Language Anxiety Among Heritage Speakers of Spanish on the Texas-Mexico Border

Leigh A. Cherry

Brigham Young University - Provo

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Language Anxiety Among Heritage Speakers of Spanish on the Texas-Mexico Border

Leigh A. Cherry

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Blair E. Bateman, Chair
Rob A. Martinsen
Robert N. Smead

Department of Spanish and Portuguese
Brigham Young University
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ABSTRACT

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Leigh A. Cherry
Department of Spanish and Portuguese, BYU
Master of Arts

There is an increased need for bilingual education programs throughout the U.S. as a result of the increasing bilingual population, especially Spanish-English bilinguals. With the implementation of such programs there also exists the need to be aware of issues that affect bilinguals and their language learning experience. One of these issues that has been investigated among foreign language learners, but less among bilinguals, is the issue of language anxiety.

This case study reports the findings gathered from classroom observations, a language survey, focus group interviews and teacher interviews in order to better understand the issue of language anxiety among heritage language learners on the border. The information gathered from student and teacher participants at a high school in South Texas describes students’ language background and attitudes toward language learning as well as teachers’ background, beliefs about language teaching. Results include responses from both students and teachers in reference to what creates language anxiety and what can be done in the classroom to mitigate its effects.

Results indicate that language anxiety is not the issue of greatest concern, although some lower proficient bilinguals experience it. Rather, it was found that poor classroom management has the ability to affect nearly every other aspect of a language class, directly affecting language expectations, language use, classroom routine, attitudes, and even the level of language anxiety. Due to poor classroom management, a very low expectation has been set for these students and as a result, there is also a low percentage of students who experience language anxiety. Recommendations for improving bilingual language classes come from students’ comments during focus group interviews.

Keywords: bilingual education; bilingualism; classroom management; heritage language; heritage students; language anxiety; low expectations; secondary schools; South Texas; Spanish; Spanish for Native Speakers
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Throughout the years, those involved in educational research have sought through their findings to create a better language-learning environment for all students, regardless of age, gender, or background. It goes without saying that much has been learned that has truly helped to improve a student’s overall language classroom experience and to help educators assist in that effort and there will continue to be improvements as time goes on. However, as I have read a variety of articles covering the spectrum of language-learning related topics, there are two issues which stand out to me as areas in which much growth is still to be had in the realm of language learning: Spanish heritage language students and language anxiety.

Problem

By definition, a “‘heritage language student’ refers to a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English” (Valdés, 2001, p. 38). On the educational front, due to the unique linguistic background of heritage students, many educators have asked the questions such as the following: What do we do with heritage students? What are their linguistic needs in comparison to monolingual language learners? How should the curriculum be designed and taught in order to help them strengthen areas of weakness? Some studies and experienced educators have provided suggestions to these answers; however, as a whole, many teachers do not feel that they have sufficient knowledge and training on how to effectively work with students classified as heritage speakers. Heritage programs throughout the U.S. are still looking for ways to better meet the needs, both linguistically and otherwise, of these students.
A separate issue that has been investigated is language anxiety, or, as it is often called in the linguistic realm, linguistic insecurity. According to Labov (1972), linguistic insecurity is an attitudinal issue that involves the perceived correctness of one’s use of language and how that will affect their ability to maintain a particular image or identity. Also, linguistic insecurity is a term that has typically been expressed in reference to native speakers of a language, whereas in previous studies language anxiety is a term that has more often been used in conjunction with second language learners. Although there is much overlap between these two issues, there are also some differences that will be highlighted in greater depth in Chapter 2. In regard to these issues, researchers have sought to understand these phenomenon, specifically causes and manifestations, students who tend to experience them, and the pedagogical implications that can help teachers meet the needs of anxious students.

The issue of language anxiety has traditionally been viewed as a phenomenon that is more common among beginning language students, in other words, monolingual language learners, although there have been a few studies that show that language anxiety is higher among more advanced speakers (Ewald, 2007; Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009). In essence, language anxiety is an issue that can affect the full spectrum of language learners (secondary, heritage, and adult) at all language levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced), especially when said students are expected to perform language tasks that involve production, such as speaking (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) and writing, although studies have shown that students do experience some anxiety involving the skills of reading (Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999) and listening (Vogely, 1998).

Specific types of speaking activities that have been known to create language anxiety include spontaneous role play in front of the class, presenting a dialogue in front of the class, writing on the board, oral presentations and skits, and speaking in any way in front of the class,
and oral exams (Young, 1990; Frantzen & Magnan, 2005). Young (1991), in a later study, adds that the greatest source of anxiety for students in the language classroom is the face-to-face interaction and evaluation that often occurs with peers and instructor and that all language anxiety can usually be associated in some way with the learner, the instructor, and/or the instructional practice. Furthermore, in a study involving beginning, intermediate and advanced students of Spanish, Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009) discovered that, in addition to oral practice, other factors commonly associated with high levels of anxiety are “fear of making mistakes or of being laughed at, pursuing high expectations, showing low self-esteem, or failing the language class” (p. 104).

In reference specifically to more advanced speakers of language, research has found supporting evidence that there is a direct correlation between the level of the language course and the level of language anxiety experienced: the higher the language level, the higher the anxiety (Ewald, 2007; Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009). These advanced second language learners and heritage speakers often experience higher levels of anxiety in comparison to beginners, not always due to the difficulty of the course itself or language tasks within the course, but often because they have more to lose socially by not performing well. Their anxiety is often more related to the relationships they have with peers and instructors, which may or may not be the case with beginners (Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009). The level of comfort that they feel in the class and the confidence they experience also play a big part in their overall experience (Ewald, 2007). In contrast to the beginners in regard to “one right way” to speak the language, advanced and heritage speakers often feel increased anxiety when expected to use the formal register of Spanish or when they feel that their dialect isn’t the “right” one (Coryell & Clark, 2009).

Language anxiety can manifest itself in many ways, both positively and negatively, among the full spectrum of language students. On the positive side, high anxiety can increase
motivation (Coryell & Clark, 2009). However, on the negative side of the spectrum, manifestations include “freezing up” and concentration difficulties, lack of comprehension, errors (Young, 1991), worry and dread (Ewald, 2007), frustration (Coryell & Clark, 2009), fear, panic, reticence and self-consciousness (Horwitz et al., 1986) to name a few. Horwitz et al. (1986) have also found that students who experience high anxiety tend to not even attempt to participate and often avoid use of the target language entirely.

Although research has determined that there are a plethora of factors that can contribute to a student’s overall foreign language experience, anxiety surrounding the language experience is viewed as being one of the most important predictors of foreign language achievement among many researchers (Bailey, Dailey, & Onwuegbuzie, 1999; Coryell & Clark, 2009; Ewald, 2007; Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999; Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999; Tallon, 2009). This is not only an issue, but the issue among all language learners that has the potential to predict success or failure in the language classroom.

Due to such a wide spectrum of results regarding language anxiety, whom it affects, and how it affects them, there is still a great need to understand Spanish heritage students, and perhaps an even greater need to understand how they are affected by language anxiety and what this could imply for bilingual teachers. Such knowledge, combined with application, has the potential to drastically improve teacher education programs, both foreign language and bilingual alike, thus creating teachers that are much more prepared to face a variety of challenges in the classroom, one of the most important and common factors being language anxiety.

**Overview of Study**

An area of the U.S. with one of the highest percentages of Spanish heritage language students is the Rio Grande Valley on the Texas-Mexico border. This is a unique area of the U.S., which continues to experience constant immigration, rapid urbanization, and increased
opportunities to receive a higher education. As of the year 2000, the Rio Grande Valley, demographically speaking, consisted of an 89% Hispanic population, which includes immigrants from Mexico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, and Spain, and a very high percentage of locally-born Mexican-Americans, the majority of whom use both Spanish and English on a daily basis in school and/or in a professional setting (Mejías, Anderson-Mejías, & Carlson, 2003). This is an area of the U.S. that consists of both bilingual heritage speakers, some first generation Spanish speakers from outside of the U.S. and others that are second, third, fourth and even fifth-generation bilinguals born and raised in the Valley. Not everyone in this area is bilingual, however. Of those that are considered Mexican-American, there is also a large monolingual population that does have some ability to understand Spanish, while almost completely lacking the ability to produce Spanish aside from common words and phrases.

In order to better understand the attitudes of local bilinguals, professors at the University of Texas-Pan American have found among university students that their language maintenance is due mostly to the value they place upon Spanish and a sense of language loyalty that they feel (Mejías et al., 2003). There has been a gradual shift from Spanish to English among this population; however, in comparison to other Spanish speaking parts of the U.S., this area is, for the most part, maintaining its use of both English and Spanish, as evidenced by the daily use of both languages by many within the population in a variety of settings.

I had the opportunity to live in South Texas, specifically in the border cities Brownsville, Edinburg, and Laredo, from 2003 to 2004 and conversed daily with these heritage speakers of varying English and Spanish abilities. Since then, I have become increasingly interested in their abilities to perform, particularly in Spanish, due to their diverse academic background with the language. Considering what I have studied in regard to heritage speakers and language anxiety, I believe it would be a contribution to the educational field to understand how the complex issue
of language anxiety affects heritage speakers, specifically those in the secondary schools, in an area of such a high concentration of Spanish speakers, regardless of their perceived abilities both in and out of the classroom.

In order to better understand the unique language environment among bilinguals on the Texas-Mexico border and in order to see if and how they are affected by language anxiety, I chose a border town in South Texas, TX, located in the Rio Grande Valley, as the location for my research. I visited a local high school for nine days, my first visit being from February 28 to March 4, 2011 and my second visit being from March 28 to March 31, 2011. Participants were from three bilingual Spanish classrooms at the high school level. In order for the findings to be more generalizable, I worked with two different teachers because research findings state that teachers are also one of the most important factors in creating or eliminating language anxiety (Frantzen & Magnan, 2005). Therefore, with this research design, I was able to determine if and how the teacher plays a role in creating or eliminating language anxiety.

I observed two class periods taught by one teacher and one class period taught by the other. Ideally, I would have liked to have three different teachers, but given the difficult task of finding willing participants, two had to suffice. There is a possible benefit to this situation, however. The two class periods I was working with that were taught by the same teacher were both bilingual classrooms; however, one of those classrooms was, according to that teacher, more proficient in Spanish, whereas the other felt more comfortable using both languages in the classroom, and therefore, a mixture of Spanish and English was used during this class period. This situation had the potential of providing valuable insight into who experiences higher levels of language anxiety – the intermediate speakers or the advanced speakers. More information specific to the participants will be discussed in Chapter 3.
During the week, I observed the three classrooms took extensive notes on my observations, particularly of interactions between peers and teachers, in order to determine if language anxiety was apparent and how it was most often manifest. I also administered a survey via Internet, which is a slightly modified version of the FLCAS, (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) adapted for heritage speakers as opposed to foreign language learners. A copy of this survey is included in the Appendix B.

In preparation for this case study, I also felt that a teacher perspective would be useful as well because it would provide further insight into if and how heritage learners experience language anxiety and to what extent this affects their classroom behavior and experience. Therefore, I interviewed both participating teachers to not only gather background information about them and their teaching experience, but more specifically about the presence or absence of language anxiety in their classroom. Focus group interviews were also conducted with four to six students from each of the three class periods in order to better understand the language experience of those who commented on their survey as feeling anxious about some aspect of language learning.

The background questionnaire as well as the Likert portion of the language anxiety survey was used for the quantitative portion of my research. The open-ended questions, which permitted students to comment openly on their language experience, constituted the qualitative portion of my research. All of the aforementioned sources of information – observations, the survey, and interviews (teacher and students) – were incorporated with the intent of improving the validity of my research and allowing me to provide a thick description of the language experience of the students of these three classes, thus making the findings more generalizable to perhaps other settings.
This Chapter has introduced the research that will be conducted. Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of the literature surrounding heritage speakers and language anxiety. Chapter 3 will discuss methodology and research questions. Chapter 4 will address this study’s results and findings. Chapter 5 will discuss these results and provide implications as well as ideas for further study.
CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Among the many phenomena in regard to Spanish and English bilinguals, language anxiety and linguistic insecurity are areas in which there is still much research to be done. These are potentially complex issues that affect many bilinguals in different ways, both in and outside of the bilingual classroom. Although these two phenomena are interrelated, there are slight differences, which will be highlighted in this review of literature. The goal of this review is to provide insight into language anxiety research from the foreign language and bilingual perspectives in an effort to show the need for further investigation of this topic.

Review of Literature

Definitions and Background

Before delving into the research findings, several terms need to be defined. The word “bilingual” can in theory be defined in a variety of ways ranging from one’s actual level of proficiency in a second language to how often that other language is utilized. Grosjean (2010) defines bilinguals as “those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives” (p. 4). In the classroom setting in the U.S., bilinguals are often referred to as heritage speakers of a particular non-English language they learned at home. By definition, a “‘heritage language student’ refers to a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English” (Valdés, 2001, p. 38). As noted, these definitions are very broad and in many ways, all-encompassing, including a wide spectrum of bilinguals, some of whom are very proficient in both languages and others who are not equally proficient. Of the bilinguals in the U.S., we find many third and fourth generation U.S.-born Hispanics who are classified as bilingual and yet are English dominant while at the same time understand almost all spoken
Spanish, but often they have limited speaking abilities in the language and rarely are able to read and write in it (Schreffler, 2007). Schreffler also adds that spoken language among bilinguals also often contains features more commonly associated with casual or informal registers that might be inappropriate in certain situations and an inability to change register depending on social context.

In research, language anxiety, as defined by MacIntyre (1999), is “the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language” (p. 27). Due to the fact that even heritage speakers often experience language anxiety, a broader definition states that “language learning anxiety” is the “tendency to experience an anxious response during language learning interactions” (Coryell & Clark, 2009, p. 484). Horwitz, who has made language anxiety a primary focus of her research and to whom the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is credited, adds that language anxiety is “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language process” (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 128), rather than anxiety that simply transfers from one area of learning to another.

Linguistic insecurity, while it has similar manifestations to language anxiety, is more an issue of language attitude. Bucci and Baxter (1984) characterize linguistic insecurity “as a negative or poor ‘speech image’ comparable to a poor ‘body image,’ that is, a bad feeling about the way one talks like a bad feeling about the way one looks” (p. 191). According to the world-renowned sociolinguist, Labov (1972), linguistic insecurity is more related to speakers’ relative confidence in the perceived “correctness” of their language use. Linguistic insecurity is associated with the attitude that one’s use of language is “bad” in comparison to a more supposed prestigious form on the Spanish bilingual spectrum.
Bucci and Baxter (1984) define linguistic insecurity in terms of the following characteristics:

a. It is situationally induced, a matter of performance in certain contexts rather than a fixed attribute of an individual. A person may be fluent and expressive in informal settings in his own speech community, but his language behavior and attitudes change in [certain] contexts.

b. It leads to a focus on the form rather than the content of speech. The individual is concentrating on how he talks rather than on what he says.

c. It is not necessarily related to level of competence. Some individuals with full linguistic competence may have low linguistic self-esteem.

d. It may be but is not necessarily consciously recognized by the speaker, it is almost certain not to be recognized by the listener.

e. It is a function of upward social mobility rather than of social class. (p. 192)

As can be seen, it can be relatively difficult to diagnose linguistic insecurity especially because many other things may disguise it. It is also difficult to detect due to the fact that many are unaware of their negative language attitudes, therefore making direct questioning and self-report possibly ineffective and unreliable (Bucci & Baxter, 1984).

**Who Experiences Language Anxiety / Linguistic Insecurity?**

Language anxiety is an issue that has most commonly been researched using monolinguals learning a second language, also known as foreign language students, as participants. Due to the potentially negative effects of language anxiety in the classroom, effects of which will be discussed later in the review, several studies have sought to understand this issue that impedes many language students from having the ideal language learning experience. Of these studies, many have sought particularly to determine which students tend to experience
language anxiety, if there are differences between levels of foreign language anxiety among students enrolled in different levels of foreign language (elementary, intermediate, and advanced), and under what circumstances do students tend to experience this phenomenon.

Most of the research conducted involving language anxiety states that language anxiety has typically been observed to be higher amongst beginning language learners as opposed to those in the more advanced levels and that as students increase in their competence in a language that the amount of language anxiety experienced usually decreases (Pichette, 2009). Sparks and Ganschow (2007), who used the FLCAS, came up with similar findings. In addition, by analyzing the different levels of anxiety present among high school students, they established correlations between the level of anxiety experienced in language classrooms and the level of native language skill (such as proficiency, word decoding and spelling) exhibited by the students. Their findings suggest that students who scored the highest on the FLCAS in the areas related to their native language skill also were the students who exhibited the lowest levels of foreign language anxiety on this same assessment (Sparks & Ganschow, 2007). This supports the argument that the higher the level of language ability, the lower the level of anxiety, or conversely, the lower the skill level, the higher the anxiety. Considering the various language skills involved in becoming proficient in any language, the findings of Sparks and Ganschow (2007) “suggest that students with the highest levels of anxiety about foreign language learning may also have the lowest levels of native language skill, especially in reading and spelling” (p. 277).

The question has also been asked as to whether or not anxiety is a language level issue or if it is simply a learning style issue and that those who experience anxiety have a special way of learning language. A study conducted by Bailey, Daley, and Onwuegbuzie (1999) used the FLCAS scale and another scale, the Productivity Environmental Preference Survey (PEPS),
which measures students’ reactions to environmental factors such as noise, light, sound, and temperature. In order to determine if there is a connection between foreign language anxiety and learning styles of students, one hundred forty-six first and second semester Spanish and French students from a mid-southern university served as subjects. Findings suggested that students who prefer to learn and work alone in completing assignments and students who are not generally responsible in completing assignments tended to show increased levels of foreign language anxiety (Bailey et al., 1999). These findings could apply to beginning, intermediate, and advanced students alike. After the study was complete and the data was analyzed, however, it was discovered that many of these students seemed to possess these particular traits both in and out of the language classroom and it was determined that such tendencies might not correlate, as predicted, specifically with foreign language anxiety (Bailey et al., 1999).

Not every study agrees, however, that beginning language learners tend to exhibit higher levels of anxiety. Other research shows quite the opposite. In regard to the research focusing on advanced speakers of foreign language and bilinguals, research findings are mixed. In a study conducted in 2003, Tallon (2009) found through his qualitative research that the mean anxiety score on the FLCAS was lower for heritage speakers than it was for nonheritage Spanish speakers. However, his findings showed that Spanish heritage speakers, despite their ranging capabilities with the language, can also experience various forms of language anxiety such as reading, writing, and listening anxiety. He also suggests that anxiety can have other potentially negative effects on language learning such as less output in the language both orally and written (Tallon, 2009).

Research conducted by Ewald (2007) and Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009) concludes that there is a direct correlation between the level of the language course and the level of the language anxiety experienced: the higher the language level, the higher the anxiety. These
advanced and heritage speakers often experience higher levels of anxiety in comparison to beginners, not so much due to the difficulty of the course, but because they often feel more pressure to do well and are also more concerned about their relationships with peers and instructors because they feel that they have more to lose by not performing well (Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009). The level of comfort that they feel in the class and the confidence they experience also play a big part in their overall experience (Ewald, 2007). In contrast to the beginners, who often believe there is “one right way” to speak the language, advanced and heritage speakers often felt increased anxiety when expected to use the formal register of Spanish or when they felt that their dialect was not the “right” variety given the social context (Coryell & Clark, 2009).

The goal of a particular study by Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009) was to determine if there are differences in levels of anxiety among students who are enrolled in different levels of Spanish, if their course grades differ, and if there are connections between their anxiety and the overall course achievement. By using the FLCAS and analyzing the results, significant differences were found between the levels of anxiety experienced by the beginning and advanced Spanish students. Interestingly, the study by Marcos-Llinás and Garau revealed that anxiety was highest among the more advanced learners, and thus it was concluded, for this study at least, that the level of anxiety increases as the language level increases.

Similarly, in a study investigating language learning anxiety in upper-level classes, Ewald (2007) mentions that she was shocked to hear students comment that they experienced such intense anxiety in their upper-level Spanish classes that they often felt physically ill, considered changing their future plans of study, and often dreaded attending class. Student comments also included that they felt that their upper-level language classes were often more difficult in comparison to their other classes and that these classes required more mental work,
causing students to feel more anxious and nervous (Ewald, 2007). Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009) concluded that advanced students feel more pressure to do well in their courses due to the desire they have to succeed academically, hence the increased anxiety. These students are also typically concerned about, in addition to their academics, how they will be perceived by their peers as well as their instructors in regards to their language capabilities.

The increase of anxiety among more advanced speakers of Spanish, however, cannot be looked at entirely as a negative factor affecting their performance because studies also show that the higher the language level, the higher the course grade (Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009), making anxiety a factor that is not always directly associated with poor course achievement. Higher course grades are often found in higher language levels, despite students’ tendency to experience more anxiety according to the FLCAS, showing that high anxiety is not always a predictor of poor course achievement, but could also have positive effects on some students. Conversely, students with low anxiety showed lower grades (Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009).

As previously mentioned, language anxiety can affect any language learner at any language level. More specifically, researchers such as Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, and Daley (1999) agree that students who tend to have the highest levels of language anxiety also tend to have at least one of the following characteristics: no experience with high school language courses, older, high academic achievers, never visited a foreign country, lower expectations in regard to grades in their language course, negative perception of their overall academic competence, or low-self esteem.

Research suggests that language anxiety can affect the full spectrum of language learners (secondary, heritage, and adult) at all language levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced), when expected to perform language tasks involving speaking and listening, and reading (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999). It is not clear as to why the studies
presented show different results especially since most of them were qualitative, used the FLCAS as the testing instrument, and in the case of a few, another qualitative assessment (questionnaire or survey) was used to test language anxiety. The different results could be due to a lack of external validity, meaning that the findings gathered from each study are not applicable in settings other than in the one where the research took place and cannot, therefore, be easily replicated. Although the FLCAS, according to Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009), “has already been used in previous studies on foreign language anxiety, proving to be a valid and reliable measure of language anxiety,” (p. 99), research by Sparks and Ganschow (2007) observes that the FLCAS might not be measuring foreign language anxiety, as it purports, but rather “is in large part also measuring students’ self knowledge of their language learning skills” (p. 279) due to the fact that students perceive their language abilities as different from what perhaps they really are.

With the spectrum of findings presented, it can be seen that more research is needed in the area of language anxiety, particularly in reference to bilinguals, in order to understand the needs of this growing populations.

