Spanish because this language was not given the same status as English in the secondary levels: middle school and high school. It is during this period of formal instruction that schools emphasize reading and writing. Therefore, her formal bilingual education came to a halt, but she continued using the spoken language at home.

Thus far, the data extracts presented from Ms. Daisy and Mrs. Lolbel responses reveal that they would like to provide the students with a space to use their mother language. However, the school does not only have children that are English learners, but native English speakers who are also learning a second language. The perception of both teachers is that Spanish speakers are the ones who need the spaces to communicate in their language because they have not been provided in other contexts outside their family and the school-good. Meanwhile, native English speakers are considered as part of the dominant culture who are already privileged to have their voices heard.

Ms. Martha's reasons to become a bilingual teacher are grounded on the proposition of bilingualism as linguistic capital. Regarding her career choice she states the following:

I decided to be a bilingual teacher because I was always aware that knowing two languages (or more) is a benefit that adds to my possibilities. I have always wanted people to see Spanish as an advantage, not a disadvantage. We are privileged to speak and write Spanish; this is why I wanted to seek a bilingual credential and work at a bilingual school. (TQ-Martha)

Some individuals in the U.S.A. considered Spanish as having a lower social status, as previously stated in the section 4.2 of this chapter, and Ms. Martha considers that speaking this language is not a disadvantage. She perceives teaching in a bilingual school as a possibility to share her knowledge of Spanish to change the beliefs that have been influenced by the language. However, she believes that the knowledge of two languages will always be better than knowing just one:

I believe that DLPs are becoming extremely popular and many public schools are now becoming dual schools because the majority of parents are seeing the benefits of being able

to speak more than one language. Placing your child in a dual language school gives them a tool that nobody will ever be able to take away. (TNF- Martha)

Ms. Martha states the implementation of DLPs has increased because parents have seen the benefits. This suggests that the American education system has heard their requests. However, bilingual education is still understood as a privilege for those who can afford to access to it. Evidence shows that “class has become increasingly more important in today’s policy context than race, ethnicity, national origin, or English-speaking abilities in determining access to opportunities, power, and privilege” (García, 2005, p.99). Even if students are bilingual or multilingual, their lack of economic resources might hinder their access to employment and academic opportunities. Most students who attend EJEEA come from low-income families. Nonetheless, if parents, teachers, and students continue advocating for bilingual education in the United States, their social mobility will become a possibility. This means that students will have access to more and better socioeconomical opportunities, as well as academic ones.

Ms. Daisy also considers bilingualism as linguistic capital that will benefit the students in the future:

I believe in the power of speaking two languages, and its benefits. My goal is to inspire students to embrace bilingualism, because unfortunately many of them do not understand the benefits of it yet. (TNF-Daisy)

She perceives bilingualism as an advantage for her students. If she believes that the students do not understand the benefits of being bilingual is perhaps because the school designates more time to other aspects of education, and the DLP is not correctly implemented.

According to Ms. Daisy and Mrs. Lolbel, the Spanish program at EJEEA requires improvement. Mrs. Lolbel suggests that she would like to change the program for these reasons:

I don’t think it is at the same academic level as our English program because not all of our students are proficient in Spanish by the time they get to fifth grade. Our school places a huge emphasis on English after third grade because of state testing that takes place at the end of each school year. The state test gives our school an overall ranking which says a lot about our academic performance, and therefore Spanish gets put on the back burner. I

would not only change the Spanish program, but the school's approach and emphasis on the Dual Immersion Program. (TNF-Lolbel)

While EJEEA has accomplished many of its goals since its creation in 2005, Mrs. Lolbel reveals that the DLP is not putting enough emphasis on Spanish. Every year, the school focuses more on preparing students for statewide assessment which puts greater emphasis on English. These tests usually measure the students' performance in English/language arts literacy and mathematics. Therefore, the Spanish program becomes a secondary aspect of the curriculum. Ms. Martha agrees with this statement by mentioning:

I would like to change the focus on the test scores because it makes teaching way more stressful. (TNF-Martha)

It seems like the teacher must focus more on the students' test performance than on what they learn throughout the school year. Spanish is not included in standardized testing, so why make it a priority in the schools' curriculum? The lack of emphasis in the DLP can be appreciated in the language preference of the students. Concerning this, Mrs. Lolbel states that she has seen her students:

struggle with both languages. Some students master one language more than the other. Very few students are able to communicate in both languages equally by fifth grade. They prefer to communicate in English. (TNF-Lolbel)

