

Español, el Idioma Que Nosotros Hablamos: **A Collective Case Study of Home Language Use and Literacy Practices of Mexican American Families**

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Abstract

This collective case study employs both family literacy theory (Taylor, 1983) and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) to examine the ways that Mexican American parents conceptualize and practice literacy in the home with their emergent bilingual elementary-aged children. “Emergent bilingual” is used to reference students who are gaining English as an additional linguistic repertoire (García, 2009). Drawing from questionnaires and interviews from a suburban Midwestern U.S. community, findings demonstrate how families position and mediate their languages and literacies within their homes and communities. Such findings illuminate how emergent bilingual families create distinct spaces to shape the identity and agency of their emergent bilingual children. Such findings are now incorporated into English Language Learner and bilingual teacher preparation courses so teachers can identify, describe, and understand the multifaceted literacy capacities of their emergent bilingual families.

Key Words: family literacy practices, emergent bilingual, family engagement, agency, identity, home language use, Mexican American families, collective case study, funds of knowledge

Introduction

Describing how families are negotiating their “linguistic repertoires” in their homes and communities is an important area of inquiry, as bilingualism is not only levels of language proficiency (e.g., beginning, intermediate, or advanced). Bilingualism is the dynamic interplay between heritage languages, the majority language, and families’ locally generated resources (García & Kleifgen, 2010). We use the term emergent bilingual as employed by scholars to recognize the assets these children and families bring to schools and communities through not only their linguistic backgrounds, but also their cultural practices (García, 2009; García & Kleifgen, 2010). This study identifies and describes the strategies and resources Mexican American families use with their bilingual children. Analysis from parent interviews describe the strategies parents employ in their homes and communities, roles that schools play in shaping these literacy and language activities, and how such strategies intersect and differ from each other. We approach this study by asking the following research question: How do Mexican American parents conceptualize and practice literacy in their home with their elementary-aged emergent bilingual children and for what purpose? Through observations and interviews with 11 Mexican American parents, we explore ideas and strategies adopted in their home literacy practices, which can reshape the way teachers and schools define literacy practices for and with emergent bilingual students.

Literature Review

Shifting Orientations Around Family Literacy

Family literacy programs that are run by schools often direct families to implement school activities in the home, reflecting the needs of the school rather than the family (Auerbach, 1989; Li & Renn, 2018; Morita-Mullaney et al., 2019). Auerbach (1989) found that some family literacy programs hold the assumption that home practices are not as valuable as school practices, ignoring multiple forms of family literacy practice that contain interactions with people across different social contexts. Such assumptions from schools create a disequilibrium of power between educators and families, with school literacies conceived as more powerful, disregarding the distinct knowledge that emergent bilingual families bring to the literacy experiences of their children (Kajee, 2011; Poza et al., 2014; Rodríguez, 2015). Replacing home practices with school literacy activities ignores parents’ knowledge and experiences and suggests that children need to be fixed and parents need to broker such remediation. To date and in contrast to Auerbach’s earlier findings (1989), more

research suggests that family literacies hold value and purpose, building on a body of literature from the fields of language, literacy, and family engagement (Anderson et al., 2010; Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2010; Morita-Mullaney, 2020; Morita-Mullaney et al., 2019; Renn & Li, 2018; Reyes et al., 2007).

Classroom teachers often underestimate and constrain what emergent bilingual students are capable of intellectually (Auerbach, 1989; García & Kleifgen, 2010; Moll, 1994). Reyes et al. (2015) appeal to preservice teachers to learn from family interactions and be aware of the oral language skills, emergent literacy, and cultural knowledge developed in homes, rather than ascribing students as being broken, constructing them from a deficit perspective. Further, U.S. educators who are not immigrants themselves often ascribe to the construct of individualism, whereby any social ideal can be realized through individual effort. This individualism contrasts with the more collectivistic beliefs embodied by emergent bilingual families (Greenfield et al., 2020), such as brokering communication between children, parents, and school personnel. Moll and Greenberg (1990) advocated that teachers value the cultural and cognitive resources emergent bilingual students bring to the classroom and use them to fuel and inform literacy learning. Understanding students' funds of knowledge can reform teachers' teaching pedagogy, responding to students' needs by contextualizing students' world into understanding how they learn (Hedges et al., 2011).

Expanding our Definition of Literacies

Family literacy is typically described as parents reading books to their children. Although reading aloud between parent and child may be a practice for families, it is not the only means of generating literacy within the home (Mui & Anderson, 2008). To expand this perspective of "literacy," family literacy practice can include reading recipes, playing board games, engaging in dramatic play, and role playing among family members. Interactions across these activities are bidirectional, as children and adults fluidly take on leadership roles to impart skills across children, parents, and other family members (Reyes et al., 2015). As a result of these literacy exchanges, the knowledge that the children generate is incorporated into communications with family and community members (Moll & González, 1994). Kajee (2011) identified that such creations of literacies are not only distinctive of the home, but also a manifestation of "community literacies," as literacy and language practices are readily observed at religious and cultural events. Drawing from the work of Barton et al. (2000), "literacy is situated," meaning each literacy event is an adaptive and performed exercise. These studies stretch the operational definition of family literacy beyond storybook reading, recognizing that family and community activities arbitrate the different roles family members take on as they create, negotiate, and enact literacies.