**What are Causes and Manifestations of Language Anxiety / Linguistic Insecurity?**

As previously stated in this review of literature, language anxiety and linguistic insecurity are two terms that although somewhat different are very related. An attempt has been made to use the terms as the authors used them in their studies. The reader should keep in mind, however, that the causes and manifestations of language anxiety and linguistic insecurity are in many ways the same. As a result, research on both anxiety and insecurity has been included in this section.

Qualitative and quantitative research both reveal that linguistic insecurity and language anxiety have most commonly been associated with speaking activities (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Concerning these anxiety-provoking activities, Young (1990) and Frantzen and
Magnan (2005) compiled a similar list of anxiety-inducing language activities according to student response, some of which include: spontaneous role play in front of the class, presenting a dialogue in front of the class, and oral exams. In a later study, Young (1991) adds that the greatest source of anxiety for students in the language classroom is the face-to-face interaction and evaluation that often occurs with peers and instructor and that all language anxiety can usually be associated in some way with the learner, the instructor, and/or the instructional practice. Likewise, Martínez and Petrucci (2004) discovered that speaking was the greatest factor associated with linguistic insecurity, but in addition, 50% of the bilingual students surveyed reported low confidence levels when speaking with a native English-speaking instructor.

Although most research concurs with what has been mentioned, there are other reported causes of language anxiety and linguistic insecurity. In a study involving beginning, intermediate and advanced students of Spanish, Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009) discovered, in addition to oral practice, that “fear of making mistakes or of being laughed at, pursuing high expectations, showing low self-esteem, or failing the language class” (p. 104) are also common feelings that typically contribute to high levels of anxiety.

Although many of the manifestations of language anxiety and linguistic insecurity can produce positive results, such as increased motivation despite high anxiety, (Coryell & Clark, 2009), negative manifestations include “freezing up” and concentration difficulties, lack of comprehension, errors (Young, 1991), worry and dread (Ewald, 2007), frustration (Coryell & Clark, 2009), fear, panic, reticence, and self-consciousness (Horwitz et al., 1986) and code-switching (Javier & Marcos, 1989), to name a few. Horwitz et al. (1986) have also found that students who experience high anxiety tend to not even attempt to participate and often avoid use of the target language entirely.
In the foreign language classroom teachers often focus their methodology on the improvement of the basic language learning skills – reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students not only exhibit language anxiety in areas of oral and written performance, but also in their reading abilities. Saito, Garza, and Horwitz (1999) explore the effects of anxiety on reading abilities. They asked, “Does foreign language reading anxiety exist as a phenomenon distinguishable from general foreign language anxiety? Do the levels of foreign language reading anxiety and general foreign language anxiety vary according to the specific target language? Do learner perceptions of difficulty of their particular target language relate to their levels of foreign language reading anxiety?” (p. 203)

Findings indicated that students with higher levels of anxiety in regard to their foreign language experience also experience high levels of reading anxiety (Sellers, 2000); therefore, reading can be a catalyst for language anxiety. Sellers (2000) agrees with Saito et al. and suggests through further study that “reading anxiety is a separate and distinct phenomenon in language learning” (p. 517) due to the fact that there are so many other outside issues to be considered when analyzing language reading anxiety, including students’ ability to focus on a reading task and the level of cognitive interference experienced on a reading assignment. Both of these reasons contribute to language anxiety, but could as well be separate from the issue at hand. The data also suggests that out of the three languages on which the study was focused, Russian participants expressed the lowest levels of reading anxiety, followed by French participants, with Japanese participants as the most anxious (Saito et al., 1999). In regards to language reading anxiety, as anticipated, students’ perceptions of the difficulty of the language directly influenced the level of reading anxiety experienced. In other words, those that perceived that their language was difficult to learn also experienced higher levels of reading anxiety (Saito et al., 1999).
Javier and Marcos (1989), in an effort to understand linguistic insecurity among bilinguals, investigated the role of stress on language independence and code switching, specifically if and how stimuli affect how and when bilinguals use Spanish and English. By using a procedure which entailed lists of stimulus words in Spanish and English and the use of buzzer sounds as a representation of a stressful situation, the researchers concluded that language shift tends to occur in stressful or anxiety-provoking situations and that stress can have a deleterious effect on students’ use of language. In other words, the subjects’ response to the simulated stress condition with the use of the buzzer parallels subjects’ normal linguistic response to stress. Likewise, “when this stress is too overwhelming, this normal linguistic response deteriorates, resulting in a ‘dampness’ of the generalization process” (p. 466). Thus, “bilinguals’ shifting from their first to their second language was construed as an attempt on their part to avoid unacceptable and anxiety-provoking materials’ (p. 467), and bilinguals were found to exhibit a greater amount of anxiety in their primary language than in the more recently acquired language. This supports the findings of Ewald (2007) and Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009), which suggest that advanced bilinguals tend to experience higher anxiety in given situations.

Closely related to the issue of stress is the issue of heightened emotional reactions. Javier (1989) claims that “it appears that [some] individuals attach very definite emotional experiences to the two languages” (p. 90). Supporting the hypothesis, Bucci and Baxter (1984) discovered that in states of heightened emotion, it became difficult for some bilinguals to express emotional experience in a code other than the mother tongue resulting in linguistic breakdown or shifting of language. Linguistic shifting, or code switching, has been viewed, in the context of these studies, “as a coping mechanism to avoid and to minimize the emotional impact of specific contents associated with one of the languages” (Javier, 1989, p. 90). Guttfreund (1990) also concurs that
English-Spanish and Spanish-English coordinate bilinguals “often seem more emotionally withdrawn when using their second language as opposed to their mother-tongue,” which leads to an “increase in defenses when a bilingual is engaging in his or her second language” (p. 604), especially if open discussion of opinions and experiences is a common practice in a bilingual classroom. Such activities, according to this study, will lead to increased anxiety.

The real question, then is why do bilinguals experience linguistic insecurity when, according to society and even the school system, they “speak” both languages? The literature suggests several reasons for the existence of linguistic insecurity and language anxiety. These factors include issues of identity (García, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla, & Paulino, 1988; Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009; Martínez & Petrucci, 2004; Tallon, 2009; Young, 1990), societal attitudes and prejudices toward language varieties, (Carreira, 2000; García et al., 1988; Potowski, 2005), the idea of a “best” dialect (Bucci & Baxter, 1984; Martínez, 2003; Schreffler, 2007), and ease of emotional expression in one language as opposed to the other (Bucci & Baxter, 1984; Guttfreund, 1990; Javier, 1989; Schreffler, 2007).

Heritage speakers and bilinguals often find themselves in a no-win situation. Unlike the monolingual English speaker who learns Spanish as a foreign or second language, the use of Spanish by bilinguals is part of their identity and links them to their heritage. In the language classroom, especially if they are in a Spanish foreign language classroom, if they do well, it is expected; whereas if they do poorly, the experience can be especially damaging to their identity as bilingual speakers of Spanish and English (Tallon, 2009). As mentioned previously, there are many motivations for maintaining the use of Spanish even while in an environment where English is the dominant language. One of the main reasons for this motivation is that it is part of bilingual students’ identity, part of their heritage. As a result, the majority of both middle-class literate and educated Hispanics want their children to be both biliterate and bicultural so that they
can perform in English as native born Americans and in the Spanish-speaking community so that they can connect with their Spanish-speaking relatives (García et al., 1988). Therefore, bilingual students find themselves in a high-stakes situation when they are unable to maintain certain levels of proficiency in both languages. As far as proficiency in Spanish is concerned, linguistically bilinguals sometimes share greater similarity to second language learners, therefore placing them in danger of having their identity as heritage speakers and bilinguals either “negated or ignored, and their linguistic insecurities emphasized” (Schreffler, 2007, p. 32). But bilinguals are linguistically distinct from second language learners and have affective and intellectual needs that are not sufficiently addressed in the second or foreign language classroom. Therefore, placement of these students in a foreign language classroom, “that is, the ‘outsider’ track, negates…their identity as heritage language speakers and members of the Hispanic community” (Schreffler, 2007, p. 32).

Closely related to the identity issue, societal attitudes towards one’s use of language, more specifically the idea of a “best” dialect, seems to be the factor that most influences if and when someone experiences linguistic insecurity or language anxiety. Among teenage and college age bilinguals, this issue originates and is perpetuated in the classroom, inasmuch as many who work closely with curriculum have taken it upon themselves to prescribe the “best” dialect and have, in essence, deemed certain dialects as nonstandard in the classroom (Martínez, 2003). The education system within the U.S., although varied depending on demographics, traditionally does not respond well to linguistic diversity, “rationalizing that the standard language taught in schools is the vehicle for general communication and the language which already has an established role in society, whereas a dialect has only informal, daily functions, thereby hindering its usefulness” (Schreffler, 2007, p. 29).
Naturally, when the question of dialect comes into play, the likelihood of linguistic insecurity and language anxiety increases because there will inevitably be those who fall into the “bad” speech category. Potowski (2005) discusses the same issue of stigmatizing a student’s vernacular: “Muchos de los alumnos bilingües muestran inseguridad sobre su español y miedo ante la idea de estudiarlo formalmente. Esto se debe a varios factores. Muchos han sufrido críticas de hispanohablantes monolingües por el español que hablan, sobre todo por las influencias del inglés. Como resultado, muchos alumnos bilingües sufren profundas inseguridades lingüísticas, que pueden impedir su deseo de seguirlo usando” (p. 30). As a result, many of these bilingual students, due to their linguistic insecurities, develop a form of “linguistic self-hate” (Martínez, 2003, p. 7) and poor “linguistic self-esteem” (Carreira, 2000, p. 427) that eventually leads them to abandon Spanish for English.

Continuing with this argument, Martínez (2003) worries that by asking “students to model the speech of socially prestigious groups, we are implicitly saying that their own language is somehow not good enough to get on in society” (p. 4). According to Tallon (2009), it is actually the linguistic nature of many of these heritage courses that causes the linguistic insecurity and language anxiety in the first place. For instance, studies conducted at the University of Texas at Brownsville and at many other universities along the Texas-Mexico border, have lead to the implementation of a mandatory sequence of courses in development writing to help bilinguals who failed that portion of a classification exam to improve (Martínez & Petrucci, 2004). However, it was discovered that students labeled as “developmental learners” tend to display greater levels of linguistic insecurity in English, whereas those labeled as “non-development” tend to display greater levels of linguistic insecurity in Spanish. Thus we see that the nature of programs that aim to classify students and label them as “deficient” tends to increase the amount of linguistic insecurity (Martínez & Petrucci, 2004).
Although the traditional response to linguistic diversity in the education system has been to eradicate these non-prestigious or nonstandard forms, there are Spanish for Native Speakers (SNS) programs in the U.S., such as one at New Mexico State University, which has as its main goal the preservation of students’ heritage varieties as opposed to the eradication of their heritage varieties. Despite this effort, however, many heritage language students are still reluctant to participate in these programs due to the internationalization of “discriminatory attitudes of non-Hispansics and even some Hispanic educators towards their language variety” (Schreffler, 2007, p. 33). These students are negatively affected by the belief that the way they speak is bad. Therefore, when called upon to produce language, they feel insecure in their abilities and experience some of the manifestations already mentioned.

Although this review of literature regarding linguistic insecurity and language anxiety has provided perhaps a negative look at many of the issues surrounding bilinguals in the U.S., there is research that reports that there are bilinguals from a variety of Spanish dialects who are studying Spanish in order to improve and in order to acquire a more prestigious form. In a qualitative study, Ducar (2008) discovered that 96% of the students expressed that they want their Spanish to be corrected by their teacher. Ducar (2008) hypothesizes that this could be due to several factors: 1) Perhaps students are very aware of their stigmatized form of Spanish and want to distance themselves from it; 2) Perhaps they want to learn a more proper and grammatically correct form; and/or 3) Perhaps they simply are respecting their teacher as the authority figure.

The attitude that there exists a superior dialect, which often leads to linguistic insecurity, is a problem that transcends the confines of the bilingual classroom. The idea of a “best” dialect affects bilinguals in a range of circumstances throughout society as a whole. Regardless of one’s stance on the issue, “language is power” (Martínez, 2003, p. 9), and it is this very idea that
causes many bilinguals to eventually reject their language due to society’s position that Spanish is inferior to English, or the attitude of the Spanish community that certain dialects are inferior to others (Potowski, 2005). The use of particular “nonstandard” dialects of Spanish, or of the Spanish language itself, is seen as an obstacle to overcome rather than something to be valued (Potowski, 2005). Carreira (2000) claims that despite the “irrefutable linguistic validity of U.S. Spanish, Hispanic bilinguals must contend with deeply ingrained linguistic prejudices that are not likely to change any time soon” (p. 430). Although these linguistic prejudices exist for many reasons, many are related closely to the defining characteristics of U.S. Spanish such as its numerous anglicisms, lack of lexical cohesion, and, depending on the dialect from which it originates, radical pronunciation (Carreira, 2000; García et al., 1988).

Although there are perhaps many reasons why bilinguals do not have equal access to Spanish language education, this situation will not likely change until language attitudes among Hispanic and non-Hispanics change. Schreffler (2007) purports that U.S. citizens need “to see multilingualism with all its variations and dialects as an asset with clear social and financial benefits. Only when Americans no longer perceive bilingualism as a detriment and look upon it as an asset” (p. 33) will the issue of linguistic insecurity among bilinguals be lessoned both in and outside of the classroom.

Apart from the research previously mentioned, several qualitative studies have also been conducted that have provided valuable feedback directly from students regarding what contributes to their language anxiety. The most commonly reported reasons for language anxiety among a group of 21 language students, especially among true beginners, revolved around oral performance such as skits, oral presentations, oral exams, and other forms of speaking in class. Another reported cause of anxiety was boredom, although it is not clear as to how that would increase anxiety (Frantzen & Magnan, 2005). Truthfully, all of the reasons for which students
suffer anxiety are often not clear because there are so many factors that influence their experience in a language classroom. Several of the reported reasons for student anxiety include fear of situations such as being made fun of, failing the class, or making mistakes in front of their peers. Some of these students experience low self-esteem and feel that their lack of ability impedes them from pursuing higher expectations (Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009).

Another study invited adult online language learners to share their experiences about language anxiety. These were students who held themselves to high expectations and were extremely motivated to learn Spanish so that they could participate in their community more fully. When asked why and how they experienced anxiety, they responded that the “focus of language competence in formal and informal instruction was firmly placed on correctness and precision. Language production was conceived as a performance, rather than as a communicative medium for community interaction” (Coryell & Clark, 2009, p. 493). Focusing so much on accuracy shifted students’ attention and caused them to concentrate more on each utterance, thereby increasing their level of anxiety.

In regard to the online language instructions assessments, students’ anxiety level likewise increased as they were allowed limited amounts of time to complete assignments and were also limited in their responses, emphasizing once again the focus on precision rather than on students’ communicative goals (Coryell & Clark, 2009). A particular student in this study commented that she became so focused on saying and doing everything the “right way” that she often felt anxious and that the learning process was slow. An interesting discovery was that students, often despite language anxiety, will continue their learning because they are motivated by something greater, as seen in this case with this group of people who felt that their language development was vital to their wellbeing in their community. This finding supports what Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009) also discovered – that “course achievement differs according to the goals of the learners,
as each language group has different purposes to study Spanish” (p. 103). The students in this study were highly motivated, and therefore were able to learn despite the language anxiety that they experienced in given tasks.

Both positive and negative aspects of language anxiety have been mentioned throughout this review, raising the question as to whether anxiety is a positive or negative factor in context of language learning. Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009) conclude that “some level of anxiety may be beneficial and may actually facilitate the study of a foreign language” (p. 103) due to the correlation found between level of anxiety and course achievement. Likewise, Ewald (2007) purports that “a certain level of anxiety might motivate some language learners and enhance their performance” (p. 124). Ewald goes on to ask, however, how we can expect students who experience high levels of anxiety – who cannot concentrate, who avoid coming to class, who continuously forget previous knowledge – to perform up to expectations and therefore reach their potential in the various language skill areas. In summary, research suggests that anxiety may have either positive or negative aspects, depending on the assessments used, the participants, or other factors.

**Pedagogical Implications**

Language anxiety is an area that many have researched in order to help create a better learning environment in which students are free to learn a language. In order to create such an environment, suggestions have been provided. For example, “Tallon (2009) emphasizes the importance of instructors having open discussions with their students about language learning in order to help them better cope with anxiety. Particularly in reference to heritage speakers, Tallon states that it is important to “inform the students that the goal of the class is not to eradicate the home variety of the students, but rather to expand their bilingual range by building on their
existing strengths” (p. 126). Whether heritage speakers or not, all students should feel that the knowledge that they bring to the classroom is valued.

Frantzen and Magnan (2005) cited three rather simple conditions that, if present in a classroom, typically cause students to feel more at ease in learning a language:

1. A feeling of community in the classroom.
2. A good teacher.
3. A background in the language.

One student said that “the more familiar you are with your classmates, the less intimidated you feel speaking in front of them (Frantzen & Magnan, 2005, p. 180). A way to accomplish this could be to provide frequent opportunities for students to converse with one another through group and paired activities, working with a variety of partners so that a sense of “community” can be created within the classroom (Frantzen & Magnan, 2005). Several researchers have offered suggestions for how teachers can improve the learning environment of their classroom and thereby reduce the level of anxiety. Ewald (2007) quotes these researchers and adds suggestions of her own:

Teachers should…

1. Build an environment in which the students feel supported.
2. Be helpful instructors by showing that they are concerned with the students’ learning, rather than be an authority figure.
3. Establish that mistakes form a part of learning a language.
4. Express that learning and improvement are more important than performance.
5. Find a balance between instruction and cognitive tension.
6. Encourage students to write in a journal in order to improve language abilities both reading and writing.
7. Allow students to work in groups when the activity permits.

8. Work to help build student confidence.

9. Find creative ways of teaching grammar.

10. Evaluate responses in the context of the activity – not just as right or wrong.

11. Find ways to encourage participation without forcing students to do so.

12. Discuss language learning anxiety as a class and come up with ways to alleviate this anxiety. (pp. 134-135)

Other ideas mentioned throughout the literature include that students benefit from a “highly structured, systematic approach to foreign language instruction” (Sparks & Ganschow, 2007, p. 279), while making the context of the learning activities less stressful (Saito et al., 1999).

Considering what it is that allows students to feel at ease in the foreign language classroom, Ewald (2007) concludes “that foreign language learning anxiety in upper-level class depends more on the level of comfort and confidence experienced by students in the class than on its actual difficulty” (p. 127).

According to Valdés (1997), there are four objectives upon which a SNS program must be founded: 1) the maintaining of Spanish, 2) the acquisition of a standard form of Spanish, 3) the expansion of students’ bilingual range, and 4) the transference of reading and writing skills between both languages. Therefore, in addition to the previous questions mentioned in this section, the bilingual teacher will perhaps have another group of questions to consider: “What dialect does the teacher promote? What does the teacher think about the vernacular dialect of students? How does the teacher express these prejudices in the classroom? How are these attitudes and expressions damaging students’ self-confidence? Is the use and promotion of a standard dialect an instance of educational malpractice?” (Martínez, 2003, pp. 2-3). Standard dialects are what allow one to communicate with the Spanish-speaking world, whereas a dialect
refers to a regional or social variety of a language that provides a sense of identity and belonging to a particular social group. These questions in relation to standard and regional dialects and many other questions not included in this review reflect the ongoing debate in bilingual education. Depending on how a teacher answers these questions, linguistic insecurity and language anxiety can become a very real problem in the bilingual classroom.

What are possible solutions? Carreira (2000) stresses the importance of expressing the “overwhelming similarities between dialects, rather than their differences” (p. 438) thus empowering bilinguals to develop confidence as they strive to develop a more proficient command of the standard variety. Potowski, Jergerski, and Morgan-Short (2009) discuss the importance of helping students develop a greater bilingual spectrum while validating their spoken variety of the language, so that they can communicate appropriately in the context of both formal and informal situations. For other ideas on how to decrease linguistic insecurity and language anxiety, particularly in the language classroom, refer to the following studies: Coryell and Clark (2009); Ewald (2007); Javier (1989); MacIntyre (1999); Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009); Potowski (2005); Potowski et al. (2009); Tallon (2009); Valdés (2001); Young (1990); and Young (1991).

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

There is still much left to be researched in regard to language anxiety in any classroom setting. Currently, what is known is that it is a problem that exists in the majority of language classes – among heritage and nonheritage speakers, among beginning, intermediate and advanced speakers of languages, and in the language skills, having positive effects with some students and negative effects with others. The majority of the research presented involves the use of the FLCAS to gauge foreign language anxiety among students. Although the majority of researchers have found this to be a valid and reliable assessment, the possibility for creating
another assessment in the future that more adequately helps determine reasons for and solutions to language anxiety still exists. Although the majority of the studies present ideas for how teachers can reduce anxiety in the classroom, there does not appear to be a study that analyzes the effectiveness of these supposed anxiety-reducing strategies. This type of research would provide valuable information to the language teaching field by outlining which, out of all of the suggestions, benefit students most in the classroom. Further study could also analyze the differences in anxiety among mixed classes of both heritage and nonheritage speakers and how to meet the needs of both types of students, even though the reasons for their anxiety will often be caused by different situations.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Study Design and Research Questions

In order to better understand and draw conclusions about language anxiety among heritage speakers of Spanish in South Texas, TX, this case study was designed in such a way as to provide both qualitative and quantitative data. The purpose of the qualitative portions of the study is to describe and explain how and why the students feel and behave the way they do in their bilingual Spanish class. The purpose of the quantitative portions of the study is to identify factors and relationships between the students’ language background and how much or how little language anxiety they experience. Ultimately, this will provide for a more well rounded study and hopefully greatly increase our scope of understanding about language anxiety among this particular group of students. Therefore, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are the general attitudes of the heritage speakers in this study towards studying Spanish?
2. According to the students (survey and focus groups), what are factors that contribute to language anxiety in the classroom and how does this affect their language learning experience?
3. To what degree do the students experience language anxiety?
4. According to the teachers of these students, what are factors that contribute to language anxiety in the classroom (based on their observation) and how does this affect their language learning experience?
5. Based on student and teacher perspectives of language anxiety among heritage speakers, what can be done in heritage language programs to mitigate the effects of language anxiety?
Participants

The participation of this group of students is purposive in nature. I chose South Texas as the location of my research due to its unique language situation. There are not many areas of the U.S. where use of both Spanish and English is absolutely essential. South Texas border cities have a unique fusion of American and Latin American cultures and language making the ability to communicate in both languages requisite to functioning in and contributing to society. As previously mentioned in my review of the literature, language anxiety is commonly considered an issue that affects beginning, intermediate, and advanced language speakers. Understanding this particular group of language students will further contribute to preexisting language anxiety and heritage research.