She believes the school does not meet the expectations of the parents regarding the students' command of both languages. In fifth-year, the instruction time is evenly divided in English and Spanish. However, in the section related to the students' responses, they mention that English is the language that they use most in the classroom, and in the school interaction in general. EJEEA should make an emphasis in the correct implementation of the DLP. Mrs. Lolbel mentions the following regarding the expectations that families have when they decide to enroll their children in a DLP:

I think that for some of our families, EJEEA is their only way of ensuring that their children are exposed to the Spanish language and have an opportunity to practice the language. (TNF-Lolbel)

As seen in the first section of this chapter, parents expect their children to learn two languages at EJEEA, and for some, especially for first-generation immigrants, it is essential that their children continue learning Spanish, in an environment that they trust and respect. Nonetheless, although Hispanic students do have a certain proficiency in Spanish, the focus on the testing at school is a factor that diminishes the efforts of the DLP.

Ms. Daisy, who works with sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students, in the middle school describes the DLP as follows:

Our program is a 70-thirty model in the middle school. Our students have two classes in Spanish (Spanish & History) and all other classes in English (English, Math, Science, Music, and P.E.). Our school needs to strengthen the Spanish program, I am the only Spanish teacher in the middle school, and the students have very limited time with me (180 minutes for 7th & 8th grade) but only (140 minutes in 6th grade) due to our schedule. I think that we need to get creative with our schedule in order to be able to truly implement a 70-thirty model that is producing biliterate students. (TNF-Daisy)

Ms. Daisy believes that the time designated for Spanish is limited in the three grades that she teaches. The three participants agreed that the Spanish program should be improved because the school is not educating genuinely biliterate students. Perhaps they can interact in Spanish; nonetheless, the learners might struggle with the language when reading and writing.

The three teachers consider that working at EJEEA represents hard work because being a bilingual teacher is a challenging profession. The next extracts belong to the teachers' responses in the narrative frame to the prompt that reads I have found my working experience at EJEEA to be:

Difficult, challenging, overwhelming, rewarding, exciting, tiring, constantly changing. (TNF-Lolbel)

Very exhausting (but in a good way). The job is very rewarding however, it is endless because our students have many academic and social emotional needs. However, what I like about EJE is the positive school culture and the several support systems that are in place for the students, families and teachers. (TNF-Daisy)

Rewarding. Although it requires a lot of dedication, it is a rewarding feeling to take kids out to eat, to spend time with them. It is rewarding to get to know your students at a personal level rather than just on an academic level. The freedom we have at EJE to try new things makes teaching an enjoyable experience. (TNF-Martha)

The three of them agreed that working at EJEEA is rewarding, but also tiring. A lot of dedication must be put into educating bilingual and biliterate children. They mention that they have to know their students and be there for them when they need it; although this might be challenging at times. None of them seems to perceive themselves as transmitters of knowledge, but as a support for their students, and their students' families.

This section of the data discussed the experiences of the teachers working in a DLP. They perceive bilingualism and biliteracy as an advantage that will benefit students in different aspects of their lives. The three teachers acknowledged the lack of attention that the DLP, specifically Spanish, is given. They believe that the time and effort designated to Spanish must increase because they are not achieving their goal of educating truly bilingual students. Ms. Martha and Mrs. Lolbel recognized that the school dedicates more time to prepare students for standardized testing, which evaluates a students' knowledge of English language arts, mathematics, and science. Therefore, there is no need for the students to focus their attention on Spanish, when they see that they do not need it and probably will not need it in examinations that give the school a certain status according to the students' results (the testing is likely high stakes testing, meaning that the results determine how much public funding the school will receive-hence the emphasis/washback effect on English vs Spanish instruction/proficiency. The teachers must place their efforts into preparing them for these tests.