Family's Negotiated Literacies and the Home to School Connection

Scholars have worked to bridge the literacies that families negotiate within their homes to bring to schools as a means of cultural connection and relevance for the child. Louie and Davis-Welton's (2016) study examined how emergent bilingual family members described their personal or cultural stories during literacy time at school. Teachers in their project encouraged children to transform their family stories into their own picture books and allowed them to use their heritage language. Similarly, Goldin et al. (2018) studied about building connection between family and school by parent–teacher conference. In the study, preservice teachers learned to reexamine their assumptions about Hispanic parents and embrace incorporating family and cultural knowledge into teaching. These studies made educators recognize that literacy begins at home with the contributions of family members and their current resources and related practices (Epstein et al., 2018; Njeru, 2015; Protacio & Edwards, 2015). Rather than claiming the child's literacy development as exclusively fostered in the school setting, these strategies integrate the familial and educational communities to work collaboratively on behalf of the child to recognize their home literacies as valid, relevant, and meaningful (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Epstein et al., 2018; Louie & Davis-Welton, 2016). In addition, bilingual parents are supportive and actively involved in children's language and literacy development in connection with schools (Poza et al., 2014; Rodríguez, 2015). Understanding children's familial language and literacy development help teachers to realize learners' identity and teach accordingly (Moll, 2019). The acknowledgement of the literacies that emergent bilingual families possess fosters a reciprocal relationship between schools and homes versus the school's unidirectional definition of literacy (González & Moll, 2002).

Children in immigrant, emergent bilingual households develop transnational literacies as they are immersed in flows of languages, ideas, values, and multimedia that are frequently used in homes in a variety of ways (Compton-Lilly et al., 2019; Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2010; Morita-Mullaney et al., 2019; Sánchez, 2007). For example, distinct types of interactions are occurring in the home between a student and their grandmother who resides in another country, so a video exchange (e.g., Google hangouts, Zoom, Skype) is needed. Thus, we see how new forms of language and literacy are generated and regenerated across physical and mental borders. Such practices represent language and literacies expanding beyond a physical space (e.g., a school or only a text), being transposed and transformed uniquely, representative of transnational literacies.

García and Kleifgen (2010) and Auerbach (1989) all urge schools to focus on students' strengths and incorporating curricular and program changes that

reflect the literacies that emergent bilingual families transact and transform inside and outside of school. Despite these important connections between schools and homes, our study examines how language and literacy interactions are distinctly negotiated and performed in emergent bilingual homes. While the negotiated nature of language and literacies within emergent bilingual households demonstrates its transactional nature, family literacy theory and funds of knowledge helps us theorize how literacy practices are being appropriated in the homes and communities of emergent bilinguals.

Theoretical Framework: Describing Emerging Bilingualism

The term English language learner is often used by policymakers, school districts, and educators to refer to students developing English proficiency with a background in another language. This terminology suggests a deficit by focusing on English proficiency and English monolingualism rather than the strengths of their home language, culture, and experiences (García & Kleifgen, 2010). The term emergent bilingual embraces these differences, referencing students who are gaining English as an additional linguistic repertoire (García, 2009). Further, García and Kleifgen (2010) call for a different definition of bilingualism among emergent bilingual families, calling on academics, school staff, and families to recognize and reconceptualize how languages and literacies are appropriated in emergent bilingual homes. Therefore, the present study adopts the term *emergent bilingual*, rather than English language learner.

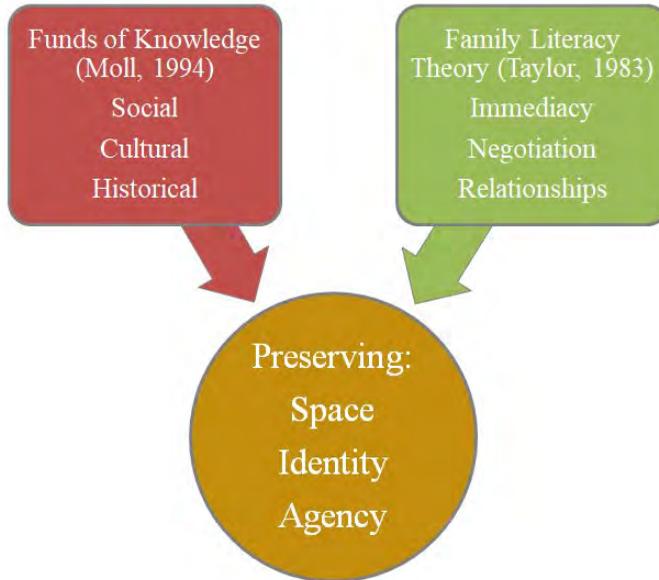
In this study, we employ family literacy theory (Taylor, 1983, 2019), which centers the distinct knowledge of families and recognizes them as the main organizers from which literacies emerge (Louie & Davis-Welton, 2016; Taylor, 1983, 2019). The language and culture constructed at home with family is a beginning for children's emergent biliteracy and bilingual development, continuously shaping children's future literacy practices and their identities as bilinguals. Schools often have a formalized philosophy and method of teaching literacy, suggesting that literacy is standardized and fixed (Ong, 1991), with the aim of English monolingualism (Morita-Mullaney et al., 2019). Family literacy theory involves negotiations among family members, inclusive of language use, while simultaneously fostering social relationships that meet the immediate needs and interests of the family. Family literacy theory accentuates the important role of parents in children's language and literacy development, including parents' choices of what and how to appropriate and perform literacies across their shared literacy and language resources. Thus, family literacies within and across family members involves *immediacy, negotiation, and relationships*. This study draws upon our immersive work throughout the Midwest

with emergent bilingual families (Li & Renn, 2018; Morita-Mullaney, 2020, Morita-Mullaney et al., 2019).