Upon choosing this location, I began contacting local high school principals and language department chairs in order to find out the contact information for Spanish bilingual teachers. Once I heard back from these individuals, I contacted several bilingual teachers directly through email, asking for their participation in my study.

Of the several language teachers that I contacted from three local high schools in this border town, two responded saying that they were not only interested in my research topic, but also volunteered to allow me to work directly with their students over the period of time that I would need in order to collect data. As a result, these heritage students were chosen to be part of my study because of their teacher’s consent to participate.

The participants in this study are currently students (and teachers) at this South Texas high school. Ranging in age from 14-19 years old, these students are enrolled in Spanish Bilingual I or II for the 2010-2011 school year. Out of the 75 students that could have opted to participate, 51 did participate – 31 males and 20 females. All three class periods that I worked with had a higher percentage of male students.
Through the process of discussing demographics with teachers, students, and other administrators in the area, it was concluded that each of the participating heritage students fits one of the following four scenarios:

1) They are from the Rio Grande Valley, born and raised. The majority of the students that I worked with fall into this category. They spoke Spanish at home as a child and then learned English upon entering the school system at the age of five. The majority continues speaking Spanish at home or both English and Spanish. Only a few of the students mentioned speaking more English than Spanish at home.

2) They are from Mexico originally and at some point immigrated to the U.S. This was the second most common scenario that I found among this group of participants. These students tend to speak only Spanish at home, either because their parents don’t speak English or because their parents want them to maintain their use of Spanish. They appear to have a high level of proficiency in each of the four language learning skills, although I am not able to say with certainty due to the overall lack of assessment in these classrooms. Of this group of students, many still maintain contact with Spanish-speaking relatives outside of the U.S and either talk to them often or visit them.

3) They are from Mexico, and return to Mexico on the weekends to be with family. There are only a small percentage of students who fall into this category. During the week they live with another family member or friend and are here in the U.S. for the sole purpose of attending school.

4) They were born in another part of the U.S., grew up speaking Spanish in the home, and at some point moved to the Valley. Of the few that fall into this category, Spanish and English are spoken at home and with relatives. Only a handful of the participating students mentioned growing up elsewhere.
Due to the possibility of compromising the students’ legal status in the U.S., I was not permitted to ask where students are from and how long they have been living in the Valley. Therefore, I am not able to give exact numbers and the descriptions I have provided are more general.

Sources of Information

As one of the most important sources of information in this study, observation was key in providing a thick description of each of the three participating class periods. Out of the nine, 50-minute class periods in which I was able to work with these heritage students, seven of those class periods were either partially or entirely dedicated to observation. During my observations, I took extensive notes on peer interactions, interactions between students and teacher, the daily classroom routine, use of Spanish and English, students’ reaction to instruction and, of course, activities during the class period that could cause language anxiety. Findings from my observations will be discussed in depth in Chapters Three and Four of my thesis.

In order to best answer my research questions, I created a three-part language survey that is an adaptation of the FLCAS created by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and the background information sheet created by Tallon (2009). I chose to use these two instruments due to the applicable nature of the questions that they each contain in relation to my research topic and due to the researchers themselves, Tallon and Horwitz, who have conducted multiple studies in relation to language anxiety among language learners. Modifications were made in order to make the survey more applicable to heritage speakers as opposed to foreign language learners.

Part One of the language survey contains a series of background questions that pertain to the students’ language experience, areas of strength and weakness in regard to the four language learning skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), and also a few open-ended questions in
which they are able to comment on their teacher’s attitude toward their use of Spanish in the classroom. Some of these background questions allowed students to select more than one option due to the fact that in some cases more than one answer applies to their situation.

Part Two is a five point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree) that targets language anxiety among language learners and asks students to agree or disagree with statements regarding how often, if ever, they feel anxiety associated with their language experience. Topics include communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative criticism or evaluation in the language classroom (Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009).

Part Three consists of four open-ended questions dealing with language anxiety that allows students to comment more openly on if they experience language anxiety, and if so, what are the factors that cause them to feel anxious in their current bilingual Spanish class.

Once the language survey was administered to each of the three participating classrooms, and once I was able to look over the results of the language surveys, five to six students were selected from each class period to participate in a focus group interview in which I further inquired about their language experience and, more specifically in regard to their current language classroom and if and how they experience language anxiety. Although, the length of the focus group interviews varied depending on the number of participating students in the group and their level of participation in the interview, the average length of each focus group interview was between 20-25 minutes.

Understanding language anxiety from a teacher perspective is also one of the primary goals of this case study. Therefore, as an additional source of information, I interviewed both of the teachers in order to find about more about their own language learning experience, their teaching background, and their thoughts on the presence of language anxiety in bilingual classrooms and in their individual classrooms. These interviews were conducted at a time
convenient to each of the teachers and each interview lasted for 25-30 minutes. Additionally they were able to provide me with further insight into the challenges that heritage students on the border face. Both the language survey and the focus group interview questions are contained in the appendix.

As a last source of information, the teachers allowed me to make copies of student work during the last couple of days of my visit. According to the teachers, the assignments that I copied were a representative sample of the classroom work that these students tend to have to do. Assignments copied included practice worksheets and writing samples.

**Implementation of Project**

Once the two participating teachers agreed to be part of my research study, I presented them with options for when I would come and observe the predetermined class periods, administer the language surveys, and conduct the interviews. We all agreed upon the week of February 28-March 4, 2011 as the time in which I would conduct my research. Once a date was agreed upon, I additionally received written approval from the School District, the high school principal, and Brigham Young University. Due to some unforeseen obstacles during my initial visit to the high school, which resulted in not having sufficient data to analyze, I returned to The high school during the week of March 28-31 to conclude my data collection.

**Data Analysis**

This study contains both quantitative and qualitative data; however, the quantitative portions of this case study provide descriptive statistics, rather than show correlation. Descriptive statistics have been used to summarize the background portion of the survey as well as the Likert anxiety scale. The descriptive statistics consist of means, percentages, and standard deviations. For the qualitative portion of the research, I looked for common themes from the
observations, interviews, and surveys and created memos that describe the essence of each of those factors.
CHAPTER 4

Introduction

This chapter contains the findings and results provided by the student survey, classroom observations, focus group interviews, and teacher interviews.

Profile of Students

Prior to delving into what was learned specifically about this unique group of bilingual students at this high school through the survey and interviews, it is worth mentioning once again from a broader perspective of the area that as of the year 2000, the Rio Grande Valley consisted of an 89% Hispanic population, which includes immigrants from Mexico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, and Spain, and a very high percentage of locally-born Mexican-Americans, the majority of whom use both Spanish and English on a daily basis in school and/or in a professional setting (Mejías, Anderson-Mejías, & Carlson, 2003). The percentage of Spanish-English bilinguals remains high; however, there also continues to be a large monolingual population that, according to locals, no longer speaks Spanish for reasons ranging from being far removed from Spanish-speaking relatives, to not learning Spanish in the home, and even due to the fact that despite the strong presence of Spanish on the Texas-Mexico border, English continues to remain the language of greater importance.

The student population of the high school is much like the community in which it resides – Mexican-American. Walking down the hall when I first arrived was a cultural experience in and of itself and was very distinct from my own high school experience. Although I heard the occasional English speaker during the five minutes between class periods, the halls were overcrowded with students that not only look Hispanic, but the majority of whom either speak only Spanish with their peers (because they prefer it over English) or the local contact variety
sometimes referred to as *Tex-Mex*. In other parts of the U.S *Tex-Mex* is often referred to as *Spanglish*.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, the participants in this study are from three Spanish Bilingual classrooms. For the purpose of this study, teacher’s names have been changed. Mr. Martinez teaches Bilingual II (fourth period) and 17 of his students participated. Mr. Flores teaches Bilingual I (fifth and seventh periods). From his fifth period class, 19 participated and from his seventh period class, 15 participated. The purpose of this section is to provide a thorough description of the 51 participating bilingual students, specifically what characterizes them and what are their abilities as discovered while collecting data through observation, the survey, and focus group interviews.

**Students’ Characteristics and Abilities**

There were a total of 51 participants – 20 female, 31 male, 17 from Mr. Martinez’s fourth period class, and 34 from Mr. Flores fifth and seventh period classes. Due to the fact that each of the three class periods exhibited such similar characteristics, I have chosen to talk about them as a whole, and will only refer to specific class periods as needed.

The majority of the information I received regarding these students and issues they face were provided to me by their teachers, Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores. According to their teachers, these students for the most part are highly bilingual, especially those who are currently enrolled in Bilingual II with Mr. Martinez, with a few exceptions. Some of the students are finishing up their Spanish requirement to graduate and a few of the more dedicated students are concurrently taking an AP Spanish class. Mr. Martinez stated during his interview that given the typical ease with which the students communicate in English and Spanish, “a lot of times, they think they know more than the teacher.” Mimicking his students, he said that they often complain and say that they do not want to work because they already know and understand whatever they are being
asked to do during the class period. More about their actual language abilities as pertaining to
the four language-learning skills will be mentioned in another section.

Of the participating students, many are native Spanish speakers from Mexico and have
attended school in Mexico, or they were born either in the Valley or in another part of the U.S.
such as California or Chicago) where they participated in an immersion program, thereby giving
them some academic experience in Spanish. A small percentage of the students also mentioned
taking Spanish classes during Middle School. When asked to describe their academic experience
with Spanish and English prior to their current Spanish class, specifically in regard to immersion
programs, many described their immersion experience as quick, meaning that the goal was for
them to learn English and to move on from the immersion program into a mainstream English
learning environment.

The majority appears to be proficient in Spanish and English, although there are of course
varying levels of proficiency among these students based on their language background.
Unfortunately, I did not have access to formal assessments that would have allowed me to more
clearly describe their overall academic abilities in both languages as they pertain to the four
language-learning skills – speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Putting aside the academic aspect of this student profile, both Mr. Martinez and Mr.
Flores shared very interesting insights about their current students. According to them, the
majority is poor and many come from one-parent homes where that one parent is usually the
mother. Many come from families where no one has gone on to study at the university level.
Due to their low socioeconomic status, many students do not have computers in their homes,
making it difficult for their parents to stay abreast of their grades and assignments that are posted
on Blackboard. As a result, Mr. Martinez said that he often has to call parents directly or else
they will be completely unaware of their son or daughter’s progress in the class.
One of the most surprising issues that Mr. Martinez shared with me pertains to several students’ current living conditions. Although there are many students in all three class periods who were born in the Rio Grande Valley, making them U.S. citizens by birth, there are many students who are natives of Mexico. Mr. Martinez reluctantly shared that he estimates that about 40% of his students are illegal and have come to the U.S. for various reasons, although the accuracy of this estimate cannot be verified. According to Mr. Flores, “things are bad in Mexico right now,” resulting in parents sending their children across the border to the U.S. to attend border city high schools. Mr. Martinez pointed out a specific group of young men in his fourth period class who are from Mexico and live on the border during the week. They often live by themselves in cheap apartments located close to the school and only return home to Mexico on the weekends. Both teachers mentioned the Cartel del Golfo (CDG) as being one of the main reasons that the Texas-Mexico border has become so dangerous, so much so that those from the Valley who used to cross weekly for shopping and to visit friends and family, such as Mr. Flores, almost never cross anymore. In fact, Mr. Flores said that he hasn’t crossed in about five years due to the increase in border violence. Some students have connections to the CDG and return home to Mexico on the weekends as drivers for the cartel and can earn up to $500 a week. Mr. Martinez mentioned that some of his male students have even brought photos to school that show them driving or “hanging-out” with other cartel members. Apart from the CDG, there are also other gang related issues in this community. Due to the proximity of such influences, it is easy, according to these teachers, for students to get “mixed up with the wrong people.”

Another issue that impacts these students academically, especially those students who are here illegally in the U.S., is the fact that many of them work after school and sometimes until very late hours of the night. Mr. Martinez mentioned that many illegal students create false Social Security numbers and work at a place such as a restaurant for one to three months until
their Social Security number is rejected and they are forced to look for another job. They go from job to job creating false Social Security numbers. Due to the high percentage of students who work outside of school, many are tired when they come to school and therefore do not succeed academically. While discussing the different situations that exist among bilingual students, Mr. Martinez made the following comment:

I mean...they don't have their resources, but they try. Its just so difficult. I have some that come from wealthy families that are such excellent students...from Mexico, right. Most students come from Mexico. And then there are some that are wealthy families and the kids are just terrible. They just plan on playing. I guess they have it too easy. Their priorities are completely different. Its just the upbringing, the culture of the family, not so much the culture of the town or the country, but the family. The values of the family. I think that's the main thing that...uh...that helps shape the students.

As can be seen from the findings reported in this section, there are many challenges that these students face that make it difficult for them to focus in school, and likewise for the teachers to instruct.

**Age and gender.** The background portion of the survey provided information that follows. As seen in Table 1 below, all of the participating students fall within the ages of 14-20, the majority falling between the ages of 14-16, which is the typical high school age. I was surprised to find that there were students older than 18 attending high school. The students in one of the focus groups informed me that when students transfer over from another country such as Mexico, they sometimes are placed up to two years behind their peers in order to “catch up.” For that reason, there are two students who are older than 18.
Reasons for taking a Bilingual course. In the background portion of the language survey, students responded to the question “What are your main reasons for taking Spanish?” Students were asked to check all answers that apply to their situation. As seen below in Figure 1, the main reason that students participate in a language class is to fulfill the school’s graduation requirement. At this high school, the requirement is for students to complete two years of language. According to Mr. Martinez, the required language credits do not affect their GPA, although they are required to pass the class with a 70%. The school also offers a Distinguished path that requires students to complete three years of language courses. Student responses in the “other” category included 1) to help translate, 2) to get smarter, and 3) to speak more fluently.
What are your main reasons for taking Spanish?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To fulfill a language requirement to graduate.</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve my bilingual skills for my current or future job(s).</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To better communicate with older relatives.</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To feel closer to my culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To talk to my friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve my grade point average.</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second reason that this group of students participates in a foreign language class, aside from the obvious school requirement, is in order to be more prepared and marketable for future jobs. This echoes what many students stated during the focus group interviews. Although there are exceptions, many students feel that being bilingual gives them an advantage in the workplace, whether they plan on staying in the Valley or not. The value that these students place on language learning will be revisited in another section.

Aside from academic and work-related reasons, between 33-45% of the students are in a Bilingual Spanish class for communicative and/or cultural purposes. During focus group interviews, several students discussed the importance of and necessity of knowing Spanish in order to be able to talk with relatives and friends in Mexico, showing that some students still see the value in remaining close to their heritage culture and family members. According to the survey, speaking with friends in Spanish is less important in comparison to the other responses.

Language background and abilities as they pertain to the four language-learning skills – reading, writing, speaking, and listening. As part of the background portion of the language survey, students were asked to respond to the question “What variety of Spanish do you
They were also encouraged to check all responses that apply to their language variety. As seen in Figure 2, 73% of the participating students describe their Spanish as Mexican-American, whereas 49% feel that their Spanish is more Mexican. In the context of language variety, Mexican-American Spanish describes the language variety common in the Valley, which can include among other things, code-switching and anglicisms due to the influence of English. Individuals who speak Mexican Spanish are likely from Mexico and at some point moved to the U.S. Their use of Spanish tends to show fewer signs of English influence. All the students who took the survey were either Mexican or Mexican-American (born and raised in the Valley, or born elsewhere in the U.S. and moved to the Valley at some point) and their teachers confirmed that none of the participating students are from other Spanish-speaking countries. It is odd, therefore, that some students would describe their Spanish as anything other than Mexican or Mexican-American, as can be seen below with 6% choosing Puerto Rican Spanish, 4% choosing Central American Spanish, and one student selecting Castilian Spanish. The one response listed under the “other” option was “Hispanic.”

![Figure 2](image)

**What variety of Spanish do you speak?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexican-American Spanish</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Spanish</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican Spanish</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central American Spanish</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban Spanish</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castilian Spanish (from Spain)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to students being asked to describe their language variety, they were also asked to self-rank their abilities in each of the four language learning skills – speaking, reading, listening, and writing.

With regard to listening proficiency, Table 2 reports that 59% of participating students rank themselves as “very high” and 37% as fairly high. In essence, 96% of students feel that they have a high level of listening proficiency.

In regard to speaking proficiency, nearly 90% of the students who responded fall within the “very high” or “fairly high” range, meaning that according to the students, speaking is also a skill of higher proficiency in regard to their particular variety of Spanish. A remaining 10% of the students consider themselves to have lower speaking proficiency.

In reference to reading and writing skills, we begin to see a shift toward “fairly low.” One-fourth of the student participants ranked themselves in the “fairly low” category for both reading and writing, meaning that these students recognize that their skills in these areas are not as high in comparison to speaking and listening. Most likely these are also areas of greater difficulty for the students. Of all the language proficiency skills, though, 12% ranked their writing proficiency as “very low.” This is the weakest area for this group of students.

Table 2

How would you describe your current proficiency in the Spanish language in each of the following areas?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>Fairly high</th>
<th>Fairly low</th>
<th>Very low</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to better understand what students feel most comfortable doing in relation to each language learning skill, student responses are included in Figures 3-6.

Figure 3

*Which description about SPEAKING Spanish best describes you?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I can always express myself easily when I am speaking in Spanish.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I can usually express myself adequately in Spanish, but sometimes it can be difficult for me.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have trouble speaking in Spanish.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 includes descriptions related to speaking abilities. Fifty-five percent of students are able to express themselves easily when speaking Spanish, and 39% are usually able to express themselves, although they occasionally might find it difficult depending on certain factors. These percentages coincide very closely with the findings reported in Table 2 – roughly 90% of the students ranked themselves as “very high” or “fairly high” in speaking ability, whereas in Figure 5, 94% can either usually or always express themselves in Spanish. Only 6% have trouble speaking in Spanish.

Figure 4

*Which description about READING in Spanish best describes you?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I read Spanish easily.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I read short, informal things in Spanish easily, but newspapers, magazines, or textbooks are sometimes difficult for me to read.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have trouble reading in Spanish.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4 contains three descriptions about reading. Students were asked to choose the response that best describes their reading abilities. The majority, which constituted 59% of the participants, read easily. This is likely due the fact that many of these students are either from Mexico, and have therefore attended Spanish classes before, or because they have received Spanish instruction here in the U.S. and teachers have focused on this particular skill, or both. A significant percentage of 35%, however, find reading formal things more difficult.

Figure 5 contains descriptions about listening in Spanish. According to this figure, 82% of students understand spoken Spanish easily, making this skill the strongest for students. This also agrees with the findings recorded on Table 2.

Figure 5

*Which description about LISTENING in Spanish best describes you?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I understand spoken Spanish easily.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I understand most spoken Spanish easily, but understanding Spanish radio, TV, or Spanish speakers from other countries is sometimes difficult.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have trouble understanding spoken Spanish.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which description about WRITING in Spanish best describes you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am confident and comfortable writing in Spanish.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am confident and comfortable writing notes and personal messages (emails, twitter, Facebook) in Spanish, but writing essays, compositions, or reports for school are sometimes difficult for me.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have trouble writing in Spanish.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6 contains descriptions of writing abilities in Spanish. According to this figure, only 33% of students are confident and comfortable writing in Spanish. A much higher percentage, 51% in fact, are confident and comfortable writing informal messages as listed above, but find formal writing, such as essays, to be more of a challenge. In comparison to the other categories, a much higher percentage of students have trouble with writing in Spanish than with any other skill. This agrees with Table 2 and that tells us that 36% of students feel that their proficiency in writing is “fairly low” to “very low.”

During interviews with both teachers and during the focus group interviews conducted with students, I inquired about students’ abilities with each of these four language learning skills. From teachers, I learned that most of their students speak “good.” According to that description, Mr. Martinez means that they are able to communicate their point clearly, although sometimes not accurately. For the most part in all three class periods, though, the majority of students speak Spanish when conversing with their peers, with the exception being a small percentage that feels more comfortable with English.
Mr. Martinez stated that although his students are able to communicate well in Spanish, they are often lacking in vocabulary. The type of vocabulary that he is referring to is more formal vocabulary necessary for formal writing assignments, synonyms so that they can express an idea but in different words, and vocabulary that is common in Mexican Spanish, but perhaps is not used as much in the Valley due to the influence of English. Therefore, in the view of Mr. Martinez, vocabulary development would serve to improve students’ ability to communicate, and perhaps also improve their accuracy. While discussing speaking proficiency during a focus group interview with a few students from Mr. Flores’s fifth period class, I asked students to describe how they feel about their speaking proficiency in Spanish. Following are a few of their responses:

Student 1: Spanish is hard.

Student 2: There are more words (referring to the Spanish language).

Student 1: Like there are more meanings and stuff for Spanish.

Reasons such as these are why some students struggle to express themselves in Spanish.

In regard to listening, the most students expressed that it was easy to understand Spanish; however, when they watch videos in class that often contain vocabulary from other Spanish-speaking countries or regions or the speakers on the video speak with an accent that the students are unfamiliar with, then listening becomes a more difficult skill.

Concerning reading proficiency, both teachers are under the impression that the students enjoy reading the literature presented in the textbooks. Both classes use the textbook Nuevas vistas as the main source of curriculum for Bilingual Spanish I and II. Each chapter has a literature section where students read either poetry or an excerpt from a Spanish or Latin American novel. Authors featured in the textbooks include Antonio Machado, Rubén Darío, Gabriel García Márquez, and Pablo Neruda. Due to how both teachers conducted their class
periods, I was not able to actually hear students read; however I was able to discuss reading proficiency with each of the focus groups. The two most difficult skills for the students tended to be reading and writing. They all seemed to agree that reading is a little easier than writing because you do not have to create language out of thin air. The challenge with reading centers more on pronunciation. Students are comfortable when reading silently; however, whenever they are asked to read out loud, they become concerned about their pronunciation and are unsure if they are reading the words correctly. More about language anxiety associated with reading will be discussed later in this chapter.

Teachers and students agree that the skill of writing is the most difficult for several reasons. According to the teachers, students not only struggle with grammar, but also hate it. In addition to grammar, students mentioned that spelling is difficult and accents add an extra element that they do not have to worry about in English. During my several days of observation, I was able to see several samples of students’ written assignments. Some were simple worksheets that went along with the textbook and others were half-page written responses asking students to respond to a prompt. I saw many of the errors typical of heritage speakers – switching of the letters {b} and {v}, completely forgetting that the letter {h} even exists, and the complete absence of accents and other punctuation. On a grammatical level, these students also do not follow prescriptive rules of grammar in their use of the indicative and the subjunctive and, due to the influence of English, mix both languages even in their writing.