Ms. Daisy, Mrs. Lolbel, and Ms. Martha decided to become bilingual teachers because they went through the same experiences that their students do. They feel identified with the lived experiences of their learners outside and inside the classrooms as second language learners. Spanish is their first language; consequently, they needed to learn English to survive in the country where they lived, just like many of their students do. Their perceptions of the students are that native-English speakers do not need to struggle and fight for spaces to be able to use their language, while native-Spanish speakers do not have the same opportunities to express using their mother

tongue. Each of these teachers hopes that their students confide in them and perceive them as a support that will help them achieve their goals in a caring, but also challenging environment.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the themes that emerged from the data collected from the parents, the students, and the teachers. The first section analyzed parents' reasons for choosing a dual language charter school to enroll their children. The subsections include major topics that had an impact on their perception of the DLP, such as the waiting lists, the teacher-parent relationship, and parent involvement in the classroom. The second major section, being bilingual children, discussed aspects of the lives of the students as bilingual learners outside and inside the school. The last section, teaching in a dual language school, explores the experiences of teachers in the DLP implemented at EJEEA, and the way that these experiences shape their perceptions of bilingualism and biliteracy.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

The first part of this chapter summarizes the key findings of the study, followed by its contributions to the area of bilingual education, and its practical applications for the institution where it was conducted. Then, the limitations of the study are acknowledged, which leads to the recommendations for further research. The chapter concludes with an overview of the preceding sections.

5.2. Summary of findings

The research was conducted in EJE Elementary Academy (EJEEA) in El Cajon, California, with 20 parents, 73 students and 3 teachers; a total of 96 participants. An instrumental case study was adopted to collect data concerning mainly the DLP implemented at EJEEA. Three data collection techniques were employed: semi-structured interviews for parents and students; an open-ended questionnaire and a narrative frame for teachers, which were e-mailed. The participants were mainly asked about their expectations and perceptions of the program, as well as their experiences relating to it. The first objective of this study was to explore the participants' perceptions regarding the current state of a dual language charter school in southern California. Therefore, the RQs that guided this study were the following:

RQ1: How have the participants' expectations influenced their perceptions of the current state of EJEEA's DLP?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and students regarding the DLP implemented at EJEEA?

Regarding the first RQ, 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 related to RQ1 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 Mexican culture. An element of the DLP implemented at EJEEA are the festivals which relate to Mexican culture and Mexican folk art, such as music and dance. Consequently, students of Mexican heritage are provided with opportunities to better understand the culture of the children's parents' native country. However, this might be counterproductive in a school that aims for two-way immersion, since it has mostly attracted people from one language background.

EJEEA and its DLP are highly regarded by the parents, and they perceive both the school and the program 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 arts³. EJEEA should give the teachers the opportunity to express this common opinion regarding the current situation of the DLP. The data shows that by listening to the teachers, the DLP 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 they 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.

According to several students, the DLP has increased their knowledge of Spanish and English which has helped them overcome these situations. As well as their parents, students perceive that the reading, writing, speaking, and understanding two languages as linguistic capital. Although students consider that they are learning both languages, the data shows that teaching and

³ Language arts is a subject in the U.S.A.

learning in Spanish does not occur as stated in the description of EJEEA's DLP, which means that students do not meet the expected language proficiency in Spanish. Several students suggest that their teachers speak English when the class is supposed to be in Spanish. This affects the level of language proficiency that they reach, as mentioned by the teachers. It also implies that their literacy level in Spanish, might not be the same as the in English; therefore, students might not be able to use both languages to communicate in an academic setting. To fully understand the language dynamics at school a second study of the program could be conducted, accompanied by observation and interviews.

5.3. Contribution and practical implications

Although previous research has focused on the impact of dual language programs in the academic performance of children, little research has been carried out regarding the expectations and the perceptions of parents, teachers, and students who participate in the DLP. Therefore, the findings of this study are relevant to bilingual education because it is interested in what parents, teachers, and students have to say about the DLP and how it has had an impact on their lives.

As a qualitative study which focuses on expectations, perceptions, and experiences, it deals with the human side of DLP and not the quantitative data which, emphasize the academic performance of students who attend DLPs. It is essential to understand how DLPs in the United States work and how they serve their communities, whether the students and their families speak the target languages or not, in order for policy makers, teachers, administrators, among others, to develop bilingual education programs that serve the needs and linguistic rights of the school communities.

Regarding the practical applications, the administration at EJEEA, and also at EJE Middle Academy, could consider the findings stated in this thesis in order to reevaluate the Spanish program to strengthen their original goal which is to provide free dual language education for families from diverse sociocultural and economic contexts. Additionally, the school should consider doing further research to understand the actual results of the DLP. They might revisit the literature regarding the implementation of DLPs and their mission as a dual language charter school. If parents have decided to enroll their children because they receive a bilingual education, then the school is responsible for complying with its original objectives. Although the school is accountable for the academic performance of their students, and their results in standardized testing, they could

reconsider how being a bilingual school might be of benefit to the community. EJEEA could also consider the comments of parents, teachers, and students to improve their program, which has been considered successful by the school district, parents, students, and teachers.