Family literacy theory mainly focuses on literacy and language practices of families within the home, but funds of knowledge extends its scope to include family's social interactions, cultural practices, and historical accumulations (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). The funds of knowledge perspective claims that families hold specialized knowledge, language, and literacies, which are uniquely expressed in particular localities, including emergent bilingual homes and communities (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Moll, 1994). Such funds of knowledge are *social, cultural, and historical*, which influence how emergent bilingual students define, express, and understand themselves (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Compared to knowledge taught in school, funds of knowledge embrace broader aspects of knowledge and experiences of families, such as farming and cooking, drawing from the distinct histories and cultural accumulations represented among family members (Moll, 2019). The interaction fostered within emergent bilingual families across their shared social resources, including their different languages, makes each literacy activity relevant and personal to the learner (Moll, 2019). Instead of solely identifying children as a "student," family members see children as mutual contributors to the language and literacy development of the entire household. Thus, parents and children build upon historic and cultural strategies to engage their families in literacy and language development and innovation (Moll, 1992, 2019).

Our theoretical framework is based on the intersection of these two related constructs and theories (see Figure 1). Family literacy theory and funds of knowledge mainly focus on the interactions that occur among family members, extended family members, and the community. Thus, the literacy activities of emergent bilingual families happen in certain types of spaces. The negotiation of language and literacy within homes illustrates the dynamic and creative nature of families that incorporate all their available resources to create literacies that are distinct. The distinct family literacies reflect parents' agency when making decisions on literacy practice, and further illustrating the impact of their special identity: emergent bilingual parents. Drawing from these two related constructs, we now examine how Mexican American parents preserve space for the development of their children's literacies, shape their identities, and invoke their collective agency toward creating bilingual and biliterate children.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Methodology

This study employs a collective, illustrative case study in a suburban community in Indiana, U.S. (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2008; Yin, 1994). This design is most suitable for this study since the community is bounded to one elementary school and the Mexican American parents whose children attend that school. Because the focus is narrow in nature, findings can locally inform the area school and community about the types of language and literacy resources families negotiate, making it immersive and illustrative. This is particular significance to our research team, who continue to work directly with educators in the focal school whose families are a part of the study. This case study integrates two data sources: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with emergent bilingual parents whose children attend the target elementary school.

Data Collection and Recruitment

The ENL (English as a New Language) Director in the suburban district identified one elementary school to participate in the present study based on the emergent bilingual population and the administration's willingness to participate, making the participants a purposeful sample. Approximately 85 questionnaires were sent home with students, and 52 completed questionnaires were returned to the classroom teachers and collected by the ENL Director.

Families who expressed an interest in a follow-up interview and with whom the ENL Director had a relationship were purposively identified.

Using the information provided by the ENL Director, families were contacted by text and/or phone call to set up interviews. Times were arranged based on each family's availability. Interviews were conducted in participants' homes and the school. All interviews were audiorecorded. Brief field notes were taken by the interviewer during interviews. All participants chose to conduct the interview in Spanish. In total, 10 interviews were completed, ranging in length from 17 to 44 minutes. Participants answered the 28 interview questions with the addition of clarifying questions from the interviewer as needed. The areas included language development history and home language use; home (bi)literacy practices; bilingualism challenges; and strategies and concerns for raising bilingual children.

Participants

Participants were Mexican American parents whose children attend Delaware Elementary School (a pseudonym), a suburban elementary in Indiana. The Mexican American parents have children who are eligible and a part of the English as a New Language (ENL) program. Eleven parents from ten families, nine mothers and two fathers, participated. Participants spoke Spanish and self-identified as Mexican Americans. At the time of the study, all participants lived with their spouse or domestic partner (meaning there were two parents involved in the social interactions with the children) at home and had between two and five children ranging in age from four months to 20 years.

Instruments

Questionnaire

The first point of data collection was a family questionnaire. The questionnaire included demographic information about each family as well as self-reported English and Spanish proficiency for both parents, the focal child, and then other children in the home. The demographic information for the parents included place of birth, native language, ethnicity, education, occupation, and how long they had lived in the U.S. Information about the children included age, grade, gender, and name. Parents completing the questionnaire were also asked about their interest in participating in a follow-up interview. Questionnaires were provided in English and Spanish and were disseminated by the district's ENL Director.

Interviews

A semi-structured interview (see Appendices A and B) consisted of questions adapted from the Bilingual Family Interview Protocol (Bailey & Osipova,

2015). The interview questions addressed language development history, current home language use, home literacy practices, thoughts on bilingualism, bilingual strategies, and then challenges and concerns. Interview questions were offered in the language of choice of the parent, including English and Spanish.

Researcher Identity

The researcher team member who conducted the interviews is fully bilingual in English and Spanish. She is a native English speaker but started studying Spanish at age 13. She is married to a native Spanish speaker and taught secondary Spanish for 10 years. Although the researcher is from the area where the research was conducted, she did not have a relationship with any of the participants before the study was conducted but does have a deep understanding of the local context.

Another research team member is bilingual in Chinese and English. Though she does not speak Spanish, she has experience and understanding towards English language learners, and she also has experience teaching Mexican children.

The last research team member is bilingual in English and Spanish. She is a native English speaker, earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish, and continues to actively learn Spanish to support connections with her clients as a speech-language pathologist.

The Principal Investigator is bilingual in English and Spanish. She racially identifies as Japanese American but has no proficiency in her heritage language. She studied Spanish in school and continued to use Spanish throughout her career from teaching adults, teaching ENL, acting as an EL Director, and talking to parents of her students.