**Language Use**

Several class periods of observations, the survey, and interviews provided a wealth of information in regard to student use of English and Spanish on a daily basis. Question #9 asked students to indicate with whom they usually speak Spanish. Students were asked to check all applicable answers. In Figure 7, and in descending order, we can see that the majority of
students speak Spanish in the home with parents, grandparents and siblings. It appears, though, that Spanish is spoken less with siblings and friends, whether in or outside of school, in comparison to parents and grandparents. Figure 8 tells us that the highest percentage of students (44%) speak both English and Spanish each day.

Figure 7

With whom do you usually speak Spanish?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends at school</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends outside of school</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Other” responses included the following: 1) some cousins that do not speak English, 2) con mi perro también (with my dog, too), 3) mom, 4) mainly everyone that we know speaks both languages, 5) teachers, and 6) most of my relatives.

Figure 8

How often do you SPEAK English each day?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Figure 9, students speak approximately 50% English and 50% Spanish each day. The outliers in these figures tell us that there are some students who are able to make it through the entire day without ever speaking English, and others without ever speaking Spanish,
even though they all have courses taught in both languages and the majority tend to speak both
languages at home. Even though 55% usually speak both at home, Spanish is the main language
spoken at home for 33% of the participants, and some only speak English. This could explain
why some students ranked themselves as “fairly low” or “very low” in reference to language
learning skills such as speaking.

Figure 9

What language do you usually speak at home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both languages</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In regard to language preference, during all of the focus group interviews I asked the
students to comment on whether they prefer English or Spanish and why. Although a few
students prefer Spanish over English whether they are from the Valley or from Mexico, many
said without hesitation that they prefer English over Spanish and that they are much more
comfortable with English, even though they speak both languages very well, and in some cases
have attended school outside of the U.S. Mr. Flores pointed out during one of our conversations
that some students, although they have been raised in a Spanish-speaking environment, are much
more comfortable with English. Both Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores agreed that of those students,
certain students would benefit more from being in a monolingual Spanish class.

During one of my observations, a substitute teacher came into Mr. Flores’s classroom to
ask him a question. These two know each other quite well and this substitute teacher, actually a
retired teacher from the high school, wrote a master’s thesis on a linguistic study he conducted in
the Valley. Upon explaining my own research, he said that many of these students who are
classified as bilingual are not really proficient in Spanish or in English due to English imposing on the Spanish in the Valley, although the idea of having no mother tongue is actually a myth commonly associated with bilinguals. According to this teacher, this is true especially of those who are beyond second generation. He went on to describe the absolute necessity of knowing both languages well to “make it” in the Valley.

As mentioned previously referring to Figure 9, students speak Spanish mostly with parents and older relatives, but also with siblings and friends. When I asked students during focus group interviews about their use of English and Spanish, many said they feel very comfortable speaking both languages with relatives in and out of the U.S.; however, there are a few students who find it very difficult to speak Spanish to their relatives. Three students described the degree to which they feel comfortable speaking Spanish in their interactions with family members.

Student 1: Not that comfortable because I really don’t know that much Spanish. Like over there (referring to Mexico), they know a lot…so I try my best.

Me: And if you can’t think of a word? You go switch to English?

Student 1: Yeah.

Student 2: Yeah, you describe the word and they like, help you with it.

Student 3: Its kind of hard for me to speak English and then turn around and speak Spanish to the rest of my family.

The comments above show that although many of these students are in an environment where English and Spanish are easily accessible, they sometimes still struggle with one over the other.

The data presented thus far show that English and Spanish are both very present in the lives of many of these students, whether in or outside of school. Due to the constant interplay of these languages, many students have developed the ability to switch back and forth between
languages quite proficiently. This phenomenon is called code-switching. Grosjean (2010) defines code-switching as “the alternate use of two languages, that is, the speaker makes a complete shift to another language for a word, phrase, or sentence and then reverts back to the base language” (p. 52). For the sake of this study, I will not delve too much into code-switching, but I will simply share why the students reported switching between Spanish and English. When asked why they code-switch, students responded with the following:

Student 1: Um, well with my parents I speak Spanish like all the time, but uh with my cousins like I often speak like both like we don’t mix it up, but we like Spanish something and then English and then we go back in Spanish and back and forth.

Student 2: Sometimes it just makes it shorter to say it in English or Spanish or it just sounds better.

Student 3: Some words that you know in English and you don’t know how to say it in Spanish.

Student 4: It sounds more Mexican.

These are some of the more interesting comments made about code-switching that, from my observations, seem to accurately describe the experience of most of the participating bilinguals. Code-switching, however, is largely a subconscious process that bilinguals often participate in and as a result may not be aware of the reasoning behind its usage. In the comments above, students only reported on the conscious reasons for code-switching.

**Student Attitudes**

Throughout the data collection process, and specifically in focus group interviews and observations, it became very apparent that there are underlying attitudes and beliefs that these students have about their current language class and language learning experience. During my observations, the overall sense that I had was that students were apathetic about language
improvement. These students do what they have to do to get by and nothing more. Some do not even get by. As seen previously in Table 2, many take Spanish in order to fulfill a requirement; therefore, there is very little that they enjoy about the class. As a result, many find other ways of entertaining themselves during class time. In another section, I will discuss how students’ apparent lack of caring is directly connected to the way each teacher runs the classroom and his classroom expectations.

Value of language. Aside from the poor attitude or complete apathy that I observed during language classes as students were among their peers, during focus group interviews I inquired further into how students feel about their language class. Despite their behavior in class at times, all students agreed that knowing Spanish and English will provide better job opportunities in the future and will be useful to them in whatever career path they choose. Some students shared with me their aspirations to work for the Border Patrol or be a police officer. Other professions mentioned included physical therapist, engineer, speech pathologist, accountant, and forensic scientist, all professions that will require study and dedication.

Although many of the students see the value of language improvement, this did not seem to motivate them to stay on task consistently. Many of these students want to succeed in school, but fall victim to typical teenage behavior. During focus group interviews, the very students who expressed wanting to improve their Spanish were often the ones who participated in off-task activities. This issue will be further discussed in a later section. Despite their behavior, however, many know that their language abilities have value in regard to future work opportunities, travel opportunities, and keeping them connected to their families and heritage.

Teacher Perception of Students

I conclude this section on the bilingual students of this South Texas high school by mentioning what the two participating teachers shared with me about how they perceive their
Although most teachers will come to know the abilities of their students over a period of time, it is harder to judge students’ attitudes and behaviors. During teacher interviews I sensed that these two teachers feel that their students will not succeed. This feeling was much more prominent with Mr. Martinez. Mr. Flores seems to want to help as much as possible and yet still labels his students as being “good” at Spanish or not. In discussing this topic, Mr. Martinez stated that many of his students won’t ever go to a university, but will choose to work in lower-paying jobs instead. He went on to say that many have low self-esteem and no aspirations or motivation, and referred to them as flojos (lazy) “because they don’t want to work.”

These teachers’ perceptions of their students may or may not be accurate; however, during focus group interviews many students expressed interest in furthering their education and shared with me their aspirations and desires to succeed academically and professionally.

**Profile of Teachers**

Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores are two of the several Spanish teachers at this high school; however, they are almost solely responsible for teaching the Bilingual Spanish courses. The purpose of this section is to describe the teachers of these courses, particularly their educational and teaching background, as well as things I was able to observe while in the classroom in regard to their teaching style, how they interact with their students, and how they give feedback and correction to their students.

**Teacher Background**

**Mr. Martinez.** During an interview with Mr. Martinez, I was able to learn about his educational and teaching background. He was born in El Salvador and studied there until he graduated from high school. At some point in his late teenage years he came to the U.S. where he graduated with a bachelor’s (1991) and master’s degrees (1999) in Spanish Literature at a local university, which explains why he chose a textbook which contains a literature section in
Mr. Martinez has experience in teaching nearly every level of Monolingual Spanish and has taught other Bilingual courses. Currently, though, he is teaching six class periods of Bilingual Spanish II.

I asked Mr. Martinez to describe the type of Spanish he speaks with his students. He says that it has been an adjustment living in the Valley for many reasons, but particularly in his use of language. Growing up in El Salvador, he grew accustomed to using vos, which is very informal, and is also not common in Mexican Spanish. He has therefore had to make many adjustments to his Spanish in order to be better understood by his students. He went on to say his use of Spanish “really depends on the person you are speaking to. If I sense that they speak proper Spanish, I speak proper Spanish. If I sense that they don’t, then I adapt…unless they’re my students and then I speak to them properly. I don’t correct anyone else.”

Mr. Flores. Mr. Flores’s background in education and teaching seems to be typical of bilingual teachers on the border. He was born and raised in the area and graduated from a local high school and then went on to graduate from the University of Texas-Pan American in 1990. His bachelor’s degree is in Spanish with a minor in English and PE/Coaching. He has been teaching for 21 years and is currently in his 10th year at this high school where he teaches three class periods of Bilingual Spanish I and two class periods of Monolingual Spanish. He is also heavily involved in athletics and currently coaches track and field and football.

Mr. Flores’s experience with Spanish is very different from that of Mr. Martinez but very similar to many of the students that he currently teaches in his Bilingual Spanish classes. His first language was Spanish due to the fact that his mother is from the State of Nuevo Leon in Mexico. She was also a teacher and principal and, according to Mr. Flores, due to her influence he has always valued education. Throughout Mr. Flores’s childhood, his parents felt that it was
imperative for him and his siblings to know both English and Spanish, and as a result, Spanish was spoken in the home until he and his siblings began going to school. He did the same thing with his daughter who is now also very fluent in both languages.

Classroom Routine, Style, and Technique

My goal in this section is to describe what characterizes the teaching styles and techniques of Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores, including the routines that they have set up in their classroom as seen during observation and as commented on by students and teachers.

During focus group interviews, when I asked what students like and do not like about their current Spanish classes, they all described what occurs day to day in Spanish class as “the same thing.” From what I observed during several class periods, I would have to agree that there is a definite pattern of teaching that these teachers have established in their classroom and this daily classroom routine is very predictable and tends to include the presentation of objectives for the day, followed by the students doing independent work from the workbook and textbook, with the occasional listening activity or video presentation followed by content questions.

At the start of each class period that I observed, both teachers would generally either write on the board, or project with an overhead projector, the daily objectives and activities. In Mr. Martinez’s class, students are expected to write down these objectives every day in a notebook so that parents can know what is happening in each class period. Following is a sample of the daily objectives in Mr. Martinez’s class:

Content objective: Aprenderán como escribir una composición de evaluación (You will learn how to write an evaluative composition).

Language objective: Escribirán una composición de evaluación (You will write an evaluative composition).
Activity: Leerán las instrucciones en el texto página 221 y escribirán una composición de evaluación. (You will read the instruction on page 221 and you will write an evaluative composition).

Mr. Martinez writes the objective headings in English so that if there happens to be an observer in the classroom that doesn’t speak Spanish, he or she is still able to understand that what the students are copying down are indeed objectives. Mr. Flores likewise writes down the daily class plan, which is generally a list of assignments or quizzes that students are expected to complete during the class period.

In terms of teaching style, these teachers tend to prefer a more “hands off” method. The teacher’s job is to post the objectives and the students’ job is to complete the assignments. Therefore, as a result, there is very little, if any, actual instruction that occurs with either teacher. In my perspective, after observing several class periods, the goals seems to be to keep the students occupied. Therefore, students are provided with plenty to do during a class period. Assignments usually include activities from the textbook, worksheets, quizzes, and the occasional, sometimes unannounced, test. During one particular class period, Mr. Flores showed the students a short video from the series that goes along with the textbook. Prior to showing the video, no sort of preparation was provided to familiarize students with the context. Students struggled to understand due to the Spanish accents of the actors and due to poor sound quality of the video. The focus was very much on the lesson and less on the students and their needs.

During my first trip to the area I never saw either of the teachers actually teach the students a new concept or review a previously taught concept. All class work was meant to be done independently.

Upon scheduling my second trip to the high school, I asked each of the teachers if I could come during a week in which a new concept would be taught so that I could see how students
respond to new material and practice. They both agreed. I was shocked to see their idea of
instruction. Mr. Martinez posted the objectives as part of the daily class routine. As usual,
students were talking loudly with friends, listening to music, and playing games on their phones.
Without getting the students to be quiet, Mr. Martinez launched into a 15 minute explanation
about the pluperfect subjunctive and other forms such as the preterit and pluperfect indicative.
The instruction seemed to me to be much what I would expect in a Spanish Foreign Language
class due to the focus on grammar terms and concepts and constant reference to verb charts. He
read straight from the textbook and interjected a comment or two here and there, while the
majority of the students were distracted by something else and in some cases didn’t even have
their books open. Also, little was done to engage the students during instruction.

Mr. Flores has a similar idea of instruction. The lesson he taught that day to his Bilingual
Spanish I students was on pronunciation of certain letters when they are combined with others.
His instruction lasted for 10 minutes, during which time he stood on the right side of the
classroom, not in the front where everyone could see him, and read the pronunciation
explanation straight from the book. Students had copies of the page he was reading from;
however, as I looked around I noticed that most of them weren’t following along. After he
finished reading, students were expected to do several activities from the textbook and workbook
and turn them in to Mr. Flores for credit by the end of the class period. During the class periods
I observed, I often saw Mr. Martinez walking around and entering assignments into his
gradebook as students finished. Likewise, Mr. Flores would finish telling the students what they
were going to do during the class period and then go over to the computer and check his email.
In talking with Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores about their ideas of instruction in the classroom,
both made similar comments to me that they choose not to instruct because the students do not
listen anyway and they do not like to participate.
Interactions and rapport between teachers and students. Despite similarities in teaching style and the environment that Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores have created in their classrooms, the way they interact with students and the relationships they have formed with them are very distinct.

Mr. Flores jokes around much more with his students. He seems very interested in being a friend, perhaps more than a teacher, to these students. This feeling was communicated to the students during several interactions that I witnessed. Especially with his seventh period class, he tends to talk to groups of students about non-academic topics. He told me that this is his favorite class period because he is able to talk to them and joke around. In Mr. Flores’ fifth period class there is a freshman girl who, according to him, should be in the Monolingual Spanish I class; however, the school was not able to change her schedule. As a result, Mr. Flores works with this student often in order to keep her caught up with the rest of the class. After giving instructions to the entire class in Spanish, he will often spend a few minutes and explain to her in English what the assignment is. During the focus group interview with fifth period students, this same female student said, “He’s really cool when you play around with him.” Others in the group agreed and then added, “and then when Ms. Cherry’s around he’s really strict.” It should be pointed out, however, that Mr. Flores’s relationship with his seventh period students is much more relaxed and casual than the relationship he has with his fifth period students.

Contrastingly, Mr. Martinez has a different relationship with his students. He is much more soft-spoken and, according to his students, he rarely raises his voice, even if necessary to get their attention. He is much more socially removed from them and strives to maintain a more professional relationship; therefore, he doesn’t tend to joke around with them as much as Mr. Flores does. It is important to him, however, to have positive relationships with his students and to be a positive role model. During my observations, I saw that despite how he tries to interact
with students, many of the students openly disrespect him. For example, rather than calling him Mr. or Señor Martinez, students would just call him Martinez and then make some sort of demand such as “let me go to the bathroom,” or “let me see my grade.” I know that he is bothered by this, but he remains patient and calm in his interactions with students. During the class period, in comparison to Mr. Flores, Mr. Martinez often walks around and helps students on their assignments and encourages them to stay on task. As they finish assignments he records their grades.

**Feedback and correction.** In this section I will report on how these teachers provide feedback and correct their students during class and on assignments, and as well will share teacher’s philosophies on how they should correct their students and how students feel about being corrected by their teachers. Due to the fact that there was little instruction during my observation time, I never saw Mr. Flores give feedback to his students in regard to their performance. However, during a 15 minute lesson on the pluperfect subjunctive in Mr. Martinez’s class, I was able to see what he describes as a typical example of how he gives feedback and corrects. After the instruction portion of the class period, and to assess student understanding of the pluperfect subjunctive, Mr. Martinez pulled out a little sack which he had labeled as fourth period. He told students to open their textbooks to a certain page, he explained the activity, and then began to draw names from the sack. The names that he drew would answer the questions. Mr. Martinez seemed uncomfortable during this time, almost as if he didn’t want students to feel embarrassed and yet he would tell them directly that they were wrong if they didn’t give the correct answer. Also, if he called on a student and that student didn’t know the answer, he would allow the student to choose someone else in the class to answer the question.

During the interviews, both teachers commented on how they deal with correcting their students in the classroom:
Mr. Martinez: By now (at this point in the school year), it’s very direct. I’m not as careful anymore. In the beginning I start, you know, a little slow, in such a way that they don’t feel hurt, but by now they don’t. It’s the second semester. So I correct them whenever they say something wrong. I usually don’t tell them, “you said it wrong,” but I repeat it..the right way. I mean, I have my techniques. And whenever they write something, I at least, even if it is something daily that is really fast and there’s so many of them I at least read the first paragraph. They probably repeat the same mistakes. And some of the things I just glance at, and correct a few things.

Mr. Flores: On the question, “How often do you correct your students written Spanish?” Well, it just depends if I…for example, last week we were studying acentos diacríticos and there were times that we went back and we targeted some other areas of the accents, but I was mostly focused on the acentos diacríticos so, I wouldn’t correct the other errors because its something we had already covered. I’m trying to focus on one issue. On “How often do you correct your student’s spoken Spanish?” I say sometimes. I try to find the right moment to correct it because if I…I don’t want to stop a student from learning. I don’t want to shut them down.

On Part One of the language survey, students were asked to respond to issues regarding feedback and correction that pertain to their current language teacher.
Figure 10

*How often does your teacher correct your Spanish?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10 tells us that almost half, 41% of the students, feel that their teacher never corrects their Spanish, whether written or spoken. On the opposite side of the spectrum, 6% feel that he always does. The majority of the student responses, however, indicate that these teachers rarely, if ever, actually correct students’ use of Spanish in the classroom.

**Student Perception of Teachers**

More on how students perceive their teachers will be mentioned throughout other parts of this chapter. However, suffice it to say that these students report not feeling challenged by their current language teachers. When I asked students what they dislike about Mr. Martinez’s class, they all agreed that he doesn’t teach. They said that he definitely has the ability to be a good teacher, but because he lacks control of his students and students are “too loud,” he cannot teach them what they need to know in order to improve. Despite the fact that Mr. Flores said that he cares about his students and wants them to succeed, his fifth period students feel that he is indifferent based on the fact that he often sits at his desk rather than interact with them. Seventh period students didn’t seem to feel the same way because Mr. Flores often jokes around with them; however, they do feel the same in regard to his lack of teaching and lack of expectations.
The Bilingual Education Program at this South Texas High School

Through discussion with Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores and other teachers that I met throughout the week at The high school I became aware of some of the current issues that are affecting bilingual students and teachers alike. Due to the School District’s’s lack of funding and the continual growth of the student population, there are several repercussions that have been felt by nearly every teacher at The high school, but especially those that are not teaching core classes. Portables have been added onto the school, and teachers who teach electives or a non-core class no longer have classrooms. Therefore, Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores are considered floating teachers and have to teach in different classrooms throughout the day and wheel all of their materials around on a cart.

As of now, the average teacher teaches six periods each day and has two preparation periods of 50 minutes each. Due to lack of funding, the district will be letting nearly one-fourth of their teachers go in order to save money, plus each teacher will lose one preparation period. Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores also are in jeopardy of losing their teaching positions because they do not teach a core subject.

Another result of the lack of funding is the shortage of textbooks. Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores each have a class set of textbooks which the students are able to use while in the classroom. However, students are not allowed to remove textbooks from the classroom, which prevents teachers from giving homework and often keeps students from preparing for tests and other assignments. Lack of technology (computers, projectors, etc.) is likewise an issue that inhibits the type of activities that these teachers would like to be able to do with their students. Students have very little access to technology that has the potential to be a great asset to their learning.
Classroom Management

Although definitions of classroom management vary, they tend to “include actions taken by the teacher to establish order, engage students, or elicit their cooperation” (Emmer & Stough, 2001, p. 103). Of the many findings from this case study, classroom management is one of the more important items of discussion due to the indirect effect it has on classroom expectations, language use, and overall improvements seen among the students. This section aims to provide a description of Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores’s classroom management skills. The indirect effects of classroom management will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 5.

Most of what I discovered about classroom management came from several hours of observation. However, students and teachers also made comments in reference to classroom management and the challenges that have come as a result of poor classroom management.

As previously mentioned, the typical classroom routine is very predictable from day to day with Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores. Students have commented on the fact that they always know what to expect when they go to Spanish class. During Mr. Martinez’s fourth period class, and nearly every day that I observed, Mr. Martinez would begin class without first requiring the students’ attention. This appears to be a daily trend given the fact that Mr. Martinez hasn’t established what he requires from students as class begins. Due to a lack of order from the very beginning of the class period, there is not a moment when Mr. Martinez has complete control of the class and all students are on task. Because Mr. Martinez doesn’t have the attention of his students as he teaches, he raises his voice in order to talk over his students and naturally his students continue to talk louder and louder throughout the class period, resulting in Mr. Martinez and the more conscientious students becoming frustrated. He repeatedly asks his students to be quiet and to do their class assignment; however, the majority of the students continue talking. Several female students are also putting on makeup.
The situation is further complicated when Mr. Martinez makes an effort to teach a new concept to his students. Very few listen and even fewer are engaged in the lesson. When Mr. Martinez succeeds in getting the attention of some, he loses the attention of others and they proceed to get off task again. The day that Mr. Martinez taught his students the pluperfect subjunctive, I noticed that when he would focus on one side of the classroom and ask them questions, the students with whom wasn’t working would lose focus and begin talking to friends once again. As a result, Mr. Martinez said that instruction sometimes takes twice as long as planned.

Although a similar situation was observed in Mr. Flores’s classroom, the atmosphere he has established is slightly different. Unlike Mr. Martinez, Mr. Flores is actually able to get the attention of his students and keep their attention as he explains an assignment or, on the rare occasion, provides instruction. Also, overall his students are relatively well behaved and Mr. Flores only has to remind them once in a while to be quiet and continue working. In Mr. Flores’s fifth period class, the majority are boys and several are athletes and tend to respect him as a coach. Mr. Flores said that it used to be significantly easier to manage his fifth period class; however, a very flirtatious female student was placed in his class a couple of weeks before my arrival. He mentioned that her presence in the classroom had changed the dynamic greatly, often making it harder for him keep students engaged and focused on the task.