5.4. Limitations

The data collected from parents and students at EJEEA was rich and valuable, which allowed for the study to be completed. Nevertheless, there were some limitations which should be addressed. The distance between the research site and Guanajuato, where this thesis was written, represented a limitation because there was not an opportunity to conduct a pilot study or go back to collect more data from parents or students.

Since I did not receive data from the three fifth-grade teachers, I needed to contact teachers from other grades. Thus, distance represented a limitation when I tried to acquire data from these other teachers because I contacted them via e-mail and received response from six of them. However, only three of them completed the questionnaire and the narrative frame, while the other three only signed the consent form. Consequently, the study lacks data from more teachers to understand better whether the perceptions of the three teacher participants presented here are prevalent among the staff. In the next section I present some suggestions for further research regarding dual language education.

5.5. Further research

DLPs in the United States have drastically increased in the last fifty decades, from one program in Miami, Florida in 1962, to over eight hundred implemented in American public schools in 2013 (Lindholm-Leary, 2013). Research on dual language has primarily focused on the effectiveness of the programs. However, little research has been conducted regarding the dual language programs implemented in charter schools, and how these, as a school of choice, have responded to the expectations, cultural and linguistic needs of the population. Therefore, more research, whether quantitative or qualitative, needs to be carried out regarding the implementation of dual language programs in several charter schools in the U.S.A.

Further research could also be conducted at EJEEA with more teachers in order to understand the language dynamics in this institution. A future ethnographic study could be carried

out to contrast what has been done in the classroom and the objectives of the school and the second language acquisition program implemented at EJEEA. This type of study could provide a more complete snapshot of the DLP implemented at EJEEA to explore areas of opportunity.

A longitudinal study with a group of students in a dual language programs is also suggested to understand the students' development of the target language, whether it is English or Spanish, depending on the students' language background. This study could focus on elements of bilingualism such as code-switching, language shift, language attrition, among others, that will allow the understanding of L2 acquisition, but also the effects on the students' L1.

5.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has focused on the current state of the first dual language program implemented in El Cajon, California, through the perceptions of parents, teachers, and students. Although the findings are not generalizable to other programs in the area and in the United States, the perceptions of the participants are relevant to understand their linguistic needs and wants and the importance of dual language education in American schools. I, as well as the participants of this study, believe dual language education provides language minority students access to better professional, academic, and cultural opportunities in a globalized world, where they are able to coexist with other ethnolinguistic groups and respect their similarities and their differences. The knowledge of English and plus a second language empowers students because they perceive themselves as people who possess linguistic knowledge that dominant language speakers in the U.S.A. might not possess.

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Appendix 1: Interview questions

Questions for students

- What language(s) do you speak at home with your family? Why?
- What language(s) do you prefer to use at school/in class? Why?
- What language(s) do you prefer to use when you speak to your classmates? Why?
- Do you like your school? Why?
- Do you have a favorite class? Which one? Why?
- How do you learn at this school? Do you think it is different from the way other kids learn at other schools? Why?
- Would you make any changes to the way you are taught?
- Do you know what being bilingual is? Could you explain?

Questions for parents

- How many of your children are currently enrolled at this school?
- Why did you enroll your children in this school?
- How long have your children been enrolled at this school?
- Do you understand the purpose of the dual language program? If yes, please explain.
- What languages do you speak?
- What language(s) do you speak at home with your children?
- Do you get involved in the school's activities, such as cultural events, fundraising, etc.? How?
- Do you do any school related activities with your children at home, such as helping them with homework and school projects? If you do, what are they?
- How do you feel about the dual language education that your children are receiving?
- Do you have any questions for the researcher?

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Instructions: Please complete the following questions/items. Use as much space as you need.

These questions will enable to understand the teacher more in dept. The information you provide will be used for academic purposes only. Your identity will not be revealed. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, leave it blank. Thank you!