Data Analysis

After completing the parent interviews, a synopsis was written in English for each interview and served as the first phase of data analysis. Later, all audio recordings were fully transcribed into Spanish, and thereafter translated into English. The lead researcher used color coding and tallying to organize and analyze the responses from parents for meaning units of space, agency, and identity. Thereafter, the research team conducted a more thorough thematic content analysis individually (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify saturated themes consistent with our conceptual framework (Figure 1). Later, the team conferred to identify where there was agreement. If there was disagreement within the team, research team members would review the transcripts again and confer until consensus was reached.

Findings

Findings from this study will be arranged in the order of our interview protocol, including the areas of language development history and home language use; home (bi)literacy practices; bilingualism challenges; and strategies and concerns for raising bilingual children. Thereafter, we analyze the findings employing the conceptual framework of family literacy theory and funds of knowledge. To further understand the families, we have included Table 1 with a sampling of the demographic information collected in the questionnaire.

Table 1. Emergent Bilingual Interviewee Demographic Information

Family	Age of Interviewee(s)	Years in U.S.	Education Level/Grade	Job/Occupation	Strongest Language Parent	Strongest Language Children
Fam1	M: 37	M: 27	M: 12	M: Housewife	Spanish	English
Fam2	M: 33	M: 13	M: 9	M: Housewife	Spanish	English
Fam3	M: 38	M: 12	M: 6	M: Housewife	Spanish	English
Fam4	M: 36 D: 34	M: 16 D: 15	M: 12 D: 6	M: Housewife D: Baker	Spanish	English
Fam5	M: 32	M: 15	M: 2	M: Work	Spanish	English
Fam6	M: 40	Not Entered	M: 8	M: Housewife	Spanish	English
Fam7	M: 39	M: 13	M: 12	M: Housewife	Spanish	English
Fam8	M: 38	M: 18	M: 6	M: Housewife	Spanish	English
Fam9	M: 42	M: 18	M: 12	M: Housewife	Spanish	English
Fam10	D: 39	D: 18	D: 12	D: Factory	Spanish	English

Notes. D = Dad; M = Mom. Native language of all families was Spanish.

Language Development History and Home Language Use

All parents interviewed spoke Spanish to their children after the children were born. When asked why, the mother from Family 2 said in Spanish, “el idioma que nosotros hablamos,” meaning “the language that we speak.” The same mother later stated, “español, el idioma de nosotros,” or “Spanish, our language.” Family 3 also articulated that Spanish was important “porque es el lenguaje de nosotros” or “because it’s our language.” Families 6, 7, and 8 also discussed how it was the language that they “have” and the language that they “know.” Family 4, 5, and 10, also identified the use of Spanish only in the household due to their lack of English proficiency. But dominantly, families expressed that the use of Spanish was embodied by their deep ownership of their language and how it connected to their identities and heritages.

As a result of parents' Spanish speaking at home, all children spoke their first words in Spanish. Currently, parents reported that they speak to their children in Spanish most of the time at home. The children's responses to their parents varied, with six families reporting responses in Spanish, and three families reporting responses in both languages.

Home (Bi)Literacy Practices

When asked about print materials in the home, all parents said there were books in the house, and less than half reported other materials like newspapers, magazines, Bibles, bills, mail, and notes from school. Although all parents stated they had books in English, two families owned a few books in Spanish. The mother from Family 9 reported,

Bueno, los de español me los traen mis papas de México....Les leo en español, entonces me traen libros. Pero en cuestión como para leerles en inglés, vamos a la biblioteca también. [Well, the Spanish ones, my parents bring me from Mexico....I read to them in Spanish, so they bring me books. But the question of reading to them in English, we also go to the library.]

Other parents also read books with their children, but some were not comfortable reading in English. When asked if she read in English with her children, the Family 8 mother said,

Pues no. (Nombre del padre) a veces se pone a leer con (nombre de la hija), como anoche estuvieron leyendo, es que él sí un poquito más entiende y él puede, pero yo no puedo. [Well, no. (Father's name) sometimes reads with (daughter's name), like last night they were reading together, because he understands a little more and he can, but I cannot.]

Language proficiency drove how this family engaged with reading activities that involved English texts. Whereas with Family 9, literacy occurred in Spanish with resources from the parents' home country of Mexico.

When asked about television and music, and all responses were similar: Parents watched TV and listened to music in Spanish, and the children watched TV and listened to music in English. Eight children (middle and high school age) had cell phones. Their phones were all programmed in English, and they used English as the primary means of communication on social media. Parents' phones were mainly programmed in Spanish, with only one in English. Parents texted their children in Spanish, and the children responded in both languages. Family 7's mom stated,

En español, pues sí me dice "ya voy," o "estoy bien," "hola," ...así nada más. O me pone la carita (emoji). [In Spanish, well, he says "I'm coming,"

or “I’m fine,” “hello,” ...but nothing more. Or sometimes he sends me a little face (emoji).]

Although Spanish texts were brief in nature from the children, sometimes accompanied by an emoji, communication between children and parents was creative and bidirectional.

Delaware Elementary frequently sent letters home with students. Seven parents said the schools sent letters home in both languages, two said letters were in English only, and one said letters were in Spanish only. When asked what they did if they did not understand something sent home in a letter, three parents said they used a translation tool on their smartphones to help translate.

Parents reported other home activities including cleaning, cooking, eating, sports, and doing homework. Parents reported they spoke in Spanish during such family activities, with children responding to parents mainly in Spanish and speaking English with their siblings. The shifting language among children and parents became even more pronounced as more than one child started school. School played a major role in the language shift from Spanish to English among siblings.

Bilingualism Challenges

All parents said they wanted their children to be both bilingual and biliterate. Generally, parent responses related to their children’s future careers or for cross-cultural connections. More than half of the parents said their children’s future job prospects would improve if the children were bilingual. The Family 2 mother stated,

O como mi esposo luego dice, “yo no quiero que andan como yo, ahorita afuera en el frío trabajando.” [My husband always says, “I don’t want our girls to be working like me, right now out in the cold working.”]