Among Mr. Flores’s students there is also a lack of engagement. Students do not participate. During my observations, I realized that if they are quiet, it is most likely because they are doing something else entirely, which could include passing notes, sleeping, drawing, texting, or listening to music, all of which I observed during instruction time. Although there is greater order and perhaps more respect, students are nonetheless not engaged by the teacher in the learning process.
In addition to students talking, and therefore not listening during each class period and
often for the entire class period, students are also continually using their cell phones. In fact, cell
phones appear to be the main cause of distraction. Cell phone activity that I observed included
texting, playing games, listening to music with and without headphones (even though the
syllabus states that they may listen to music with headphones once they have completed their
assignment), taking pictures and video of the class, watching videos, and talking on the phone.
The only time that Mr. Martinez seemed to have a problem with a student using a cell phone was
when a student was filming the class on his cell phone. Mr. Martinez said, “I only give you
permission to do this if you finish your assignment.”

Although cell phone use was much higher among Mr. Martinez’s students, it was
likewise a great cause of distraction among Mr. Flores’s students. Over the course of several
hours of observation, Mr. Flores administered several small quizzes and a couple of tests. Even
during test administration, students often had their cell phones out and were allowed to listen to
music and text.

During the focus group interview with Mr. Martinez’s students, I asked students what
they like or dislike about their current language classroom environment. One of those
discussions revealed the following:

Researcher: What do you not like about your Spanish class right now?
Student 1: So much noise.
Student 2: Yeah, he can’t even control the class. (Other students agree). He’s a big
pushover.
Student 3: Well, yeah, I don’t like it and people they just keep yelling and screaming.
Student 2: And he’s trying to like get them quiet because he wants to teach the class but
he can’t.
Student 3: It’s like they…don’t pay attention.

Student 4: I think he’s a good teacher and he tries but, I mean, like…

Student 1: …they make him give up. Like he can try and try but they don’t let him.

Student 3: Mr. Martinez just kinda, he just…sometimes when he know he can’t control them he’ll just let it go, and then other times he will like scream, “You need to be quiet!”

Student 2: …But he can’t do any good activities with us because our class is too loud. That’s why he give us the sheets and the answers so it’ll be easier for him because he can’t even teach us.

Student 3: That way we can just learn it…like we’ll read the question, get the answer. And that’s how we learn.

Both teachers, as previously reported, say that they choose not to instruct most of the time because the students don’t listen.

While discussing classroom management issues, Mr. Martinez mentioned one of his students who has severe anger management problems. Mr. Martinez doesn’t want to push this student too hard, and therefore he allows the student (and others) to listen to music and play cards if they do their work. Mr. Martinez referred to Colombine and said that that shooting occurred right around March or April and that others have occurred towards the end of the school year. As he described it, students get fed up and more behavior problems result towards the end of the school year so it’s better not to push them. He said, “I push them a little bit, but then back off.”

Although it would be very easy to place full blame on these teachers for the lack of order and instruction in the classroom, they really are in an incredibly tough position due to lack of administrative support, funding and resources, and especially due to the issues with which their
students are faced. The task of implementing better classroom management practices in this situation would be difficult for most teachers.

**Students On or Off Task**

As a direct result of poor classroom management, many, but not all, of Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores’s students are usually off task. In the previous section, I mentioned that these distractions tend to include cell phones and peers, and for the female students, putting on makeup. And, as I observed in Mr. Martinez’s fourth period among a group of five teenage males, card games can also be a distraction.

Students from Mr. Flores’s fifth period class who participated in the focus group interview mentioned that most of the students, sometimes including themselves, tend to get off task when they do not understand some aspect of the assignment and its just easier not to ask. Additionally, in my own observation, I noticed that students in all classes would usually get off task when their teacher is working with other students and therefore is not as closely monitoring the entire class. Regardless of the reason for students being off task, many commented during focus group interviews that it bothers them that their peers are so easily distracted and often make it a challenge for others to complete their assignments.

One of these students was in Mr. Martinez’s fourth period class and frequently would talk loudly, go over to the door and talk to people as they walked by, and sometimes even yell at Mr. Martinez across the room. He was one of the biggest distractions because of his inability to stay on task. There were fewer distracting students among Mr. Flores’s students; however, as previously mentioned, the female student in his fifth period class has drastically changed the dynamic of the entire classroom. I rarely saw her work on her classwork; rather, she often made it harder for the male students to stay on task.
Another observation from all three class participating class periods is that if they do not want to work and/or if they are bored, they ask to use the restroom. Then they proceed to wander the halls until they decide its best to head back to the classroom. When some of these students would leave I kept an eye on the clock and noticed that some would be out of the classroom (which could include wandering the halls, in the cafeteria, outside, or actually in the bathroom) for up to 20 minutes of the 50-minute class period. It seemed to be the same handful of students that would ask to leave each class period; however, the teachers would always allow them to leave and wouldn’t question them when they would come back.

Although the majority of the students in each class period are usually off task at some point or during the entire class period, about one-fourth of the students work quietly everyday to get their assignment completed. These students stay on task, complete the assignment quickly, despite the distractions (often while listening to music with headphones), and turn in their assignment for a grade. It is only afterwards that they tend to talk or use their cell phone for other purposes.

Both teachers have daily assignments, and as students finish each assignment, their teacher enters in their grade. Those grades are then posted online for students and parents to check. Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores mentioned that towards the end of each grading period, students become very concerned about their grades and therefore begin to stay on task and complete their assignments, often having to do two or three previously assigned activities in order to catch up and remain at at least a 70%.

**Classroom Expectations**

Related to classroom management techniques are classroom expectations, whether they are explicitly stated or implied. Both teachers have a course syllabus that they review with students at the beginning of each school year. The course syllabi do not necessarily outline
desired outcomes; however, I have included below a few statements from the course descriptions provided to students and parents on the course syllabi:

Mr. Martinez’s Bilingual Spanish II syllabus: Communicating effectively is one of the main objectives acquired through oral proficiency methods. The four basic skills are also developed as needed. It also includes a study of the cultural background of the Hispanic world. Instruction is in Spanish.

Mr. Flores’s Bilingual Spanish I syllabus: The major goal is to enable the student to communicate effectively orally and in written form by applying the four basic skills. It includes vocabulary, grammatical structure and experience in reading and writing in order to develop the ability to communicate in the language on topics of practical value and to improve the student’s ability in the command of the Spanish language.

The teachers, however, are communicating a different message to their students. During focus group interviews students described how easy their Spanish class is. According to them, all they have to do is complete their work independently and they will get a good grade. My observations confirm that the class is relatively easy. Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores do not require students to do homework. Apparently what students do not finish in class they are supposed to do for homework. However, given the fact that students do not have their own Spanish textbooks, but rather use class set which stays with their teacher, they are not able to complete assignments at home. Therefore, both teachers allow students to complete multiple assignments during one class period should they get behind. As a result of the low expectation for completion of work, students waste class time because they know they can just do the assignment later for full credit.

**Teacher expectations.** Despite their teaching styles, both teachers expressed high expectations for their students. According to Mr. Martinez, students should be able to speak only
Spanish in class and if they are not able to do so, then they should consider transferring to the Monolingual Spanish class. Both teachers agree that students should improve their grammar skills while in the class because the rules will help them “speak right and speak better.” During our interview, Mr. Martinez added that the purpose of the bilingual classes is that “they’re not learning to speak, they’re improving their language.” As a result, both teachers strive to express these expectations to their students so that their students improve over the course of the year.

**Student expectations.** Focus group interviews revealed that students have their own expectations for their current Spanish course and teacher. In Table 3 I have included a summary of what students expected or would like to happen in their Spanish class in order to have a better, more beneficial language learning experience.

**Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Students’ expectations for Spanish class divided by class period</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Martinez – 4th period</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to be taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear teaching, not confusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforce the rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not be as lenient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, the tables, which include results from Part One of the language survey, report that the majority of students want to be corrected. Despite the fact that 68% of the students feel that their teacher “never” or “rarely” corrects their Spanish as indicated in Figure 10, Figures 11-12 indicate that 69% of students want their spoken Spanish to be corrected and 90% of students want their written Spanish to be corrected.
These findings coincide with what students said previously in regard to the language learning skills. Writing is their area of greatest difficulty and, therefore, the area in which they need the most feedback and correction, and they expect their teacher to help them improve in this area.

**Improvements.** Despite low expectations on the part of teachers and the lack of cooperation among students, Mr. Martinez believes that his students improve over the course of the year from increased contact with grammar and vocabulary. He mentioned, however, that the rate at which they improve also has much to do with their level of interest and motivation. When I asked students during focus group interviews if they feel that they have improved from their current language courses, a few of those students felt that they have improved in little ways such as with accentuation and spelling, although the remaining students who participated in the focus group interviews feel that their abilities have remained the same.

**Use of Spanish and English in the classroom.** Classroom management also was shown to have an effect on what Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores are able to expect of their students in regard to the use of Spanish. First, both teachers spoke Spanish nearly 95-99% of the time
during my observations. Mr. Martinez always spoke Spanish, in fact, English was only used a few times to get the students’ attention when they were off task. His interactions in Spanish are less about building a rapport with his students and more about keeping them on task. Mr. Flores tended to speak Spanish also, although, this did differ between fifth and seventh periods. His interactions in Spanish with his fifth period students mostly consist of giving instructions and occasionally redirecting, whereas with his seventh period students he often jokes around in Spanish and English.

During observations and focus group interviews, I came across a spectrum of abilities and preferences that allowed me to group students according to language use: 1) Prefer Spanish – This group of students tend to only speak Spanish in class, not necessarily because they are in Spanish class, but because it is their language preference. Most of these students are from Mexico and immigrated to the U.S. at some point. 2) Speak both languages comfortably – These students speak both languages with friends and teachers, and have typically either only spoken Spanish at home or speak both English and Spanish. They are in the habit of switching easily between languages and tend to have been born and raised in the Valley. 3) Prefer English – This group, although able to function in a language classroom, will almost always choose English over Spanish. They tend to speak more English than Spanish at home. However, students from each of the three focus groups, although bilingual, reported preferring and being able to function better in English over Spanish. Even some of the students from these focus groups whom I heard only speaking Spanish in class still prefer English.

As previously mentioned, by taking a Bilingual Spanish class students are in essence saying they are able to function in a bilingual setting. Despite the supposed expectation of the teachers, however, I noticed that the teachers tend to speak only in Spanish and then allow the students to respond in whichever language they prefer, either English or Spanish or a mixture of
both. When I asked students in Mr. Flores’s fifth period what they like about their current Spanish class, two students responded with, “we can still speak English even though it’s a Spanish class.” Many times students would ask questions in English and the teacher would respond in Spanish. However, conversations between students were often heard both in Spanish and English.

One of the possible reasons as to why students choose to speak either English or Spanish could be due to how each students thinks their teacher perceives their use of language. Question #22 on the survey dealt with their teacher’s attitude toward the variety of spoken Spanish of their students. Table 4 is a summary of their statements; their full responses are included in Appendix C.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses:</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Martinez</th>
<th>Flores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He’s fine-ok with my use of Spanish.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He helps or corrects me so I can improve.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is indifferent about my use of Spanish.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is strict about our use of language.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He doesn’t like how I speak.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is rude.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority feel that their teacher is “fine” or “ok” with their use of Spanish in the classroom. Twenty other responses describe their teacher’s attitude as correcting, indifferent, or strict. There is no way of knowing, however, which of these students tend to speak more Spanish or English in class or which are more comfortable with Spanish or English.

**Language Anxiety**

In this section, I will discuss language anxiety as pertaining to these bilingual students. Language anxiety, which I anticipated would be the focus of my study, is really only a small
piece of the puzzle. Other, perhaps even greater findings, have already been presented in this chapter. Chapter 5 will seek to connect all of these ideas and will discuss their implications in regard to language anxiety. Here I have organized the findings according to the source of information: classroom observations, survey data, focus group interviews with students, and teacher interviews.

**Observations**

As I mentioned before, language anxiety really is not as big of an issue as I had originally suspected it would be among these bilinguals. During my time in South Texas, I was able to observe each of the three participating class periods several times – one week at the beginning of March and the other during the last week of March 2011. My observations indicate that students are rarely in a position to experience anxiety, whether through class presentations, projects, or reading out loud. As previously mentioned, to classroom management techniques of these teachers convey very low expectations for these students. As a result of not being challenged, the students tend not to experience anxiety. From my observations, it seems that there are very few if any who experience anxiety.

The few cases of possible anxiety that I was able to see generally manifested themselves in the form of hesitation or lack of confidence when called upon to participate. This was not seen in Mr. Flores’s classes because he never called on students to participate. However, Mr. Martinez, during a grammar lesson, randomly chose students’ names out of a bag for them to answer questions. I noticed that when certain students were called on, that they were uncomfortable and would stutter over their words. As Mr. Martinez noticed their discomfort, he would either offer to help them or allow them to choose someone else to answer the question. It is difficult to know, however, if these students are truly anxious and if there are others in the
class who experience language anxiety because such a small number of students were chosen to participate.

In Mr. Flores’s fifth period class, there is one particular female student that Mr. Flores feels should be attending the Monolingual Spanish I class. Throughout the week, I observed this student to see how she functions in a bilingual setting. Daily, she would ask to leave the classroom in order to go to the restroom. Often she would be gone for up to 20 minutes of the class period. During one of their test days, I observed her taking the test. Without reading the questions from the actual test, she bubbled in random answers on the scantron and finished the test within 10 minutes, after which she asked to use the restroom. Her constant desire to leave the classroom and guessing on the chapter test could be anxiety-related reactions to being in a bilingual classroom.

Survey Data

Parts Two and Three of the language survey inquire more specifically into if, when, and how students experience language anxiety. Students were asked to respond to language anxiety-related questions using a five-point Likert scale, which consisted of the following possible options: 1) SD = Strongly disagree, 2) D = Disagree, 3) N = Neither agree nor disagree, 4) A = Agree, and 5) SA = Strongly agree. The language anxiety-related statements are found in Table 5 and student responses shown in percentages are included in Table 5 and Figure 19. Figure 19 is a visual representation of the percentages recorded in Table 6. As is evident, language anxiety is not a significant issue among this group of students. In fact, none of the means from students’ responses to the statements below indicate a high degree of language anxiety. A few of the statements with means below 3.0, indicating disagreement, are the following:

#1: I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my language class.

#3: I get nervous/anxious when I know that I’m going to be called on in language class.
#10: Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.

#12: I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

#15: I feel more nervous in my language class than in my other classes.

#17: I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak Spanish.

#20: I experience language anxiety.

Conversely, responses to the following statements had means greater than 3.0, indicating agreement:

#8: I would not be nervous speaking the language with a native Spanish speaker outside of the U.S.

#11: I feel confident when I speak Spanish in my language class.

#13: I don’t feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.

Statements that students tend to neither agree or disagree with include the following:

#2: I don’t worry about making mistakes in language class.

#5: I worry about the consequences of failing my language class.

#14: I feel very self-conscious about speaking the language in front of other students.

#16: I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak Spanish well.

#19: It wouldn’t bother me at all to take more Spanish classes.

From Table 5 we can see that on the responses with a mean of approximately three (neither agree nor disagree), there were students who strongly disagreed or strongly agreed with each statement, which explains the neutrality of these responses when the mean was calculated. The “neither agree nor disagree” statements with corresponding percentages are in Table 6.
From these statements, we can see that there are students who are anxious in regard to 1) making mistakes in class, 2) failing, 3) speaking in front of their peers, and 4) learning all of the grammar rules. This concerns many of them to the point that 24% would be bothered by having to take more Spanish classes. The responses to these statements agree with what students and teachers expressed during interviews.

A significant finding from this portion of the survey is that Question 20 indicates that 50% of students rate themselves as not experiencing language anxiety and only 16% feel that they do experience it, indicating that language anxiety is not of great concern among these bilinguals.
Tables 7-9 are results from the open-ended questions from Part Three of the language survey. Each of these tables include a summary of student responses; full responses can be referenced in the Appendix C. Table 7 summarizes student responses that describe when they tend to be nervous in class, listed in descending order.

Table 7

*Summary of Responses to Question “When do you feel nervous or anxious in Spanish class?”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Martinez</th>
<th>Flores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t feel nervous/anxious in Spanish class.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel nervous/anxious when I have to SPEAK in front of the class.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel nervous/anxious when I have to READ in front of the class.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel nervous/anxious when I have to WRITE in Spanish (grammar, punctuation, spelling)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel nervous/anxious when I have to take a Spanish test.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is evident from the table, 25 students said in response to this item that they do not feel nervous or anxious in Spanish class. Ten students mentioned being nervous when called upon to speak in class. Six students described feeling nervous when called upon to read in class, and five mentioned writing as the area of greatest anxiety.

Table 8 contains student responses that describe if and how their performance is affected when they experience language anxiety. As mentioned in Chapter 2 in the review of literature, anxiety usually is viewed as something that negatively affects performance, which is borne out by students’ responses here. Only three students mentioned anxiety being a motivator and a way to improve performance.
Table 8

Summary of Responses to Question “When you feel anxious in class, how does that affect your performance?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative effect</th>
<th>Positive effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“say things incorrectly”</td>
<td>“it makes me wanna get better so I practice at home”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“repeat myself”</td>
<td>“I just keep trying till I get it right”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“not really that much focused”</td>
<td>“it does me a little good”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“don’t have that much imagination”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I use (used) to forget things”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“try to calm down so I don’t mess up”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“it makes my reading slow”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“makes me misprenaounce (mispronounce) words”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“don’t want to speak”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I start to studder (stutter) and/or I repeat things”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“don’t do my work”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“it tenses me”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“sometimes mix up the answers”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“it affects me by turning red”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I get annoy (annoyed) really fast”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I get shy”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“it makes me talk so different”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“it feels like you are shutting down”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I sometimes just mess up the word”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I stutter and forget what I just studied”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 contains student responses describing how their teacher may or may not contribute to language anxiety. Of the 47 responses, 38 say that their teacher does not contribute to language anxiety. Nine students, however described how their teacher does contribute in some way to language anxiety they experience in the classroom. Once again, full responses can be viewed in Appendix C. Of these nine students, suggestions as to what their teacher could do to help them feel at ease are also included in Table 9.
Focus Group Interviews with Students

As previously explained, students were chosen to participate in the focus group interviews because their responses on the language survey indicated that they tend to experience language anxiety in at least one of the four language skills. However, the students who participated in the focus group interviews are somewhat in the minority, since few students reported experiencing anxiety.

During focus group interviews I was able to inquire more specifically as to which of the four language learning skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) are the most difficult for students and which activities cause them to feel anxious in the classroom.

When asked how they would respond to having to give a presentation in front of their classmates in Spanish, the general consensus among Mr. Martinez’s fourth period students is that they might feel a little anxious; however, their anxiety was not necessarily related to language. Some students even felt that it would be easy for them to stand in front of the class and give a presentation in Spanish. Many also mentioned that they would not feel anxious if they went to a country where they only speak Spanish and as a result wouldn’t be able to rely on
their English abilities. Interestingly, these students said that they would be comfortable in that environment and that they might even be happier. Reading, however, was described as a language skill that is difficult for a few of them. One student stated the following about reading out loud in a Spanish class: “I’d be nervous. I’m not so good at the reading. I really can’t read in Spanish...there’s some words that I don’t know how to pronounce. They’re spelled a way, but I don’t know how to pronounce it.”

During the focus group interview with Mr. Flores’s fifth period students, I discovered that each of the skills cause certain students to feel anxious. Listening was the first skill mentioned as being an area of difficulty for some students and sometimes an area of anxiety. In reference to some of the listening exercises that Mr. Flores uses in class, students discussed how the speakers often speak too fast, how they use vocabulary that the students do not know, and as a result, they easily lose their spot when they’re following along, resulting in them feeling overwhelmed with the exercise. However, listening overall is their area of greatest strength in comparison to the other three language learning skills.

While discussing speaking, one student shared with the group that he doesn’t feel comfortable with the idea of going to a Spanish speaking country where he cannot rely on English because he does not feel that he knows enough Spanish. The two students who expressed being the most comfortable with English and feeling the most anxiety associated with Spanish mentioned that they would feel anxious if they had to give a presentation only in Spanish. They described their anxiety as directly related to the fact that they would have to speak in Spanish and not as a general form of anxiety. Those who expressed anxiety about giving a presentation in Spanish class described experiences where they have had to use their Spanish in front of the class. They expressed discomfort at having to perform such a task and said that when placed in these types of situations they stutter and forget words.
In reference to reading and writing, students from Mr. Flores fifth period feel that they are both difficult skills, but that writing is much more difficult due to the level of proficiency that is required in order to write something such as an essay. Reading can be difficult due to pronunciation. When I asked students how they would feel about having to write an essay entirely in Spanish, the male student who expressed the most discomfort with the other language skills said, “it would take me forever.” A female from the group said that if she had to write a whole essay only in Spanish, she wouldn’t be able to do it. She likely just wouldn’t do the assignment. To these students, writing is difficult due to accentuation, spelling, and grammar. Other males in the group mentioned cheating as an option – “I’d wait till…til someone finishes [the essay] and then copy it.”

Mr. Flores’s seventh period students expressed more confidence than some of the other students in reference to the four language learning skills. Only one male student in the group expressed anxiety in relation to speaking in Spanish. When asked how he would feel if asked to give a presentation in class only in Spanish, he commented, “I would be a little [nervous]…because I’m not that good at Spanish.” I asked him to elaborate on why he doesn’t feel that he is good at Spanish and he continued, “I can speak it, but when I speak it, sometimes I don’t phrase it right…its just…I stutter.” The remainder of the group didn’t express discomfort at the thought of having to give a presentation in Spanish or in having to write an essay; however, they wanted to be corrected so that they can improve. One female student talked about how she would actually enjoy giving a presentation. The skills of reading and listening are not areas in which these students expressed difficulty or anxiety.
Teachers

From interviews with Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores, I learned how they perceive language anxiety in their classrooms. In reference to writing and speaking, Mr. Martinez expressed the following:

Writing is difficult. In Spanish they would feel insecure because of their writing. And most of them have that insecurity, then they find out how good they are... and one of the problems they have, the grammatical errors, the accents...they don’t know the accents. I make short cuts for them. Writing is the most difficult...especially when I check the grammar. (In reference to participating) They don’t like that. They don’t like to participate...that sort of activities. They like to do work as long as I don’t make them participate...because they’re concerned to speak it right. They do feel insecure about the way they will speak and if they are going to say it right and if I’m going to correct them. So I try to correct them.

