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International Mail Order Brides: A Narrative Inquiry Investigating the Lives of Six Female Second Language Learners, Their Literacies and Their Acquisition of the English Language

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INTERNATIONAL MAIL ORDER BRIDES: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY
INVESTIGATING THE LIVES OF SIX FEMALE SECOND LANGUAGE
LEARNERS, THEIR LITERACIES AND THEIR ACQUISITION OF THE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE

A Dissertation

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Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: International Mail Order Brides: A Narrative Inquiry Investigating the Lives of Six Female Second Language Learners, Their Literacies and Their Acquisition of the English Language

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This study focuses on the population of women voluntarily entering the United States via arranged, often through the Internet, marriages. A congressional report (Immigration and Naturalization Services 2006) on “International Matchmaking Organizations” reports that the number of immigrants coming to the United States with a “K-1 fiancée visa”, the temporary visa status used to have a non-native individual enter the United States for the purpose of marriage, to be growing rapidly. Of these individuals, 79% are women, referred to in both government data collection and sociological literature using the century old moniker of “mail order brides”.

Through first-hand experience, over a period of 20 years teaching and acting as an administrator for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, I have found this population of women, International Mail Order Brides (IMOBs), to present significant English language and literacy needs. Demonstrating inconsistent attendance in ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, they exhibit low-level English language fluency skills. This study of six International Mail Order Brides, all of whom live in rural settings within Pennsylvania, emanated from these

observations. Participants were located through their attendance in community based, adult ESL programs.

Research conducted used the case study method offered the participants the opportunity to share the lifelong progression of their biliteracies. Each of the narratives is transcribed in the words of the participant to assure the critical element of authenticity. The biliterate lives presented through this restorying is interpreted using Hornberger's Continua of Biliteracy theory in order to identify the multidimensional International Mail Order Bride biliteracy.

Analysis revealed five of the six participants to be monolingual, with no agency given to their L1. All developed their biliteracies successively, living currently with the L2 in the majority power position. Five of the six IMOBs function at the less powerful oral-vernacular end of the Continua, with few literate abilities.

The value of shared life stories formulates an in-depth representation of how the specific life choice of this population drives the need for highly contextualized English language opportunities, providing clear data to guide the field of Second Language Literacy in creating a pedagogical response.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND RATIONALE

“Each person you question can take you into a new part of the world. For the person who is willing to ask and listen the world will always be new. The skilled questioner and attentive listener know how to enter into another’s experience.” (Patton 1990 p. 278).

Introduction

The field of Second Language Acquisition has taken us into the world of many English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. This study focuses on a specific and previously untapped portion of that population, the International Mail Order Bride (IMOB). As I explore this new world through the stories offered by the women in this study, I focus on the IMOB’s biliteracies and how her life and her identity are constructed through her language and literacies. My eleven years of experience as an ESL instructor afforded me a glimpse into this world, a world that the ensuing data collection process in this study has shown to be filled with stories worth telling. I occasionally had IMOBs as students, but never for long enough to gain in-depth insight, into their world. That world differs from one inhabited by most of the ESL adult learners in our community-based classrooms, which until now served as the setting for most of my experiences in ESL. As a practitioner in the field of adult education specializing in ESL, I found this particular population of women to possess very specific and unique circumstances associated with their literacies that set them apart from the typical ESL learner in our community-based programs. Social and political barriers exist for all adult learners, but especially for the English Language Learner (ELL). Typical barriers of transportation, childcare and scheduling restraints plague all adult learners, but for ELLs there are additional issues

such as language and culture to overcome. Many of the constraints experienced by these women are compounded by the fact that they are ELLs who have come to the United States as international mail order brides. It is my opinion that the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) can benefit by understanding how the life circumstances of these women both promote and limit their opportunities to acquire language and literacy. Through their stories comes an insight that can not only aid these women in understanding their own biliteracy but also offer to the field of adult SLA an invaluable instructional perspective on which to enhance future pedagogy.

As I have stated, I had the privilege of being an adult ESL classroom instructor for over a decade. During that time, I heard wondrous stories detailing my students' lives, taking me to Taiwan for "Tomb Sweeping Day" to giving me a front row seat at the Olympic boxing match between one of my students and the Russian Olympic champion. However, it was the tragic story of a life turned upside down that jump-started this study and my interest in this particular segment of the ESL adult population. The student who began my commitment to this study is one of its participants, and you will hear the details of her story in her own words later in the study. However, I would be remiss if I did not offer an initial glimpse into the IMOB's world.

For the purpose of the study I will call her Maria—all names and identifying information relating to each participant have been changed to protect the participants. Maria, born in South America, met her husband through an internet dating service, married, and moved to a tiny rural town in Pennsylvania with a teenage daughter and very limited English skills. She was literally swept off her feet, over the internet, by a charming American man twenty years her senior. After Maria and her now-husband met

online and conversed for several months, Maria's husband-to-be decided to visit his potential bride in person. During his first visit to her small town in South America, he proved most respectful of her family, requesting Maria's hand in marriage in a private audience with her father, and winning the affections of her mother with his respectful demeanor. He planned a church wedding at her home parish to honor the family's religious beliefs and helped allay the family's economic concerns by outlining his vast property ownership in America and revealing his healthy savings account. The couple wed and the new family of husband, wife, and daughter (adoption was promised upon settling to the United States) returned to the rural property that would be their home in Pennsylvania.

The property was vast indeed, with a driveway that took fifteen minutes to traverse before it connected to a secondary road that eventually led to a main highway. Although her new home was isolated, Maria's new family began the process of settling in to the patterns that create an everyday life.