Economic advancement was seen as a prospect for their emergent bilingual children as they could mediate meaning among different speakers and within different contexts. Further, parents expressed that keeping their children’s Spanish intact would benefit them when they traveled to Mexico to see family. Also, Spanish served a critical role in maintaining their Mexican heritage.

All parents were devoted to their children’s Spanish maintenance, while developing their children as bilingual and biliterate. When asked if it was easy or difficult to raise a bilingual child, answers were mixed. Four parents responded it was easy, because it was part of their responsibilities as a parent to speak Spanish at home, while the children learn English at school. Five parents said it was difficult, with three parents attributed difficulties to their limited English proficiency. Another parent stated it was because the children do not like to

speak Spanish as much as speaking English. Parents expressed the pull and allure of the dominant language of their immediate surroundings, and although they found English to be of value, they struggled with it occupying time away from Spanish.

Strategies and Concerns for Raising Bilingual Children

Parents said speaking in Spanish was the main strategy utilized to raise bilingual children. Three families maintained their rules for speaking strictly Spanish at home and reported that their children were highly proficient in Spanish. Some parents allowed their children to respond in English and others required Spanish. Three parents said they would act as if they did not understand if the children spoke in English, prompting the children to repeat themselves in Spanish. When asked about his strategies for raising bilingual children, the father from Family 10 stated,

Pues, en este caso, como le decía anteriormente, tratamos de mantener el español totalmente aquí en la casa el 100%...pues todo se hable en español aquí. [Well, in this case, like I said before, we try to keep Spanish totally here in the house 100%...well, everything is spoken in Spanish here.]

When asked an open-ended question about what teachers could do to better serve their emergent bilingual children, parents overwhelmingly reported that teachers should have more “*paciencia*” [patience] with students. Parents also stated that schools should have more bilingual staff and teachers to better serve both their children as well as themselves. When asked how the school could help the bilingual language development for her children, the mother from Family 3 said, “*Como que ayuden a los niños también, personas bilingües como que ayuden también a los niños,*” conveying, “*Like they could help the kids too, bilingual people can help the kids, too.*” She later said,

Bueno, al principio yo creo que sí, como cuando apenas entran en la escuela y no saben nada. Y como a veces uno tampoco a veces no sabe nada. [Well, at the beginning I think yes, like when they just start in school and they do not know anything, and sometimes their parents do not know anything either.]

This mother emphasized the importance of bilingual teachers at school to facilitate transitioning to an English-speaking school system. Additionally, the mom wanted such resources to facilitate her connection to the school and to her child’s sense of inclusion in a new and unfamiliar setting.

Analysis and Discussion

Using family literacy theory (Taylor, 1983) and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), we now analyze the language and literacy findings and practices of emergent bilingual families within their homes. As referenced in the theoretical framework, analysis of family literacy practices attended to (1) the immediate social needs and interests; (2) cultural negotiations among family members; and (3) how historical and contemporary identities foster relationships. Families play a central role in negotiating language and literacies that vary from standard school practices (Louie & Davis-Welton, 2016). In our analysis, we found that parents engaged in varied literacy and language activities at home to foster their children's identity development, their language agency, and a space for such negotiations.

The preservation of space, appropriation of agency, and affirmation of identity are all heavily influenced by the dominant language and culture of the surrounding Delaware Elementary community. All families reside in a community that is quickly diversifying, but the community is still mostly populated by White, English-majority families. Students are attending schools where the majority of their educators reflect this racial/ethnic and language majority demographic. As emergent bilingual students are integrated within these school and community settings that differ linguistically and culturally from their homes, their families organically developed ways to preserve their space to serve their immediate needs, appropriate their agency by deciding which language to use and when, and affirm their identity and heritage as a Mexican American family. Consistent with our theoretical framework (Figure 1), we now demonstrate how each area was negotiated among emergent bilingual families within the Delaware school community.

Preservation and Creation of Space

All interviewed families reported that they mainly spoke Spanish at home, and parents reported Spanish as their dominant language. In contrast, school is conducted in English, and most of the children's teachers only speak English, with a few speaking some words or phrases in Spanish. When the children integrate into these schools that differ both linguistically and culturally from their home, their parents reported they are often uneasy about how to navigate this new space, making their schooling experience stressful. When asked about changes in language production after their child started school and about trying to help with homework, the mother from Family 2 said,

Sí, porque se le dificultaba entender bien el inglés, porque nosotros le hablábamos el español y ella algunas palabras en inglés para el español no

las sabías....Pues ahí fue cuando empezamos también a mirar que se le dificultaba del inglés al español y del español al inglés. No fue fácil para ella, tampoco, y hasta ahora, hay veces que también se le dificultan algunas cosas para ella de la escuela. [It was difficult for her to understand English well, because we speak to her in Spanish and some words in English, she doesn't know the Spanish....Well, that was when we started to see how difficult it was to translate from English to Spanish and Spanish to English. It was not easy for her, and even now, there are times that things are very difficult for her at school.]