Mr. Flores spoke about language anxiety in a more general sense when I asked him if he feels that there are students in his class periods who are anxious:

I think there is because, um, there’s some student that even though their first language was Spanish, they feel intimidated, and I guess I’m speaking from the heart because I went through it. I guess from my sake, knowing that my Mom was a teacher in Mexico and learning the language down here we basically learned the, , not the proper Spanish so that kinda like gets me nervous, and I’m thinking our student are, might be the same. So there are gonna be kids like that. Last week I was observed, and sometimes the students, when I speak to them in Spanish, they kinda like didn’t know the answer and I would try to explain it to them in Spanish, or simplify the question, and I could tell, I even
mentioned, “I understand, Spanish is probably not your first language, but you’re still taking…a bilingual class,” and I try to mediate.

Because Mr. Flores understands how sensitive some of these students feel about their language abilities, he tries to be very careful how he corrects them. He feels that you have to pick your battles, and often that means correcting the students in private rather than in front of the entire class. He also will occasionally allow students to work in groups so that they can help each other. Overall, both teachers came across as very uncertain as to what they can do to help anxious students.

**Summary**

Although I have reported on a variety of topics in this chapter, some of the major findings include: 1) areas of greatest difficulty and perhaps greatest anxiety for students tend to be the areas of reading and writing, 2) students want to be corrected by their teachers, as indicated on the language survey, 3) students want to learn and see the value of language learning, as reported by students during focus group interviews, 4) language anxiety is not the area of greatest concern among students, although there is a percentage of students that experience it, and 5) classroom management is an area of great concern and the root from which almost all other issues stem in this case study. The implications of these findings will be discussed in Chapter 5.

In addition to these findings, there appear to be a few discrepancies between how teachers and students perceive each other. Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores generally feel that students don’t care, and students feel that low expectations and poor classroom management are an indication of their teachers not caring either. Despite the difficult situation that both teachers and students find themselves in, both agree that changes need to be made.
CHAPTER 5

Introduction

The results and findings presented in Chapter 4 lead to a variety of important topics to discuss in relation to the teaching of heritage speakers at this high school. Some of these topics include classroom management, expectations, and language anxiety. As will be shown, these issues are very much interrelated and will be discussed in this chapter.

Language Anxiety

Studies mentioned previously in Chapter 2 have found language anxiety and linguistic insecurity to be issues among all types of language learners, regardless of language level. Due to the presence of this phenomenon in such a wide context of language situations in areas throughout the U.S., it was anticipated that language anxiety among this group of bilinguals would be much more prevalent than the results indicate.

Language Difficulty and Language Anxiety

In regard to the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – the majority of students rank their listening and speaking abilities in Spanish as areas of highest proficiency. Aside from the few students who are exceptions to this because they believe that they have lower proficiency in these areas, this seems like an obvious finding because 1) these skills are the two most used skills on a daily basis especially in a place such as the Valley, and 2) many of these students only spoke Spanish in the home prior to starting kindergarten and it was only upon entering the school system that they began to learn English. Additionally, we must keep in mind that there is a percentage of students originally from Mexico who have spoken Spanish their whole lives and had to learn English upon arrival to the U.S. Therefore, the skills of speaking and listening have been the skills most emphasized and practiced since birth among the majority of these students. On the opposite side, however, there are some students who
prefer speaking English. According to these students, this is due to the fact that they have almost always spoken more English than Spanish at home and have been raised in the Valley, which can distance them from contact with their country of origin.

Given the more frequent use of listening and speaking, it only seems natural that more students would rank themselves as having lower proficiency in reading and writing in comparison to speaking and listening. We must keep in mind, however, that although more students struggle with reading and writing, there is still a sizeable percentage that has a high level of proficiency in reading and writing.

Language anxiety does not characterize the average experience of the bilinguals from the three participating class periods. Of the 20 total statements describing aspects of language anxiety on the language survey, 10 of those statements are in reference specifically to speaking, whether it involves speaking to native Spanish speakers outside of the U.S., or volunteering answers in language class. The mean of students’ responses indicates that students do not experience anxiety in reference to speaking, showing as well that the language skills in which students perceive themselves as most proficient are also their areas of lowest anxiety. This was an unanticipated finding, considering that results from other studies show that more advanced speakers of language can experience higher levels of anxiety in reference to certain language skills even though they are often highly proficient in those areas.

Before continuing, a clarification must be made. Just because students express higher proficiency and a low level of difficulty in reference to a language skill, does not necessarily mean that those students do not experience language anxiety concerning that particular skill. Such is the case with these language learners. This is a finding that other studies also confirm. Results from the first part of this study reveal that the majority of students have low language anxiety, specifically regarding areas of higher proficiency such as speaking. However, more
students made reference to speaking activities as anxiety provoking in comparison to reading and writing activities in the open-ended questions. This shows that higher proficiency can in some situations create or allow for higher anxiety, and on the opposite side that lower proficiency in reading and writing creates less anxiety (or at least doesn’t create higher anxiety) than with a higher proficient skill. There are a couple of possibilities that could explain these differences: 1) Speaking is the most utilized skill by students both in and out of the classroom environment, causing it to be the skill mentioned most by students. 2) More students possibly experience anxiety in regard to the other areas; however, they only mentioned speaking on the open-ended questions. 3) The open-ended questions made up the last portion of the survey, so students might have been more concerned about finishing than about answering thoroughly. Despite the potential explanations here, students might have indeed answered truthfully, in which case there is some relationship between high anxiety and high proficiency among a smaller percentage of these students.

Perhaps even more helpful than the survey in providing accurate information about language anxiety were the focus group interviews that I conducted with students who reported experiencing language anxiety in some way on the survey. Students tended to agree that reading and writing are more difficult than speaking, regardless of their level of speaking proficiency, due to the challenge of pronouncing words correctly while reading aloud. This type of anxiety is related to performance and is an artifact of the teachers’ methodology. Although not mentioned by students, it is also possible that reading is a difficult skill due to low comprehension. Writing is difficult due to lack of understanding about accentuation and grammar rules. Other studies have likewise reported these to be areas of difficulty for the average heritage student, and these participants are no exception. A possible reason for reading and writing difficulty could be due to less emphasis being placed on these skills during earlier academic years. For the students who
spoke Spanish in the home and then began learning English upon entering the school system, the skills of reading and writing in Spanish might not have received special attention, making it very difficult for some of these students to acquire these skills so late in the game. This could be the reason for language difficulty and high language anxiety among some heritage speakers, but this study did not investigate whether this is true for the heritage students at this high school.

Just as high proficiency and low level of difficulty regarding a language skill (speaking and listening) may or may not cause language anxiety, the same can be said for the opposite scenario. When I asked students to describe types of activities in class that cause them to be anxious, many responded with statements such as “reading and writing are hard,” not that they necessarily feel anxious while performing reading and writing tasks. This shows that a high level of difficulty and lower proficiency (reading and writing) do not necessarily correlate with high anxiety either. Although there is most likely a relationship, I did not delve more into this area in order to be able to state otherwise. The issues of poor classroom management and low expectations seem to have a greater impact in this study on high or low language anxiety than proficiency level and level of language difficulty. This will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter.

Students stating that a particular activity or skill makes them anxious was actually the exception in these interviews. There were only a few students out of the several who were interviewed that talked about not only language difficulty but anxiety experienced in reference to those skills. Of these students, those who expressed having lower proficiency in a particular language skill in comparison to their peers are also those who spoke of language difficulty and language anxiety. Therefore, among these bilinguals, those who tend to experience high language anxiety are those that tend to be at a lower proficiency in comparison to their peers.
This study shows that language anxiety tends to affect students negatively rather than positively, often causing them to feel discomfort when placed in an anxious situation. Of the responses given, each of these reactions to anxiety has been likewise described in other studies as typical reactions to experiencing anxiety, meaning that these students react to language anxiety similarly to others who tend to experience it.

As will be seen in the following sections, language anxiety is only a small piece of the puzzle. In fact, one cannot only analyze the effects of language anxiety among this group of participants without considering other issues such as classroom management, expectations for students and students’ expectations for their bilingual classes. These other major issues were shown to greatly impact language anxiety.

**Teacher Perception of Anxiety Among Students**

Findings suggest that Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores misunderstand the experience that they are providing to their students in language class. When I asked each teacher if they feel that their students experience language anxiety and asked for them to provide me with examples, they both agreed that some of their students do experience it. However, my observation of these two teachers suggests that they each have different reactions to this issue.

Mr. Martinez is aware that some of his students experience language anxiety but he seems to minimize the situation, and overall does not seem too concerned. He is more concerned about making it through each class period. In contrast, Mr. Flores, expressed that many of his students experience nervousness or language anxiety in his classroom and he even began to list names. Throughout the data collection process, he would here and there point out additional students who probably experience language anxiety due to their frequent use of English, lack of participation, or low grades on assignments.
Unlike Mr. Martinez, Mr. Flores assumes that many of his students have language anxiety perhaps even when they do not. For example, during Mr. Flores seventh period class, he asked a male student to pass out the textbooks. The student looked at Mr. Flores as if he didn’t understand and Mr. Flores ended up repeating himself. Then he leaned over to me and said that this student probably has language anxiety because he didn’t understand that *libros* are books and that Mr. Flores was asking him to pass out the books. This is a student who tends to speak more Spanish than English even with his friends. During my observations, I only heard him speak Spanish. The issue was not the student’s ability, but rather the fact that he simply did not hear what Mr. Flores said. This example shows Mr. Flores’s tendency to overgeneralize language anxiety as an issue among his students. Mr. Flores also discussed a female student from his fifth period class with me in detail. According to him, she should be in Monolingual Spanish I because when he tries to speak to her in Spanish she always reverts to back to English and also struggles with some basic grammar concepts. To evaluate her abilities during the first week of school, Mr. Flores lent her an old grammar book from the 1970s that goes through verb conjugations and other grammar rules. She didn’t understand the book, and therefore Mr. Flores decided that she is more monolingual than bilingual, even though this book was designed for monolinguals learning a second language. In his mind this also means that she has language anxiety because she is in the Bilingual Spanish I class and doesn’t speak Spanish (low proficiency, high level of difficulty = high anxiety).

Mr. Flores’s method for distinguishing monolinguals and bilinguals assumes that both learn language in the same way. Unlike second language learners, bilinguals acquire language naturally rather than through the study and application of rules. Therefore, Mr. Flores’s method for determining whether this student is bilingual is flawed because heritage speakers cannot be expected to have the same understanding of grammar rules as second language learners.
The language survey of the student previously mentioned did not indicate that she experiences language anxiety. Granted, she might not have answered truthfully on the survey. She actually took the survey twice. The first time she took it, due to a problem with the Internet server, her answers were erased. As a result I asked her to take the survey again. The second time her responses were less detailed. I chose to include her in the focus group interview, however, in order to inquire more because Mr. Flores feels that she experiences language anxiety. However, when I asked her to describe her language abilities and if there are language tasks that cause her to get nervous, she expressed that she feels comfortable the majority of the time in class, even though she frequently takes 20-minute long bathroom breaks. She likes to leave class due to boredom, not anxiety. My overall perception of this student’s attitude is not that she is anxious, but rather that she cares little about her language experience. This is only one example out of many that demonstrates that teacher perception might not always be accurate in determining language placement or level of anxiety.

The way that Mr. Flores perceives his students who have difficulty as also having language anxiety shows a disconnect with what is really the case among his students. There are a few beliefs that Mr. Flores seems to hold in reference to his bilingual students. First, if students do not hear or understand what he says in Spanish, Mr. Flores assumes that they 1) must be more comfortable with English, 2) are not truly bilingual, and 3) most likely experience language anxiety. An example of this is the previously mentioned male student who didn’t understand Mr. Flores’s verbal directions. In fact, there are possibly many students who are not able to understand their teacher’s Spanish. Several students made reference to the fact that they do not understand Mr. Flores but are able to speak and understand everyone else. Second, Mr. Flores seems to think that because students have difficulty in reference to a particular language skill that they must therefore also experience language anxiety (high level of difficulty = high
level of anxiety). Evidence of this belief is that he constantly pointed out students who experience difficulty in reading and writing and stated that they probably have anxiety in reference to these skills. As I stated prior to this section, sometimes there is a correlation between difficulty and anxiety, but not always.

In this study, teachers have sometimes misinterpreted their students’ behaviors due to faulty perceptions. I do not mean to be overly critical or to discount the expertise of these teachers in determining whether students are monolingual or bilingual because there certainly are students who are better suited to the monolingual program. Given the many challenges that these teachers currently face in their classrooms, being able to accurately determine where each student belongs does present a very difficult task. My goal is merely to point out that a high level of difficulty regarding language skills does not always indicate high anxiety, nor does language anxiety always mean that a student is not bilingual.

**Language Choice**

Despite the disconnect between these teachers’ perceptions and their students’ language experience, both teachers shared many interesting insights about their students’ choice of language both in and out of the classroom. Findings in Chapter 4 indicate that 55% of students speak both languages at home, 33% tend to speak only Spanish, and 12% tend to speak only English. In my observation notes one day I recorded a comment from Mr. Flores regarding students’ choice of languages:

As we were talking about how students feel about Spanish and English he mentioned that it is a social issue. If students only speak Spanish, they are referred to as *mojado*, straight from Mexico. If they speak only English they are likewise made fun of for wanting to be white, which equates to “proper.” That’s why they mix languages. But if they mix too much, when they talk to those from Mexico or some other place where they only speak
Spanish, they are referred to as *pocho*, meaning that they don’t speak real Spanish. So, basically here in the Valley it’s the social pressure that causes students to mix languages, which can eventually lead to them not actually being able to speak properly or correctly or fluently in either language. Mr. Flores also stated that when he moved back to McAllen from California that people would try to correct him and it caused additional insecurity and causes those that think they speak both languages to question their word choice and causes them to wonder if they really speak well.

Mr. Flores raises a valid and interesting point. There is much more at work here than language ability. Students choose how they speak and in what language they speak based not only on ability, but also social context. Therefore, just because students switch between English and Spanish doesn’t mean that they have lower abilities in those languages. With whom someone is speaking, relationship with that person, and the task being performed are a few of the reasons why people choose to speak one language over another. Is it possible that some of these students choose to speak one language over another because of language anxiety associated with lower proficiency? Absolutely. However, I do not feel that that is always the case due to the high level of perceived fluency among the majority of these students.

Previous studies have shown that people experience insecurity when speaking Spanish if they perceive that their variety of Spanish is not as prestigious as other forms or if they feel that the way they speak is somehow different from the majority. With that knowledge, I anticipated seeing more language anxiety associated with variety of Spanish. However, once again, all of the students in the study are either Mexican-American (born and raised in the Valley or in another part of the U.S.) or are Mexican (born in Mexico and then immigrated to the U.S.). Although a few students described their language variety as Cuban or Puerto-Rican rather than Mexican or Mexican-American, not one of the students is from those countries, meaning that
their language variety is likely similar to everyone else’s language variety. Therefore, I do not believe that students in this setting experience language anxiety associated with their particular variety of Spanish. If they were to live in a less homogenous area of the U.S. where other language varieties exist in higher percentages, then perhaps there would be more evidence of insecurity associated with language variety.

Classroom Management

Throughout my time at this high school, it became apparent that poor classroom management was an overriding issue in Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores’s classrooms. Due to the relaxed nature of these teachers and the lack of enforcement of rules and expectations, the atmosphere they have allowed to be created in their classrooms is one that neither students nor teachers enjoy. The complete responsibility for classroom management issues, however, does not rest entirely on the shoulders of these teachers. Administration and students also play a part in creating a positive classroom atmosphere. In the following two sections, my goal is to outline what I perceive to be poor classroom management practices and their effects on anxiety within the three participating class periods.

Causes of Poor Classroom Management Practices

Those who have taught in the public schools know that it is not an easy task to clearly outline expectations to students and then to always follow through. Factors both within and outside of the classroom exist that can make it difficult to practice good classroom management. Such is the case in the classrooms of Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores.

Factors outside of the classroom. As mentioned in Chapter 4, many of the language instructors at this South Texas high school do not have their own classrooms, but have been asked to be “floaters.” During each class period of the day, they teach in someone else’s classroom. They have a five minute passing period, just as their students, to make it to their next
class and get organized prior to the start of the next class period. This situation exists due to a continual influx of students each year that has also resulted in the construction of portables. Despite the construction of portables and the assignment of floaters, there is still a shortage of space. Administration has, therefore, taken away assigned classrooms from teachers who teach electives and ensured that teachers that teach core classes, such as math and science, have their own classrooms. Both Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores are floaters and have been for the past few years, although they originally did have their own classrooms at The high school. According to Mr. Martinez, classroom assignments are issued by administration rather than volunteered by teachers. Naturally those teachers who must share their classrooms with floaters are not very fond of the idea of having another teacher and 25+ students in their classroom, writing on their white board, and using their teacher supplies and computers.

Because neither Mr. Martinez nor Mr. Flores teachers have their own classroom, their ability to prepare between class periods has been almost completely eliminated. This has had a noticeable effect on their ability to manage and establish a routine at the beginning of class. Rather than be able to welcome their students into class and get class started as the bell rings, they are often themselves rushing in right at the sound of the bell. I noticed this more with Mr. Martinez. Upon entering the classroom, he rushes to project classroom objectives on the overhead projector, quickly passes out books (both teachers have a cart for their class set), and makes an effort to get students in their assigned seats. He then normally launches right into the assignments for the day without taking a moment to calm the students down and ask for their attention in an effort to not waste more class time. It is unclear whether or not student behavior is a direct result of their language teachers not having their own classrooms, nor is it known if and how classroom management would improve were each teacher to have their own classroom.
This issue does, however, appear to facilitate some of the poor classroom management practices. Poor classroom management, then, is not entirely the fault of Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores.

**Factors inside of the classroom.** Classroom management practices cannot only be affected by outside sources, but there are also situations within the classroom that can affect a teacher’s classroom management techniques. Student motivation and attitude toward language learning seem to have an impact on how Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores manage their classrooms. They feel that students are the cause of their lack of control and the reason that they are not able to execute more enjoyable classroom activities such as projects, presentations and other forms of group work. Due to poor classroom management practices, Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores are unclear in their expression of classroom expectations, making it difficult to enforce rules and expectations.

From Chapter 2 we learn that a good teacher is one of the factors that most influences whether or not students have a positive learning experience (Frantzen & Magnan, 2005). Teachers themselves are expected to put into practice good classroom management techniques and can have the greatest impact on the classroom environment. Although the factors mentioned in the previous section have had a noticeable impact on these classrooms, Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores do not appear to know how to manage their classrooms in order to create the desired learning outcomes.

**Effects of Poor Classroom Management Practices**

The aforementioned situations that are imposed upon Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores have obvious effects on classroom management practices. Areas that have been affected directly as a result of poor classroom management among these students include: 1) students’ attitudes and behavior, 2) students’ desire to stay on task, 3) predictability of each class period, 4) language
use in the classroom, 5) language improvements seen throughout the year, and 6) non-behavioral expectations.

**Students’ attitudes and behavior.** Aside from the students who participated in the focus group interviews that described the value of knowing two languages, it is unclear how important it is to these students that they are being given the chance to improve their language skills. It is very clear, though, that their overall lack of enthusiasm and motivation to perform well is unrelated to the value that they place on language learning in general and more directly related to poor classroom management and low expectations set forth by the teachers. Many survey and interview responses indicate that students wish that their class were quieter so that they could work. Even though they enjoy talking to friends, they would still prefer that their teacher have control over the class so that they are able to learn more. Considering the comments that students made about wanting to learn and seeing the value that knowing more than one language has on their future careers and with family, it is probable that if classroom management were to improve, then so would attitudes and behaviors among students.

This desire to learn, however, is not always communicated clearly to the teachers. Many of the students who mentioned during focus group interviews that they want to improve their language skills remained off task by using cell phones and talking to friends. Students express wanting to learn, but may not represent that desire clearly through their actions, showing that they are uncommitted in their attitude toward language improvement.

Teachers perceive that that they are not able to create a more enriching environment due to preexisting student attitudes. They feel that their students do not care about improving their Spanish abilities. In essence, they are allowing the students’ attitudes to dictate their classroom atmosphere rather than improving classroom management practices, which would likely also
change attitudes and behaviors. In reality, creating an enriching learning environment starts with the teachers and their ability to outline objectives and expectations and then to enforce them.

**Students’ desire to stay on task.** Of the plethora of distractions that I observed, cell phones proved to be the greatest distraction and the main cause of off-task behavior. Due to lack of enforcing of a cell phone policy, Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores had almost no control over who was paying attention and who wasn’t in each class period.

In my two years of high school teaching experience, I was under the impression that policies about the use of cell phones and electronics originate at the school level and perhaps even at the district level. That does not appear to be the case, however, at this high school. At any given moment throughout the school day, whether in the classroom, in the hallways, or in the cafeteria, students can be seen using their cell phones. They text, listen to music with and without headphones, and play games. It seems that much of this occurs in the presence of teachers and administrators. Rather than creating and implementing a school-wide cell phone and electronics policy, it appears that it has been left up to the individual classroom teachers to create and enforce a cell phone policy in the confines of their classroom.

Mr. Martinez’s syllabus states that “the student is allowed to listen only to music with ear buds after finishing an assignment. The students will not be allowed to use [cell phones] while the teacher is lecturing/giving directions and during a test/quiz.” Although Mr. Martinez has outlined the expectation, he does not enforce it. Not using a cell phone at any moment during class appeared to be the exception. Students tended to be doing something involving a cell phone rather than doing class assignments during the majority of my observation time. It is as if teachers and administration alike are expecting teenagers to be judicious enough to use cell phones wisely.
The constant use of cell phones or some other electronic device has had a noticeable impact on how little control Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores have in their classrooms. The lack of enforcement of such a policy has led to other problems. What has been perceived as poor student attitudes and apathy toward language learning is actually related to the inability of these teachers to keep students on task, which has led students to seek entertainment elsewhere.

**Predictability of language class.** According to students, each class period with Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores is very predictable. Students know what they will be doing when they walk into class each day. Assignments consist only of independent work, whether it be activities from the textbook and workbook or quizzes and tests. Students and teachers alike have expressed that they would like to be able to do other activities in the classroom such as group activities, projects, games, and presentations. Although students want class to be fun, they seem to be more motivated by a desire to learn. However, both teachers are under the impression that given the students’ attitudes and behavior and their inability to stay on task, those activities will not be successful. And given the current patterns that have been established in class, that is likely true. Due to the use of ineffective classroom management techniques, Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores have allowed a situation to be created in their classrooms where they feel forced to only require independent work on the part of their students. In their minds, they cannot instruct or require student participation because the students do not allow them to teach. However, in the minds of the students, it is the lack of control that keeps the teachers from teaching and creating more fun and engaging assignments.