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Place of birth:
4. If your place of birth is not the United States, please answer the following questions:
 - a. Years of residence in country of origin before migrating to the United States
 - b. Studies completed in country of origin
 - c. Reasons why you migrated to the United States
 - d. Has this had any influence in your teaching experience? Please explain
5. What languages do you speak?
6. If you speak more than one language, please explain how you learned your additional language(s) and if you consider yourself bilingual/multilingual.
7. How long have you been a teacher?
8. What are your teaching qualifications?
9. What are the academic and professional requirements needed to become a teacher in a dual language school?
10. How long have you been teaching at EJE Academies?
11. What grade are you currently working with?
12. Had you ever worked in a dual language program before working at EJE Academies? If the answer is yes, please explain.
13. Do you have any experience living or working abroad? If you do, please explain.

Appendix 3: Narrative framework

Instructions

The purpose of this narrative framework is that you, as a teacher at EJE Academies Charter School, tell your own story. Please complete the following prompts according to your experience. Consider the following indications:

- a) Read all of the prompts carefully before you start writing.
- b) Provide as much information and detail as possible.
- c) Use as much space as you need.
- d) Try to answer the below questions according to your teaching experience.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

In these prompts, I would like you to write about 4 broad themes which are yourself as a teacher, the students you teach, the student's parents, and the dual language program.

I decided to become a teacher because....

I decided to get my bilingual teaching credential because...

I have found my working experience in EJE Academies to be...

Having taught in the school for some time, I view this school as

As a teacher, I see my students... (Please write about the students' linguistic ability, emotions; identity, future, culture, etc.)

I encourage my students to...

Regarding my students' parents, I think...

Based upon my experiences at the school, I would like to change... because...

I would like to add that...

I would like to invite you to write any other experiences which are related to dual language program. Feel free to write about how you see this program and any observations you may have related to the topic.

Appendix 4: Consent form for participation in a research study

May 2nd, 2017

Dear EJE Academies' parent,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Alexis Adriana Lozano, who is pursuing a Masters' Degree in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching at the University of Guanajuato, in Guanajuato, Mexico. The main purpose of this research study is to analyze students, parents and teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about bilingualism.

The secondary objectives are:

- Explore the reasons why parents choose to integrate their children in a dual bilingual education program.
- Explore the experiences of 5th grade students, teachers and parents in their participation in a dual (two-way) bilingual education program.

Your participation will involve:

Students: A group interview will be conducted by the researcher. The questions asked will be sent to the principal and the 5th grade coordinator for the approval. A designated teacher or parent will be present during the interview. The children may refrain from answering any question. A copy of the questions will be available with Ms. Lolbel and the principal. Some of the questions are: do you like learning in two languages? Which language do you prefer using at school/at home? What do you think are the benefits of knowing two or more languages? etc.

Parents: parents might choose to do an individual interview or a group interview according to their time availability. They can also choose to answer the questions at home by email or on a piece of paper and give/send their answers to the researcher. Some questions are: Why did you choose to enroll your child in EJE Academies? What arrangements have you made at home to help your child complete his/her assignments? Parents will also answer a short survey. It includes questions such as: How long has your child been enrolled at EJE Academies? What language do you speak at home? How many languages do the members of your family speak? Etc.

Confidentiality

The information you provide in the survey and interview will be used for academic purposes only. Your identity will not be revealed.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, or if any problems arise, please contact Alexis Adriana Lozano at 011524621302105, or ale.adr2@hotmail.com.

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

Appendix 5: Consent form for teachers

August 2017

Dear EJE Academies' teacher,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Alexis Adriana Lozano, who is pursuing a Masters' Degree in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching at the University of Guanajuato, in Guanajuato, Mexico. The main purpose of this research study is to analyze students, parents and teachers' perceptions about bilingualism and their experiences in a dual language program.

Your participation consists on completing

- a) A narrative framework, which involves completing a number of prompts related to your teaching experiences at EJE Academies and your teaching career.
- b) A questionnaire which asks basic questions such as years of experience, gender, nationality.
- c) A phone or Skype interview if any further questions arise from the analysis of the narrative framework.

Confidentiality

The information you provide in the survey and interview will be used for academic purposes only. Your identity will not be revealed.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, or if any problems arise, please contact Alexis Adriana Lozano at 011524621302105, or ale.adr2@hotmail.com.

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

Appendix 6: Photographs of the school

Image 1. *What does EJE mean to me?* (Photograph by author).



Image 2. *The history of EJE* (Photograph by author).



Image 3. *The history of EJE 2* (Photograph by author)



Image 4. *The history of EJE 3* (Photograph by author).