Some families reported that their oldest child arrived at kindergarten knowing very little English. These children had to learn how to navigate a new school, friends, adults, as well as a new culture and language. The school was not representative of the full inclusion fostered and created within their homes. Parents preserve their homes as a space where the children and extended family can express themselves in multiple languages, based on immediate needs and situations (Louie & Davis-Welton, 2016; Taylor, 1983). While all interviewed parents want their children to be fluent in Spanish, they allow their children to speak in English at home, particularly among their siblings. No parent reported punishing their child for speaking English, just a gentle nudge to speak Spanish for family members who only know Spanish. At home, they are free to read in Spanish, English, or a mixture; they can use their entire repertoire of languages to convey meaning, whereas they are usually restricted to only English at school (García & Kleifgen, 2010). The parents have preserved a multilingual space where everyone in the family can use their full language repertoire to navigate the current social situation. When asked about language use in the home, the mother from Family 4 said,

Y es que es una vida cotidiana de uno. O sea, como uno se va expresando alguna palabra, dice, “¿y qué es eso, mami?” Y ya le di...ya se les explica y como es un rato, yo no sé, ellos me dijeron una palabra en inglés, digo, “¿qué me están diciendo?” Y ya ellos me explicaron. Digo okay, para yo saber. [It's just everyday life for us. Like, when I'm saying a word, and the kids say, “what's that, mommy?” And I say, well, I explain the word, and then a little bit later, I don't know, they say a word in English, and I say, “what are you saying?” And then they explain it to me. So, I can understand.]

In situations like these, parents are negotiating meaning and supporting their children's language learning by explaining words in Spanish and asking questions about the children's English. These interactions show children that although their parents are more proficient in Spanish and prefer to speak

Spanish in the home, they are interested in the new language their children are speaking. The children know they are free to use both languages at home when necessary and that the parents are invested in supporting both languages.

Appropriation of Agency

To adapt to this hybrid culture in their home, where the parents speak Spanish and the children prefer English, parents are making decisions every day about which language to use, with which activities, and with which people. They are making informed decisions about language use in their homes based on their knowledge about their families (Moll et al., 1992; Taylor, 1983). Children are also practicing their agency in the homes when they negotiate language use with their parents, siblings, and extended family. In fact, the children showed agency of language choice just as much as parents, if not more, because their language repertoires included more languages than the parents. All interviewed parents were native speakers of Spanish and greatly preferred it over English, even those who had lived in the Midwest for many years. Most parents interviewed self-reported that they did not have a working use of English. Children, however, were all reported by their parents to be able to speak English very well. Spanish was sometimes spoken well by the children and sometimes not—this varied greatly from family to family. Therefore, children were reported to have more of a choice when it came to agency of language. For example, the parents reported speaking Spanish to their family members, including siblings, aunts, uncles, and parents. Children, on the other hand, were reported as code-switching between Spanish and English with their relatives, even if the relatives only spoke in Spanish. For example, the mother from Family 4 reported how she supports her children's appropriation of language. She said,

Pero aquí no, le digo, tienes que expresarte si necesitas ayuda, tienes que decirle 'no entiendo, explíquenme, o no sé,' en inglés, le digo. [Here no, I tell them, you have to express yourself if you need help, you have to say, 'I don't understand, explain it to me, or I don't know,' in English, I tell them.]

Parents are observing language shift and are trying to preserve the heritage language as well as support their children's bilingualism.

The parents also said the children spoke to their Spanish-speaking friends in English. When asked about his children's communication with Spanish-speaking friends, the father from Family 10 reported that "Bueno cuando hablan con sus amigos en inglés, cuando hablan con la familia...pues español," meaning, "when they speak to their friends, English, when they speak with family...

Spanish.” The children feel comfortable using both languages to convey meaning, so they choose to use both.

Overall, the children were more bilingual than their parents, so they sometimes took the lead with interpretation and translation. Many times, the child interprets or translates for the parents to help them understand something, and that something could be a simple instruction on a label, or a complicated immigration form, demonstrating the bidirectional nature of agency being appropriated not only by parents, but by emergent bilingual children. The mother from Family 7 commented,

Vamos a la tienda, y mi hijo, “pregúntale esto” o “esto como es” o “como se hace”...y ya ellos preguntan. [We go to the store, and I tell my kids, “ask them about this” or “what is this like,” or “what does it do,”...and they ask.]

The children also act as an interlocutor in conversations with the parents for clarification. For example, when talking about details in a conversation, the mother from Family 4 reported,

Que a veces uno como el padre no lo entiende, cosas que no entiende y cualquiera de los dos dicen, “ah, te está diciendo esto,” y ya para entender. Pero, sí, es un apoyo también. [Sometimes, we parents don’t understand it, things we don’t understand, and either one of the children say, “oh, they’re saying this,” and then we understand. But yes, that’s helpful as well.]

These interactions serve to address the immediate needs of families as they negotiate their literacies across their different and shared languages (García & Kleifgen, 2010; Taylor, 1983).

Affirmation of Identity

As aforementioned, the interviewed families live in an area where the majority of people are linguistically and culturally different from their home language and culture. Their identities are not always recognized or differ widely from their majority peers and educators. Emergent bilingual students are constantly negotiating their identities, including their linguistic, racial/ethnic, and cultural identities, along with deciding what to integrate, reject, or mix (García & Kleifgen, 2010). This negotiation frequently manifests itself in language agency and choice. As observed in the households, we see how parents are engaging with their children across this continuum of language use (Spanish, English, or both) in different mediums (e.g., interaction through the use of TV, radio, texting, social media). As such interactions incorporate the English that students are learning in school and from various medias, we see how the hybridization

of the language identities are being negotiated and accepted by their parents. When asked about language use between her children, the mother from Family 3 said, “Entonces los más chiquitos son los que hablan más entre ellos el inglés, su idioma,” meaning, “so the youngest children are the ones who speak the most between themselves in English, their language.” This mother is expressing that although her children have Mexican-born parents who speak Spanish, they were born in an English-speaking country, so their language is English. Families’ negotiation of this hybridity demonstrates connection and affiliation across language varieties and differences, essential tenets of language identity affirmation.