It is questionable, however, whether the use of more effective classroom management practices alone would change the type of instruction and activities, thereby creating a more learner centered, engaging environment. The current teaching method of each teacher seems to be due to lack of desire or time to plan more engaging lessons. Mr. Martinez expressed a desire
to be able to incorporate other types of activities into instruction time. Although there are
definite classroom management issues with his fourth period students, his natural teaching style
seems to be different from his current teaching practices. My observations of several of his class
periods indicate that he probably would be able to teach differently if he were to use more
effective classroom management techniques and if he were able to see an increase in student
interest and participation. Mr. Flores, although he mentioned that he would like to incorporate
more activities and projects, seems content in spending little time planning lessons. Thus, the
poor classroom management skills of these teachers may not be the only cause of the
predictability of class routines, but also the teachers’ lack of time and motivation to plan more
engaging activities.

Language use in the classroom. Although Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores would prefer
that students speak Spanish, as the course syllabi indicate, almost all focus has been taken off
language use due to classroom management issues. Poor classroom management even affects
which language is spoken and under what circumstances. Although each teacher makes an effort
to use only Spanish in the classroom, as soon as an issue arises with student behavior or students
going off task, the use of Spanish is undermined by efforts to get the students back on task. As
a result, teachers often switch to English in order to regain their student’s attention.
Also, teachers have indirectly communicated to their students that they can communicate in
whichever language they would like as long as they complete their work and do not cause any
problems. Although Spanish is the preference, teachers allow English and see it as an issue of
“picking their battles.” In their minds, there are bigger issues to be concerned with.

Language improvement. There seems to be a disparity between students’ and teachers’
perceptions of improvements that occur in these courses. Students specified that they do not
believe that they greatly improve in these courses, with the exception being in areas of spelling
and accentuation. Teachers, however, feel that their students do improve. According to Mr. Martinez, they improve greatly. He was unable though to specify exactly in which areas. If it is true that students do not improve throughout the year, poor classroom management practices may be the cause. If students are able to use cell phones during class periods, thereby missing instruction and directions, if they are allowed to choose their language preference, if they are bored and uninterested in the type of activities they are asked to perform, and if the goal is for them just to complete their work whether it is done accurately or not and to self-check answers, then how can we expect students to improve? According to this current paradigm, improvement would be the exception and would not be based on teacher instruction and feedback, but rather on an individual student being self-taught and seeking to understand and improve. Both of these require a great deal of interest and motivation on the part of the students.

**Low expectations.** Most teachers tend to have an idea of what they would like their students to be able to do upon completion of a course. Such expectations are usually stated in a course syllabus and expressed verbally by teachers, but are also implied through classroom management practices. Putting aside poor classroom management, it seems that Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores have low expectations for their students regardless. If more were to be expected of their students, then likewise more would be expected of them as teachers, requiring them to dedicate more time and effort.

Although Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores may have had low expectations for their students to begin with, poor classroom management has only further lowered these expectations. Although the syllabus states clearly what teachers expect from Bilingual Spanish I and II students regarding language use and skill development, the implied expectations differ. The message that these teachers communicate to their students is that they are on the right track if they come to class, finish their assignments, and do not bother other students. Expectations seem
to be completely disconnected from actual performance and improvement over time, especially since many assignments are based on completion and provide little feedback so that students are aware of strengths and weaknesses.

I expect that if Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores were to exhibit better classroom management skills, then their expectations of their students would also be able to increase. This would allow the teachers to incorporate greater variety into their teaching. As of now, the pattern that has been established is really a cycle: 1) The teachers do not communicate expectations, or do not have high expectations for their students, 2) students misbehave, 3) teachers do not exhibit good classroom management, 4) students become trained to do other than what the teacher really wants, and 5) as a result the teacher further lowers expectations. In essence, the classrooms of Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores are governed by their students. The students rather than the teachers have set the expectations. In order for this situation to improve, the teachers will have to both raise expectations and improve their classroom management practices.

**Language Anxiety and Low Expectations**

Language anxiety is not as great of a concern among these students as some of the other issues I have been discussing. The question is why? If there is a range of language abilities among these bilingual students, some struggling with each of the four language skills, then why is language anxiety not reported as being higher among these students? Many students commented on the difficulty of accomplishing language tasks involving reading and writing, and some even listening and speaking. Why then is language difficulty not a better indicator of high anxiety? I propose that language anxiety is not higher among these particular bilingual students because they are not placed in language situations that cause them to experience it, regardless of language difficulty. Following is an excerpt from the focus group interview with Mr. Martinez’s students that demonstrates this point:
Me: I'm curious about if there's ever a time in class where you feel really nervous or anxious. So let's say...you don't feel very comfortable with writing and you have to write this huge assignment or you have to give a presentation. How do you feel when you have to do certain activities in class?

Student 1: We never do activities.

Me: Do you ever do presentations of any kind where you have to speak?

Student 2: No.

Student 3: Not in this class at least.

Poor classroom management has not only affected the other areas previously mentioned, but has also caused that students rarely, if ever, experience language anxiety. Activities that have been reported to cause language anxiety in this and in other studies – oral presentations, reading out loud, skits, and role plays – are not activities that form part of the language learning experience in these classrooms. This is related to the lack of expectations for students as well. Low expectations in this case study have in essence created low anxiety. Given the lack of such activities and the lack of high expectations, students tend not to feel anxious even though several readily admit language difficulty. It seems logical then that if students were expected to perform more language tasks that tend to produce anxiety and if expectations were higher, that students might as a result experience higher language anxiety.

Studies have mentioned what teachers can do in order to work with anxious students in order to reduce the affective filter and create a comfortable environment in which students can feel secure. High language anxiety is usually not the goal that teachers have in mind due to how it can negatively affect performance. Despite the negative results of language anxiety on performance that have been mentioned in this study and in many others, one would wonder if it
would be better for these students to experience higher language anxiety if it means that there are also higher expectations and more language improvements seen throughout the year.

Throughout the data collection process, students were very open in sharing their opinions about their current language classes. Findings of the study include the following: 1) students are bothered by a lack of classroom management, 2) they want to improve, 3) they want to learn, 4) they want to be challenged, and 5) they want variety. When discussing the topic of language anxiety among these students, many began to express what they wish their language class was like. They mentioned giving presentations, doing group assignments, and reading novels. I then asked if they would still choose to do those activities if it caused them to experience language anxiety. The majority of the focus group participants stated that they would still choose to do anxiety-provoking language activities if it helped them improve their language skills. Comments that students made included: “You would get used to it.” “You get better.” “It would make me more comfortable with Spanish.” For this particular group of bilinguals, language anxiety could very well serve as a positive motivator among students because it would also imply higher expectations.

**Conclusion**

Through this case study, I have sought to answer several questions in regard to bilinguals and language anxiety. Among other findings, we learn that the Bilingual Spanish I and II students at This South Texas high school tend to value language learning, but due to classroom management issues and low expectations put forth by their teachers, they exhibit poor attitudes, some of which even result in behavioral problems. The factors that contribute to the language anxiety they experience are not uncommon. These students are much like others, whether bilingual or monolingual, who become anxious when asked to perform a task that is difficult or unfamiliar. What is of greater interest is that students are rarely, if ever, put into situations that
cause them to feel language anxiety. The lack of expectation and engaging teaching activities has resulted in boredom and has caused that language anxiety be the exception rather than the standard. Nevertheless, a small percentage of students do experience language anxiety.

Although the poor classroom management that I observed has much to do with the teachers themselves and the atmosphere they have inadvertently created, students’ attitudes and also issues from the district and school administration levels have contributed to preexisting classroom management problems. In fairness to the teachers in this study, it should be pointed out that they are attempting to do the best with the difficult task they have been given at this high school. Hopefully as time goes on, school administration will help to more fully support bilingual teachers such as Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores by providing resources and other necessary professional development so that students can likewise have a more positive language experience.

Implications

We can suppose then that were classroom management to improve, then teachers would be able to expect more of their students. This increase in expectations could possibly result in the increase of language anxiety, a situation that, given the current state of these bilingual classrooms, might still be better than the alternative.

Considering the students who do currently experience language anxiety, Chapter 2 highlights some of the ways in which teachers can mitigate some of the negative effects of language anxiety. In addition to these, we learn from this case study that students want to feel prepared for class and for what will be required of them. This helps them to feel less anxious and more at ease. Teachers should prepare students as much as possible for upcoming assignments by providing pre-reading and pre-listening context, by slowing down and taking reading and listening assignments in segments, and by explaining difficult concepts prior to
students working independently so that they are able to be more successful in their language learning.

Although bilingual education is becoming more of a focus in the U.S., foreign language programs still receive much more attention and study. In fact, in the majority of the studies conducted, foreign language learners have been the participants, showing that we tend to focus much more on foreign language learners than we do on bilingual learners. The foreign language programs throughout the U.S. often set high expectations for their learners, as can be seen with the implementation of ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and Standards for Foreign Language Learning. Language is an area in which we want students to succeed. There is a high expectation for foreign language programs, learners, and teachers. However, there is still much less focus on the bilingual education programs throughout the U.S., which can be seen through the lack of standards and guidelines at the national level. Due to lack of guidelines, there is also a low expectation. Whereas many foreign language programs have high expectations and also students that have high language anxiety, among bilinguals the expectation is low and therefore, with bilingual programs such as the one at this high school, language anxiety is not an issue. I am not implying that the goal is that all language learners experience language anxiety or that increasing expectations always means having higher language anxiety. My point is that if language anxiety increases as a byproduct of higher expectations for students, then language anxiety is perhaps a positive result; a result that will overall be for the betterment of language programs throughout the U.S.

Limitations

Because this is a case study, the participation of all 75 students from the three participating class periods would have been ideal. That would have created more generalizable results and would also have allowed me to make more solid conclusions about the Bilingual
Spanish program at this high school. Additionally, despite my efforts to plan with teachers and faculty prior to my trip to McAllen, there were a few unforeseen problems. Mr. Martinez and Mr. Flores failed to make me aware that on my second day of observation the students would be taking a statewide exam. This change in plans resulted in students forgetting to turn in parental permission forms and also caused me to have to change my plan for administering the survey and conducting focus group interviews. Due to limited observation time and not enough participants, a second trip was scheduled in which I was able to observe additional hours in each classroom and collect more parental permission forms, thereby increasing my number of participants.

Had I been permitted by the IRB, I would have liked to have asked more probing questions and conducted more member checks; however, due to the sensitivity of immigration issues and the possibility of compromising students’ legal status, I was not able to ask more direct questions that would have perhaps aided me in understanding their language background and current experience.

If I were to conduct this study again, I would be much more specific from the beginning with teachers in regard to what needed to occur in my study. Also, I would increase the incentive for student participation with hopes that more would choose to participate.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Although this study has revealed much about the bilingual program at This South Texas high school, further research among other bilingual secondary and elementary programs in the Valley would help us to know whether or not the problems described in this study are typical of all border town language programs. Also, in order to understand on a higher level the connection between expectations and language anxiety, bilingual programs that are known to have high expectations would be beneficial to study. Such findings would enable us to know if high expectations tend to also create high anxiety in a bilingual context. Lastly, successful bilingual
education programs throughout the U.S. should be investigated more closely so that we can
know what approaches and materials are best and how other programs that are suffering can be
modified in order to create similar results.
References


February 18, 2011

Leigh Cherry
1341 S 1500 E
Provo, UT 84606

Re: Heritage Speaker Language Anxiety on the Texas - Mexico Border

Dear Leigh Cherry

This is to inform you that Brigham Young University’s IRB has approved the above research study.

The approval period is from 2-18-2011 to 2-17-2012. Your study number is X110059. Please be sure to reference this number in any correspondence with the IRB.

Continued approval is conditional upon your compliance with the following requirements:

1. A copy of the 'Informed Consent Document' approved as of 2-18-2011 is enclosed. No other consent form should be used. It must be signed by each subject prior to initiation of any protocol procedures. In addition, each subject must be given a copy of the signed consent form.

2. All protocol amendments and changes to approved research must be submitted to the IRB and not be implemented until approved by the IRB.

3. A few months before this date we will send out a continuing review form. There will only be two reminders. Please fill this form out in a timely manner to ensure that there is not a lapse in your approval.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,

\[Signature\]

Lane Fischer, PHD, Chair
Sandee M.P. Munoz, Administrator
Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects
Research Study Assent Form

Introduction
My name is Leigh Cherry. I am a graduate student at Brigham Young University. You are being invited to take part in a research study. Your parent, or guardian, needs to give permission for you to be in this study. You do not have to be in this study if you don’t want to, even if your parent has already given permission. To join the study is voluntary. You are being asked to take part because you are currently taking a Spanish class for speakers of English and Spanish.

Why is this study being done?
The purpose of the study is to help us learn about how students that speak English and Spanish are affected by language anxiety and if and when they become nervous when speaking Spanish in class. You are being asked to take part because you are currently enrolled in a Spanish class for speakers of English and Spanish. You cannot take part in this study if you do not return the parental permission form signed by your parent or guardian.

What am I being asked to do?
If you decide to be in the study, we will ask you to:
• Take an online survey that asks for background information as well as specifics about your language learning experience. This will take place during your Spanish class period. The survey, which contains 45 questions, will be an online survey and will take the full class period to answer. Sample questions include: “I always feel that the other bilingual students speak the language (Spanish) better than I do.” and “When do you feel nervous or anxious in Spanish class?”
• You may be asked to participate in a group discussion about their language learning experience. This discussion will be audio recorded. This will take place during your Spanish class period.
• You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to answer either on the online survey or during the focus group discussion, if you are asked to participate.

What are the benefits to me for taking part in the study?
Taking part in this research study may not help you in any way, but it might help us learn more about the language experience of English and Spanish speaking students.

Are there any risks to me if I am in this study?
If you participate in the focus group discussion, you may feel some discomfort at being asked certain questions. If you feel uncomfortable, you may choose to not answer the questions. Also, because the focus group includes discussion of personal opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect your privacy. The researcher will begin the focus group by asking you and the other students in the group to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the focus group confidential. She will then ask you to verbally agree to keep everything discussed in the room confidential, and will remind them at the end of the group not to discuss the material outside. The focus group discussion will be audio recorded. The researcher will delete the date within 1 year.
Will my information be kept private?
Your information will be kept private. Only the researcher and the researcher’s faculty sponsor will have access to the online survey, which will be password protected. The focus group discussion will be audio recorded so that direct quotes can be included in the final report. Upon completion of the focus group discussion, recorded files will be transferred to a password protected email account. The data for this study will be kept for 1 year. Both the audio files and the survey results will be deleted upon completion of the study. When we tell other people or write articles about what we learned in the study, we won’t include your name or that of anyone else who took part in the study.

Will I receive anything for being in this study?
Whether you choose to participate or not in the study, on the last day of research the researcher will provide food and drink of some kind.

What are my rights as a research study volunteer?
Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You do not have to be a part of this study if you don’t want to. You may choose not to answer any questions you don’t want to answer, and you can change your mind and not be in the study at any time without affecting your grades or standing at school.

Who can I talk to if I have questions?
If you have questions at any time, you can ask
Leigh Cherry  (281) 614-9105    leigh.cherry4@gmail.com
and you can talk to your parent about the study. We will give you a copy of this form to keep. If you want to ask us questions about the study, call or email
Blair Bateman    (801) 422-1727    blair_bateman@byu.edu

What if I have questions about my rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 801-422-1461 or by email to irb@byu.edu.

Statement of Consent
I give my voluntary consent to take part in this study. I will be given a copy of this consent document for my records.

__________________________________   _____________________
Signature of Participant      Date

__________________________________
Printed Name of Participant
Parental Permission for a Minor to Participate in Research

Language Anxiety among Heritage Speakers of Spanish on the Texas-Mexico Border

Introduction
My name is Leigh Cherry. I am a graduate student at Brigham Young University. My research will explore bilingual student (Spanish and English) and teacher perspectives of classroom language anxiety in South Texas. The purpose of study is to understand the language anxiety issue from a bilingual student perspective and to as well to find out to what degree language anxiety is an issue. I am inviting your child to take part in the research because he/she is currently taking a Bilingual Spanish class at [McAllen High School].

PROCEDURES
If you agree to let your child participate in this research study, the following will occur:

- Your child will be asked to take a 45 question online survey that asks for background information as well as specifics about their language learning experience. This will take place in their regular classroom in a computer lab as part of the scheduled curriculum. It is anticipated that the survey will take the entire class period.

- In order to better understand your child’s answers on the survey, your child may be asked to participate in a focus group discussion about their language learning experience. This discussion will be audio recorded. This will take place in their regular classroom as part of the scheduled curriculum. It is anticipated that the focus group discussion will take the entire class period.

RISKS
In order to ensure privacy, the researcher will not use any real names or other identifiers in the written report. The researcher will also keep all data password protected. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Also, because the focus groups include discussion of personal opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect each participant’s privacy. The researcher will begin the focus group by asking the participants to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the focus group confidential. She will then ask each participant to verbally agree to keep everything discussed in the room confidential, and will remind them at the end of the group not to discuss the material outside. Only the researcher will have access to the data collected. Any tapes and transcripts of the focus group will be destroyed after one year or at the end of the study. In order to minimize these risks, the researcher will not discuss the contents of the survey or the group discussion with anyone other co-investigators who are participating in the research. Also, your child may decide at any time to not participate.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The research data will be kept in a secure location, which will be password protected and only the researcher will have access to the data. At the conclusion of the study, all identifying information will be removed and the data will be destroyed after one year or at the end of the study.

BENEFITS
Taking part in this research study may not help your child in any way, but it might help us learn more about the language experience of English and Spanish speaking students.
COMPENSATION
Whether your child receives permission to participate or not in the study, on the last day of research the researcher will provide food and drink of some kind.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH
If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the researcher:

Leigh Cherry
(281) 614-9105
leigh.cherry4@gmail.com

or you may contact the supervising professor:

Dr. Blair Bateman
(801) 422-1727
blair_bateman@byu.edu

Questions about your child’s rights as a study participant, or comments or complaints about the study also may be addressed to the IRB Administrator, Brigham Young University, A-285 ASB, Provo, UT 84602; 801-422-1461 or irb@byu.edu

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION
PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to have your child participate in this research study. You may withdraw your child’s participation at any point without penalty.

Child’s Name _______________________________________________

Signature  ______________________ Date __________
          Parent

Signature  ______________________ Date __________
          Researcher
Formulario de permiso para padres de menores de edad

La ansiedad lingüística entre bilingües en la frontera de Texas y México

Introducción
Me llamo Leigh Cherry. Soy estudiante de maestría de la Universidad de Brigham Young. Mis investigaciones explorarán las perspectivas de estudiantes bilingües de español e inglés y las perspectivas de sus maestros en cuanto a la ansiedad que sienten al hablar español. El propósito de mis estudios es entender el asunto de la ansiedad lingüística desde la perspectiva de los estudiantes y también para determinar hasta qué punto es un problema. Invito a su hijo a participar en mis investigaciones porque él/ella en la actualidad está matriculado en una clase de español para bilingües en McAllen High School.

PROCEDIMIENTO
Si permite a su hijo/hija a participar en mis investigaciones, sucederá lo siguiente:

- Su hijo/hija hará una encuesta en Internet de 45 preguntas que pide antecedentes y también pide información específica en cuanto a su experiencia con el español en la clase. Hará la encuesta durante la clase de español en un laboratorio de computadoras. Se estima que para completar la encuesta se utilizará la hora entera de la clase.

- Para poder entender mejor las respuestas de su hijo/hija en la encuesta, quizás la investigadora pedirá que su hijo/hija participe en una discusión sobre su experiencia en la clase con el español. Esta discusión será grabada. La discusión se llevará a cabo durante la clase de español y se estima que se utilizará la hora entera de la clase.

RIESGOS
Para asegurar la privacidad de su hijo/hija, la investigadora no usará los nombres verdaderos de los participantes en el reporte final. La investigadora mantendrá toda la información bajo contraseña. También, dado que la discusión en grupo incluirá el compartir opiniones personales, se tomarán medidas para proteger la privacidad de su hijo/hija. La investigadora empezará la discusión en grupo pidiendo que cada participante acepte la importancia de mantener en privado la información que se discutirá. Entonces, ella pedirá que cada uno de los participantes acepte verbalmente a no hablar de la información compartida en la discusión con alguien afuera cuando haya terminado la discusión, y les recordará lo mismo al final de la discusión. La investigadora tampoco hablará del contenido de la encuesta o de la discusión del grupo con cualquier otra persona aparte del co-investigador quien participará en las investigaciones. Sólo la investigadora tendrá acceso a la información. Todas las grabaciones y otros registros serán destruidos al final de un año o al final del estudio. También, su hijo/hija puede elegir en cualquier momento no participar.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD
Los datos de la investigación se mantendrán en un lugar seguro, que será mantenido bajo contraseña y sólo la investigadora tendrá acceso a los datos. A la conclusión del estudio, toda la información identificadora será eliminada y los datos de la investigación se destruirán al final de un año o cuando termine el estudio.
**BENEFICIOS**
Al tomar parte en esta investigación, su hijo/hija puede beneficiarse o no, pero quizás nos ayudará a nosotros como investigadores a aprender más sobre las experiencias del idioma que tienen estudiantes que hablan inglés y español.

**COMPENSACIÓN**
Independientemente de si su hijo/hija recibe permiso o no para formar parte de esta investigación, la investigadora traerá comida para compartir con todos participantes el último día del estudio.

**PREGUNTAS SOBRE LA INVESTIGACIÓN**
Si tiene más preguntas sobre el estudio, puede contactar a la investigadora:

Leigh Cherry  
(281) 614-9105  
leigh.cherry4@gmail.com

o puede contactar a su supervisor:

Dr. Blair Bateman  
(801) 422-1727  
blair_bateman@byu.edu

Preguntas sobre los derechos de su hijo/hija como participante en este estudio, o comentarios o quejas sobre el estudio también se puede dirigir al IRB Administrator, Brigham Young University, A- 285 ASB, Provo, UT 84602; 801-422-1461 or irb@byu.edu

Usted ha recibido una copia de este formulario para guardar.

**PARTICIPACIÓN**
LA PARTICIPACIÓN EN ESTE ESTUDIO ES VOLUNTARIA. Usted puede rechazar que su hijo/hija participe en este estudio. Puede cancelar la participación de su hijo/hija en cualquier momento sin problema.