All parents reported speaking in Spanish to their children when they were born and throughout early childhood, yet a linguistic shift occurred when their children began school. Yet, families claim Spanish as their original language, and such beginnings are regularly claimed and asserted by parents, fostering continual relationships within the family that spans their different generational statuses (e.g., grandparents, parents, children; Taylor, 1983, 2019). The parents’ use of Spanish is also a reflection of their social and historical identity (Moll, 1994). As immigrants, the parents expressed the importance of maintaining their culture and language within their families (James, 2014; Louie & Davis-Welton, 2016). When asked about the source of books in her home, the mother from Family 9 reported that her parents brought her books from Mexico so she can read to her children in Spanish. She elaborated,

Bueno, los de español me los traen mis papas de México. Me los traen, incluso, o sea...para que yo les enseñe mi cultura, exactamente. [The books in Spanish my parents bring me from Mexico. They bring them... so I can show/teach my culture to my children, exactly.]

The maintenance of heritage culture does not conflict with embracing dominant culture that children receive from outside of the family environment. As mentioned in the expectation of children’s bilingualism, all parents want their children to be proficient bilinguals. The father from Family 10 stated, “Sí, claro,” or “Yes, of course,” when asked if he wanted his children to be bilingual and biliterate. He went on to say that being bilingual is “parte de nuestra cultura, como Mexicanos,” or “part of our culture, as Mexicans.” He later said that “pues es que una persona bilingüe tiene más oportunidades en el país, en el área laboral, pues,” meaning, “well, it’s that a bilingual person has more opportunities in this country, in the workforce.” The identity is not limited to only confirming their heritage identities, but this is something new; the children have shared identities across their languages and experiences with their immigrant parents. Although the parents want the children to maintain their

heritage language/identity, the parents are also cognizant that the children were born in the United States and will speak English. The children will grow up with these intersecting identities of language and culture, and the parents want to confirm and support both identities in their children.

When asked about the advice she would give to other parents who are raising bilingual children, the Family 9 mother said,

El consejo sería de que...el hecho de enseñarles nuestras costumbres, de leerles libros. El hecho de platicar nuestras raíces. Que tengan interés en ser bilingües . . . que tengan como entusiasmo en cuestión de eso, si llegan a ir a nuestro país no sea un obstáculo el idioma. [My advice would be...that they should teach our customs, read them books. They should discuss our roots. So, the kids have an interest in being bilingual...that they have enthusiasm about that, if they go to our country it (the language) won't be an obstacle for them.]

Through the space making that families create in their households; we observed the generation of identities and the agency that emergent bilingual children appropriate across varied social contexts. Emergent bilingual children take up distinct bidirectional leadership roles with their parents and siblings and other extended family members and practice transnational literacies (Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2010; Sánchez, 2007). Our analysis demonstrates that literacy is not mere print, nor is literacy and language fixed and standardized (Ong, 1991). Emergent bilingual parents and children are adopting, creating, and transforming their language and literacy resources (García & Kleifgen, 2010), expanding our understanding of family literacy practices and biliteracy development.

Implications and Conclusion

Parents recognize the benefits of their children being bilingual and biliterate, as it forecasted better job opportunities, ability to communicate with extended family and community, and to sustain their identity as Mexican Americans. Consistent with Moll et al.'s (1992) original funds of knowledge work, defined as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills" (p. 133), parents' augmentation of funds of knowledge is a way to assert their agency and distinct identities as parents. Parents demonstrate their curiosity and engagement about what children are learning in school. English and Spanish are both used to negotiate meaning during family interactions, and parents mediate their children's comprehension. Parents hold high expectations for their children's proficiency in both languages. These high expectations help build a connection between home, school, and community.

Oftentimes, educators will construct the family's lack of English as reducing their capacity to serve as "teachers" of their own children, primarily focusing on language proficiency as the means of measurement. Yet, this inquiry demonstrates the mutual and beneficial negotiations from parent to child and child to parent and how it preserves space, affirms identity, and shapes agency. This study demonstrates how parents support their children's literacy development in the home and how their support might not fit the prescribed literacy of the schools, but it is valuable, valid, and can potentially reform instruction in the classroom.

As a result of this study, findings have been incorporated into our in-service courses with teachers from Delaware Elementary and the surrounding area. Teachers participate in a family multiliteracy project, interviewing one family and focusing on the areas of space, agency, and identity. As a result of this project, teachers are renegotiating their own understanding of what literacy means within their students' homes and communities. While teachers are attempting to make such findings "transportable" to their classrooms, university instructors have encouraged teachers to take in the experience as resettling and unsettling their notions on the purposes of literacy and language (Morita-Mullaney, 2020). This ideological shift is an important step in reshaping their beliefs prior to it becoming actionable in their classrooms. Keeping educators unsettled in their shifting beliefs also assists them in transforming their notions of individualism towards understanding the collectivism imbued by their immigrant families (Greenfield et al., 2020).

Educators' new understanding of emergent bilingual families' multiliteracies can help shift their view about prescribed literacy practices as well as inform changes in instructional beliefs (Greenfield et al., 2020). This study encompasses ways for schools to understand how emergent bilingual families are robustly supporting the biliteracy development of their children, suggesting that family literacy practices are not lacking, but are practiced in ways that school staff do not yet fully understand. Additional research is needed to explore how language and literacy is practiced in emergent bilingual families so we can identify the situated and dynamic nature of languages and literacies.

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Appendix A: Protocolo para entrevistar a familias bilingües (Español)

I. Historial del desarrollo del lenguaje

1. ¿Qué idioma(s) o lenguajes(s) le habló a su hijo/a después de que él/ella nació? ¿Por qué?
2. Cuando su hijo/a comenzó a hablar, ¿qué idioma habló? ¿Por qué?
3. ¿Qué idiomas escuchó y usó su hijo/a al crecer antes de comenzar la escuela?

4. Cuando su hijo comenzó el programa bilingüe, ¿notó algún cambio en el desarrollo del lenguaje de su hijo en español o en inglés?

II. Uso del lenguaje(s) en el hogar

5. ¿Qué idioma(s) usa para hablarle a sus hijos? ¿Cómo responden ellos?
6. ¿Qué idioma(s) usan sus hijos cuando hablan con usted? ¿Cómo responde usted?
7. ¿Qué idioma(s) usa su hijo con sus hermanos y hermanas?

III. Prácticas de alfabetización bilingüe en el hogar

8. ¿Qué materiales impresos tienen en casa? (por ejemplo, periódicos, libros, revistas, la Biblia, notas de la escuela, cartas y otro correo, diarios familiares, guías telefónicas, documentos, etc.) ¿En qué lenguajes?
9. ¿Compra libros u obtiene libros prestados de la escuela o de la biblioteca pública para usted o para sus hijos? ¿En qué lenguaje?
10. ¿Lee libros u otros materiales junto con sus hijos? ¿En qué lenguaje?
11. ¿Dónde guarda estos materiales de lectura? (estantería, mesa, armario).
12. Usted y sus hijos, ¿ven televisión, películas u otros videos en casa? ¿En qué lenguaje?
13. Usted y sus hijos, ¿escuchan la radio o música en casa o en el automóvil? ¿En qué idiomas?
14. ¿Usan usted o sus hijos Internet o las redes sociales de comunicación en casa? ¿Usan computadoras, teléfonos inteligentes u otros dispositivos? ¿En qué lenguaje?
15. ¿Le envía mensajes de texto a sus hijos? ¿En qué lenguaje?
16. La escuela, ¿le envía cartas u otros documentos escritos a casa? ¿En qué lenguaje? ¿Qué hace si no puede leerlos o entenderlos?
17. ¿Ayuda a sus hijos con sus tareas? ¿En qué lenguaje?
18. ¿Qué otras actividades hacen con sus hijos? ¿En qué lenguaje?
19. Por favor, ofrecen un ejemplo de lo que es una práctica de lectura en tu casa.

IV. ¿Por qué bilingüismo?

20. ¿Desea que su hijo sea completamente bilingüe (escuche y hable) y que pueda leer y escribir en dos lenguajes? ¿Por qué?
21. ¿Es difícil o fácil criar a un niño que hable dos idiomas? ¿Por qué?
22. ¿De qué manera su hijo/a sirve como un apoyo bilingüe a su familia?

V. Estrategias

23. ¿Cuáles son algunas estrategias o métodos que usa para educar a su hijo bilingüemente?
24. ¿Qué consejo les daría a otros padres que quieran criar hijos bilingües?
25. ¿Qué consejo les daría a los maestros que trabajan con niños bilingües?

VI. Retos, Preocupaciones y Preguntas

26. ¿Qué pueden hacer las escuelas o las organizaciones comunitarias como (La Plaza o CIIE) para apoyar el desarrollo bilingüe de su hijo/a?
27. ¿Qué se puede hacer para ayudar a más padres a inscribir a sus hijos en programas bilingües y educar a sus hijos en un ambiente bilingüe?

Appendix B: Language and Literacy Family Interview Protocol (English)

I. Language Development History

1. What language(s) did you speak to your child after he/she was born? Why?
2. When your child started to talk, what language did he/she speak? Why?
3. What languages did your child hear and use growing up before starting school?
4. When your child started in school, did you notice any changes in your child's language development in Spanish or English?

II. Home Language(s) Use

5. What language(s) do you use to speak to your children? How do they respond?
6. What language(s) do your children use when speaking to you? How do you respond?
7. What language(s) does your child use with his/her brothers and sisters?

III. Home (Bi)Literacy Practices

8. What print materials do you have at home? (e.g. newspapers, books, magazines, the Bible, notes from school, letters and other mail, family notebooks, phone books, documents, etc.) In what languages?
9. Do you buy books or borrow books from the school or public library for yourself or for your children? In what languages?
10. Do you read any books or other materials together with your children? In what languages?
11. Where do you keep these reading materials? (bookshelf, table, closet).
12. Do you and your children watch television, movies, or other videos at home? In what languages?
13. Do you and your children listen to the radio or music at home or in the car? What languages?
14. Do you or your children use the Internet or social media at home using computers, smartphones or other devices? In what languages?
15. Do you text your children? In what languages?
16. Does the school send home letters or other written documents to you? In what languages? What do you do if you can't read or understand them?
17. Do you help your children with their homework? In what languages?
18. What other activities do you do with your children? In what languages?
19. Give us an example of what a "literacy practice" looks like in your home.

IV. Bilingualism

20. Do you want your child to be fully bilingual (listen and speak) and biliterate (read and write)? Why?
21. Is it hard or easy to raise a child speaking two languages? Why?
22. In what ways does your child/ren serve as a bilingual support to your family?

V. Strategies

23. What are some strategies or methods you use to raise your child bilingually?

- 24. What advice would you give other parents who want to raise bilingual children?
- 25. What advice would you give teachers who work with bilingual children?

VI. Challenges, Concerns, and Questions

- 26. What can the schools or community organizations like [La Plaza] do to support your child's bilingual development?
- 27. What can be done to help more parents enroll their children in bilingual programs and raise their children bilingually?