Nombre de su hijo/hija ____________________________________________

Firma __________________________________________________________

Padre / Madre o Tutor Fecha

Firma __________________________________________________________

Investigadora Fecha
Teacher consent form

Heritage Speaker Language Anxiety on the Texas-Mexico Border

Introduction
This research study is being conducted by Leigh Cherry, a graduate candidate at Brigham Young University. The purpose of this study is to better understand the issue of language from a bilingual student perspective as well as the perspective of teachers of these students in South Texas. You were invited to participate because you are a Spanish Bilingual teacher at McAllen High School.

PROCEDURES
If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:
• You will be interviewed for approximately thirty minutes about the language experience of the students in your class.
• The interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements.
• The interview will take place during the week of February 28-March 4 at a time that is convenient to you.
• You will allow the researcher to observe pre-selected class periods during the week of the study.
• You will allow the researcher to administer a survey to your students and as well to conduct a focus group discussion with a select few of those students during classroom time. This will require 2 days of instruction throughout the week and will take approximately the entire class period.

RISKS
There are minimal risks for participation in this study. However, you may feel some discomfort when answering questions about personal beliefs or when being audio taped. If you feel embarrassed about answering a particular question, you may choose to decline or excuse yourself from the study.

BENEFITS
Taking part in this research study may not help you in any way, but it might help us learn more about the language experience of English and Spanish speaking students and their interactions with their language teachers.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The research data will be kept in a secure location, which will be password protected and only the researcher will have access to the data. At the conclusion of the study, all identifying information will be removed and the data will be destroyed after one year or at the end of the study.

COMPENSATION
At the end of the study you will be awarded a $20 gift certificate to a local restaurant. In addition, on the last day of the study, the researcher will provide food and drink of some kind to students and teacher to show appreciation.
PARTICIPATION
PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to participate in this research study. You may withdraw your participation at any point without penalty.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH
If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the researcher:

Leigh Cherry
(281) 614-9105
leigh.cherry4@gmail.com

or you may contact the supervising professor:

Dr. Blair Bateman
(801) 422-1727
blair_bateman@byu.edu

Questions, comments or complaints about the study also may be addressed to the IRB Administrator, Brigham Young University, A-285 ASB, Provo, UT 84602; 801-422-1461 or irb@byu.edu

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Signature:______________________________________Date:___________
APPENDIX B

Language Survey Part One

An adaptation of the background information sheet from Tallon (2009).

Background Information:

Please answer the questions about yourself as accurately as possible.

1. What is your name? (your real name will not be used in the study)
2. Gender: _____ Male _____ Female
3. Age: _____
4. What Spanish course are you currently taking?
5. Who is your teacher? What class period do you have with this teacher?
6. What Spanish course(s) have you taken before?
7. What are your primary reasons for taking this course? (Please check all that apply).
   _____ to fulfill a language requirement to graduate.
   _____ to better communicate with older relatives.
   _____ to improve my bilingual skills for my current or future job(s).
   _____ to improve my grade point average.
   _____ to talk to my friends.
   _____ to feel closer to my culture.
   _____ other (please specify): ________________________________
8. What variety of Spanish do you speak? (Check all that apply)
   Mexican-American Spanish   Cuban Spanish
   Mexican Spanish             Castilian Spanish (from Spain)
   Puerto Rican Spanish       Other: ____________________________
   Central American Spanish
9. With whom do you usually speak Spanish? (Check all that apply)
   Parents
   Grandparents
   Siblings
   Friends outside of school
   Friends at school
Other: ___________________________________________

10. With whom do you usually speak English? (Check all that apply)
Parents
Grandparents
Siblings
Friends outside of school
Friends at school
Other: ___________________________________________

11. How often do you speak Spanish each day?
0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

12. How often do you speak English each day?
0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

13. What language do you usually speak at home?
_______ English ______ Spanish ______ Both

14. How would you describe your current proficiency in the Spanish language in each of the following areas? (Choose only 1 for each area)

Speaking:                    Listening:
___ Very high                 ___ Very high
___ Fairly high               ___ Fairly high
___ Fairly low                ___ Fairly low
___ Very low                  ___ Very low

Reading:                     Writing:
___ Very high                 ___ Very high
___ Fairly high               ___ Fairly high
___ Fairly low                ___ Fairly low
___ Very low                  ___ Very low

15. Which description about SPEAKING Spanish best describes you?
___ I can always express myself easily when I am speaking in Spanish.
___ I can usually express myself adequately in Spanish, but sometimes it can be difficult for me.
___ I have trouble speaking in Spanish.
16. Which description about READING in Spanish best describes you?
   ____ I read Spanish easily.
   ____ I read short, informal things in Spanish easily, but newspapers, magazines, or textbooks are
   sometimes difficult for me to read.
   ____ I have trouble reading Spanish.

17. Which description about LISTENING in Spanish best describes you?
   ____ I understand spoken Spanish easily.
   ____ I understand most spoken Spanish easily, but understanding Spanish radio, TV, or Spanish
   speakers from other countries is sometimes difficult.
   ____ I have trouble understanding spoken Spanish.

18. Which description about WRITING in Spanish best describes you?
   ____ I am confident and comfortable writing in Spanish.
   ____ I am confident and comfortable writing notes and personal letters (emails, twitter, facebook)
   in Spanish, but writing essays, compositions, or reports for school are sometimes difficult for me.
   ____ I have trouble writing in Spanish.

19. How often does your teacher correct your Spanish?
   Never    Rarely    Sometimes    Often    Always

20. Do you want your teacher to correct your SPOKEN Spanish?
   ____ Yes    ____ No

21. Do you want your teacher to correct your WRITTEN Spanish?
   ____ Yes    ____ No

22. What is your teacher’s attitude toward the kind of Spanish you speak? Explain.
Language Survey – Part Two
An adaptation of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

(Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986)

Question 23:
*Language anxiety – Worry or negative emotion associated with interacting in another language.

Directions: In the following section you will read a list of statements that refer to how you feel about learning Spanish. Be sure to read each statement carefully and indicate the response that best describes your attitudes and feelings by circling the number that corresponds. Please give your first reaction to each statement and circle an answer for every statement. Answer with “Neither (3)” if you have no opinion or if a statement does not apply to your situation.

Strongly disagree – SD (1)
Disagree – D (2)
Neither agree nor disagree – N (3)
Agree – A (4)
Strongly agree – SA (5)

a. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my language class.
   1   2   3   4   5

b. I don’t worry about making mistakes in language class.
   1   2   3   4   5

c. I get nervous/anxious when I know that I’m going to be called on in language class.
   1   2   3   4   5

d. I always feel that the other bilingual students speak the language better than I do.
   1   2   3   4   5

e. I worry about the consequences of failing my language class (social, academic).
   1   2   3   4   5

f. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
   1   2   3   4   5

g. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.
   1   2   3   4   5

h. I would not be nervous speaking the language with native Spanish speakers outside of the U.S.
   1   2   3   4   5
i. I get upset when I don’t understand what the teacher is correcting.
   1   2   3   4   5

j. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.
   1   2   3   4   5

k. I feel confident when I speak Spanish in my language class.
   1   2   3   4   5

l. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
   1   2   3   4   5

m. I don’t feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.
   1   2   3   4   5

n. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the language in front of other students.
   1   2   3   4   5

o. I feel more nervous in my language class than in my other classes.
   1   2   3   4   5

p. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak Spanish well.
   1   2   3   4   5

q. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak Spanish.
   1   2   3   4   5

r. I often feel like not going to language class.
   1   2   3   4   5

s. It wouldn’t bother me at all to take more Spanish classes.
   1   2   3   4   5

t. I experience *language anxiety.
   1   2   3   4   5
Language Anxiety – Part Three

Directions: In the following section you will be asked a few questions that will require your personal response. Please answer each question as best you can. You do not have to fill up the space provided, but if you need more space, please write on the back of this paper.

24. When do you feel nervous or anxious in Spanish class? (Be specific in reference to reading, writing, speaking, listening and anything else that applies)

25. When you feel anxious in class, how does that affect your performance? What do you do or not do? How does it make you feel?

26. Does your teacher contribute to your language anxiety? What does your teacher do or not do that makes you anxious in language class? What would you like your language teacher to do or not do so that you can feel more at ease in class?

27. Is there anything else you would like to say that you haven’t said already about language anxiety? If so, please explain.
Focus Group Interview Guide

This focus group interview guide will be used to interview groups of students that expressed higher levels of language anxiety on the student survey.

1. Where are you from? If not from the Valley, how long have you lived here?

2. Have you attended school outside of the U.S? If so, where? For how long?

3. Do you have contact with relatives outside of the U.S.? How do you feel about conversing with them in Spanish?

4. Do you like or dislike that you are taking a Spanish class? Why?

5. Do you think that it’s important for you to be in a Spanish class? Why or why not?

6. What do you enjoy about being in class?

7. What do you dislike about class?

8. You each expressed in some way that you feel anxious in language class. Describe to me a typical situation in which you would feel anxious. What are you doing that causes the anxiety? What do you do as a result? What does the teacher do?

9. How does anxiety affect your participation in class?

10. Specifically, what activities or types of activities cause the most anxiety in language class?

11. Do you feel that your peers create more language anxiety or ease your language anxiety? Explain. Is there a specific situation you can remember when you were nervous because of your classmates?

12. What do you wish was different about your language class so that you could feel less anxious and more at ease?

13. What would you like your teacher to do or not do so that you feel less anxious and enjoy language class more?

14. In the student survey, you stated __________. What did you mean by that?

15. Are there other factors besides the ones on the survey or what we’ve discussed here that create more language anxiety for you?
Teacher Interview Guide

An adaptation of the background information sheet from Tallon (2009).

Background Information:

1. Please answer the questions about yourself as accurately as possible.

2. Where are you from?

3. What is your education background? Where did you attend school, etc.?

4. Have you lived in the U.S. your whole life? If not, how long have you lived in the U.S.?

5. Have you attended school outside the U.S.? If yes, where?

6. What Spanish course(s) are you currently teaching?

7. For how many years have you been teaching?

8. What Spanish course(s) have you taught before?

9. How did you learn Spanish? (native speaker, school, etc.). Explain.

10. What Spanish do you speak? (Check all that apply)

   Mexican-American Spanish

   Mexican Spanish

   Puerto Rican Spanish

   Cuban Spanish

   Castilian Spanish (from Spain)

   Other: ________________

11. How often do you correct your students’ written Spanish? (circle one)

   Never          Rarely          Sometimes          Often          Always

12. How often do you correct your students’ spoken Spanish? (circle one)

   Never          Rarely          Sometimes          Often          Always

13. What is your philosophy of teaching?
14. What do you expect from the students when they write, speak, read? Do they know these expectations? Explicit teaching of grammar and vocab? Or all independent work?

15. Do they actually find that they improve over a period of time? What are the expectations of the teacher in these activities?

16. Use of language in class: Are there times when you require the students to answer in Spanish only? How do they react? What is the policy about use of the language in class?

17. How would you describe their academic performance? What is their attitude toward taking Spanish?

18. Describe the typical class period.

19. Socioeconomic status? Parents work? Do these students have computers in the home?

20. Do you think that there are students in your class that experience language anxiety? Why or why not?

21. What are your thoughts about language anxiety? Is it something you should be concerned about?

22. Thinking of those specific students, what do they do or do not do that is a sign that they are anxious? What does it look like when a student is anxious?

23. What sorts of activities do you think produce anxiety in your classroom?

24. As you notice that students are experiencing some form of anxiety, what do you do or not do? How is your teaching affected?

25. What do you think you could do or not do to help these students?

26. Is there anything that you would like to mention that you haven’t previously stated
22. What is your teacher’s attitude toward the kind of Spanish you speak? Explain.

It's alright.

He understands me because I know Spanish.

Well, I think it's kind of difficult since I'm Mexican and he's from El Salvador, but I think it's okay.

He gets mad when me and my classmates are speaking English, he says that were in Spanish class, so his highly sort of strict.

He hardly talks to me in Spanish, so I've never had a chance to talk to him in Spanish, but he also gets mad when we talk in English because he says we were in Spanish class.

It's okay.

Pues me dice que hablo bien el espanol y que soy inteligente. Que deberia estar en otra clase mas avanzada jaj. o.k.

I think my teacher thinks I speak Spanish pretty good in his class.

My teacher's attitude towards the way I speak is indifferent, he pays little attention to how we speak and how we ununciate our words. We study independently and I don't mean to speak "bad" about him, I'm simply contributing to this survey.

I speak in Spanish always with him, so I think he likes my Spanish.

My teacher's attitude towards me speaking Spanish is he allows us to speak both languages, but when it comes to work we are only allowed to use the Spanish language.

His attitude is alright ;;

My teacher's attitude towards me speaking Spanish is that he allows us to speak both languages but when it comes to work he only allows us to speak or write in Spanish.

He is so rude and mean.

He helps me out with some words that I won't understand or say correctly.

Well, he really only makes sure you know how to pronounce the things you say and tells you to put the accents in a very easy class.

No problems so far.

He has a good one.

None.

He's fine with it.

No span-glish.

He corrects us and helps us when we don't know how to pronounce or write or say something.

My Spanish is okay. I speak it 50,50 but I do study and also don't use as big vocabulary words as others. But I also mix the Spanish and English language which some people don't like even though I'm used to it at home.

None.

Egh.

He corrects me once on a while because.

He understands it due to the fact that I can speak it fluently.

He finds it the norm for a person fluent in Spanish to speak.
He is okay with it, and never complains or says anything is wrong.

Normal.

He really doesn't see the differences, because when I am in his class I still speak English. I only speak Spanish when I tell him that I am finished or when I am doing my work.

He is okay with it.

My current teacher usually doesn't have a conversation about anything, so he doesn't give an evaluation of my way of speaking Spanish.

My teacher usually helps me out when I need, he has a good attitude towards us.

Sometimes he corrects me when I write in Spanish.

I think they are pleased with my Spanish, I have very high grades on both of my classes.

The vocabulary needs to increase for other teachers to take me seriously.

The teacher's attitude towards the kind of Spanish I speak is comfortable because I don't speak Spanish that well and the teacher always corrects my writing, reading, and when I speak in Spanish.

Very kind. Mr. Puente will help you out on any help you need in Spanish.

He is kind.

Fine.

It's alright! (: He is okay with my speaking.

He is like okay your doing very good read some more so you can get better.

He speaks to me in Spanish.

Normal.

My teacher is alright towards any kind of Spanish I speak. All he's trying to do is teaching how to speak, write, understand it more.

24. When do you feel nervous or anxious in Spanish class?

I never feel nervous or anxious in Spanish class because I know Spanish very well.

I only feel nervous on my writing skills because I don't really get it sometimes and I don't have a good grammar in Spanish or English. :P

I get nervous in Spanish class when it comes to writing an essay, what I have problems with is punctuation.

Never..... I feel very comfortable in Spanish class......

I never feel nervous or anxious when I speak, write, listening.

When I have to say stuff in front of the class, because I don't really know that much in Spanish I speak a lot more English than Spanish.

I don't feel anxious in Spanish class, because it's my first language and I have been practicing since I was young. I now Spanish, English, and I'm learning Chinese.

I feel nervous or anxious in Spanish when I get stuck on a word in front of everyone.

When I have to read something to the class in Spanish.

I don't feel nervous or anxious in Spanish class, my classmates speak the same language and the ambience in the room feels welcoming and a "family"-sort-of-feeling.

I never feel nervous or anxious in Spanish class because I speak perfectly Spanish language.
I feel nervous in Spanish class when the teacher is calling on a student to go up and answer a question or say something in front of the class!!!

I don't feel nervous never

I feel nervous in Spanish class when the teacher is calling on the students to go up and answer a question in front of the room.

I feel nervous when I called on to answer a question and also when they call me to read.

Well, I really don't feel like I get nervous when I speak Spanish because I learned at home how to speak it, so I feel okay and confident.

I don't really feel nervous in any way whatsoever

I don't feel nervous at all

I have not felt either nervous or anxious in Spanish class.

I don't feel nervous speaking.

I don't feel nervous in Spanish class:

I feel nervous or anxious when I am about to read a story out loud and the whole class is paying attention because I think I might mess up on my reading.

I rarely feel nervous in Spanish class. The only time I may struggle is with all the grammar rules (accents, etc.).

I hardly ever feel nervous or anxious. Mostly never.

Never have felt nervous in Spanish.

The only time I feel nervous in Spanish class is when I am about to take the final exam. Only because it is like 100 questions.

Never I am very confident.

I usually don't feel anxious but sometimes I get frustrated when the other students don't listen to my current teacher and he just stops, so in the class there usually no instructions just students talking during the entire period. For those like me, I just read the lesson and work what we are supposed to do for the day.

I fell anxious when I have to go up to the board to talk or do something.

Sometimes I get nervous when I am in class because when the teacher calls me to the front.

I don't really feel that, I speak, read, listen, and understand Spanish very well.

I fell nervous and anxious when the teacher calls my name to read where we left off in the book reading. I don't get nervous because it's fine the Spanish that I know and I'm confident on myself that I do good in class.

I get nervous when I am chosen to read because there are some words I can't say correctly or even read it. Speaking I have no trouble with. And writing sometimes I'll ask for help on spelling words.

I feel nervous when I have to read in Spanish because my reading is not that good in Spanish.

Never when I go in the front of the class to talk or answer a question.
Is is more with my witing because i dont practice writing.
well i really dont feel eithere one i feel like if i were talking english nothing different
I never am nervous in spanish class.
i have never feel anxious when im speaking spanish
When we have to write a research project, i'm not really sure if i'm doing it right or wrong.

25. When you feel anxious in class, how does that affect your performance?
i dont feel anxious in class.
when i feel anxious in class makes me dont say things correctly and repeat myself
Im not really that much focused or I dont have that much of imagination
N/A
N/A
not in anyway
Well, when i feel anxious in class, i use to forget things but i try to calm down and do my best.
i try to stay calm to make sure i dont mess up the rest of the assignment
h
when i feel anxious in class it makes my reading slow and it makes me misprenaounce words.
As i mentioned before i don't have any negative feelings in class or when conversing with my classmates;but i do believe that it would contribute greatly on your performance and how you respond or how you don't.
It's affects you and you don't want to speak or say something because you think you're wrong.
When get anxious i start to studder or i start to repeat things i have already said.
i dont do my work
when i gey anxious i start to studder for some reason and then i start to repeat things
it makes me wanna getm better so i practice at home with my mom and it makes me feel confident
The only time that happend was when the teacher told me there was some words in the mexican alphabet that i never had heard and the reason why i say this is because they really never use them in the mexican alphabet like che elle erre. I found that out when i went to mexico to visit a friend in school over there.
Doesn't affect me at all
I don't feel either nervous or anxious in spanish class.
I don't get anxious.
I don't do anything
i dont feel anxious in klass:)
Well i get nervouse and sometimes i forget what i have to say.
I never feel anxious.
i dont feel anxious in spanish class.
never
it tenses me when i take the test and sometimes mix up the answers.
Whem i am anxious in class it affects me by turning red. For example when we have to read something out loud at the front of my class. I feel as if i might mess up.
I'm confident about speaking and working in Spanish class.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't get anxious. I'm confident about what I do in class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel relaxed in Spanish it's a chill period.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't get anxious in my Spanish class. I feel comfortable in it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It doesn't affect anything I do a really good job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get annoyed really fast so I put my headphones on and work while listend to music to tune out all the noise.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get anxious when I go to the board to talk and I get shy it makes me talk so differently it makes me feel so nervous.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It feels like you are shutting down because you do not know what the teacher is talking about.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't have language anxiety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I write I sometimes just mess up the word or write incorrectly at times it makes me feel frustrated if it happens repeatedly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't feel anxious because the Spanish that I know is fine and I know my classmates will laugh at me but its fine at least I know Spanish.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It doesn't really affect my performance I don't get highly nervous I just keep trying till I get it right.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never get nervous in class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It doesn't</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stutter and I somewhat forget what I just studied like 5 minutes ago</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It does me little good but won't affect me that much.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well I don't like reading or writing I just like to speak it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't ever feel anxious, I am confident with my Spanish.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have never have that problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really don't get anxious, I'm confident in my Spanish.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. Does your teacher contribute to your language anxiety? What does he do or not do?  
I don't need help from the teacher, because I know Spanish.  
i like my Spanish class I don't really thing something should change.  
The teacher doesn't make me nervous, but I would like for him to contribute more in the writing skills.  
N/A  
N/A  
he doesn't really do anything  
no  
he corrects me in a good way and helps me sound out the words I can't say  
h  
my teacher help me read it out loud when I get anxious, I would like my teacher to not make me read to the class in Spanish.  
My teacher does not contribute at all in how I feel in the classroom, he is simply there to teach me the necessary things to pass his class.  
Yes, my teacher is always helping me.  
I would like my teacher to tell me what we are going to be studying so I can have more time to go over the subject and be more prepared.
yes
i would like for my teacher to tell my6 what we are going to be covering so that i can be more prepared or the lesson we are about to begin
I really dont tell my teacher anything. But it would help for him to help me out
nope
I don't have language anxiety
I don't feel nervous or anxious in spanish class.
No
I don't know
the teacher dosent make me anxious in language klass
he dosent do anytging taht makes me anxious in class. And well i would like to him to explain more the topic so that way i wont feel nervouse if i dont know what to do.
well my teacher corrects me but then agin that is his job.
i dont feel anxious in spanish class
i dont know sometimes it does and others not
no he is the one that has helped me get over that anxiety
Well my teacher doesnt make me anxious. It is in the situtaion that I am in. Me messing up is what makes me anxious.
No.
No, he doesn't have to. I speak spanish very well.
Nothing im fine with the way it is.
He does nothing, because i do not get anxious
no. nothing. for him to read out loud
I would like for the teacher to actually have control of the class and learn something every day new.
it is rarely that my teacher corrects my language
yes . he explain it what i do not get in the work
They just correct me whatever I do wrong such as accents or things like that.
What my teacher does is he either reads when i have trouble speaking it at times, and that's one of the things i like about it.
the teacher its well prepare for any kind of anxiety because he is a teacher and he is there to help others in the lauguage
I wouldn't make any changes on he does the best he can and thats all i need.
wen he tell me to read in class but other then that i dont get nervous
no
no
I just dont really like my writining but I still try to make it understandable.
yea he does most of the time to anyone that doesnt know how to speak it well
My teacher teaches very well and doesnt make me anxious or nervous.
o , my teacher doesn't contribute to my language anxiety. i would prefer if he did more activities that are fun .that are relating to the lesson.