I was introduced to Maria, her daughter, and new husband through the required language assessment for ESL students in public schools. In addition to working with the adult ESL population, I work with the public schools system and their ESL school-age students. The assessment I administered to Maria's daughter delineated only rudimentary English skills, but her daughter seemed very eager to learn and was a delightful child. As is usual practice after assessing the student, I met with the parents and school officials collectively to formulate a plan for the student's English curriculum. Maria's new American husband did all the talking for the family, and I noticed that even though I tried to elicit a response from Maria, she could produce little more than a smile and a head

nod. As this is not uncommon because the meetings can prove daunting for a non-native speaker, I made a mental note to attempt to get Maria to attend my adult ESL class. I also commented after the meeting to the girl's teacher that I hoped nothing ever happened to the father for he was the family's lifeline to their English-speaking environment. It was not unusual for me to think this as I always worry about my ESL students in their new environment. However, unlike most of my ESL students there was a fluent English speaker in this family, allaying some of my fears.

Maria eventually entered our adult English class. She made friends quickly within the class and seemed to be adjusting comfortably to learning a second language. Unfortunately, one day I received a call from Maria's daughter's school telling me that Maria's husband had been in a near fatal accident while on his way to work. The events following this tragedy confirmed my worst fears: How would the doctors communicate Maria's husband's condition to her? What type of insurance did they have and could Maria find the necessary paperwork to confirm their insurance? How would Maria get to the hospital consistently to see her injured husband without a driver's license? The situation found a woman and her child alone in a country where they knew very few people and had no family for support. However, more importantly, this woman and her child could not navigate the language that would help them survive in their new world. The study gives voice to Maria's story and others like her allowing the reader a candid view of their lives and the biliteracies that support each IMOB.

This study focuses on a population of women, like Maria, who voluntarily married an American man using a matchmaking service, almost exclusively internet based. They are, within the parameters of this study, referred to as International Mail

Order Brides (IMOBs). A congressional report (Immigration and Naturalization Services 2006) on “International Matchmaking Organizations” reports that the number of immigrants coming to the United States with a K-1 fiancée visa, the temporary visa status used by a non-native individual entering the United States for the purpose of marriage (IMOBs), to be growing rapidly. During the 1970s and 1980s there was a documented national average of 5,300 individuals per year entering the United States with the K-1 visa status. This number increased to 6,400 each year during the seven-year period from 1990 through 1997, and the numbers continued to grow to an estimated 9,000 + per year in 2007, data information based on 2006 numbers and rate of yearly increase over the past 10 years (immigrationdirect.com). Of these numbers, 79% were women. Of course, not all K-1 fiancées fit this study’s definition of an International Mail Order Bride, but a significant number do fall within the study’s definition.

The women, referred to in both government data collection and sociological research by the century-old moniker of “mail order brides,” enter into marriage with American men they have met through a commercially arranged marriage service. Many women make the move for the sole purpose of relocation to the United States from their native country. For the purpose of this study, “International Mail Order Bride” is defined as “a woman who commercially publishes or advertises her intent to marry a man from another country, in most cases a more economically developed country, such as the United States.” IMOBs utilize services that are paid a fee to facilitate marriage matches.

In the late twentieth century, the internet-based IMOB services offered some variance from the original practice of marriages created between virtual strangers. However, the original premise behind these services persists: the intent to change,

hopefully for the better, one's situation in life through marriage. Political, social, and economic reasons for emigration for the purpose of marriage continue to exist. That said, each woman's story nonetheless remains unique, based on not only her native culture but also her individual personality and history. Thus to appropriately study these women, we must investigate both qualitative and quantitative data to define this population. Within the study, I have used statistical data that characterizes this population in conjunction with individual interviews to create a profile of the IMOBs biliterate circumstance.

Despite cultural variances, acquisition of the English language remains a key element in the process of making an international marriage to an American man successful. Other aspects of the bride's acculturation process are also impacted by her literacies as is illustrated through the bride's stories offered in the study.

Of the non-IMOBs who come to the United States, most have a singular focus, such as graduation from an American university, a goal that sets concise parameters on the experience and the language needed for that experience. Likewise, they come to the United States with the intention of locating permanently, thus setting parameters under which they function. Permanent relocation often comes in an effort to join already settled family members or become part of a business venture located in the United States. Again, both situations have clear and specific parameters that afford the individuals concrete goals and expectations for their new life and the associated language requirements. Whether coming to join family or for a business opportunity, there exists this distinct purpose: a generalized location for residence, at least one defined community of practice within the extended family or work environment, access to an established support system, and a target set of language skills necessary to survive within their new environment

(Blueprint for Change 2006). Family or business associates are assumed willing to assist in developing appropriate language skills for new immigrants or assist in finding venues through which the immigrant may acquire the English language skills necessary to achieve their goals.

Other non-IMOB immigrants, whether temporarily or permanently, enter our country to escape negative situations such as poverty or persecution. For those who flee poverty or political strife, this escape becomes a dominant focus and assists them in formulating parameters by helping them choose what they no longer want (poverty or abuse) and where they are likely to find relief (the United States). They usually achieve a successful experience while in the United States because they have met their goal of exchanging a negative environment for a more positive one. The needs of those seeking asylum, although not always easily addressed, are concrete and socially obvious. Within American society organizations such as human service agencies, churches, and neighbors will offer guidance and support. Therefore, in defining the parameters of the journey for these groups of immigrants and offering assistance with necessities such as the provision of affordable government housing, government-assisted medical programs, food stamps, and access to necessary literacy skills, the immigrant can find the acculturation process successful. This seems, however, not to be the case with the international mail order bride population. An IMOB's circumstances and subsequent needs are seemingly negated by the fact that there is an American spouse who can consistently address these needs.

IMOBs immigrating to the United States have a distinct and singular purpose of marriage to an American man. How this purpose manifests itself linguistically is the impetus of this study and is reflected concretely in the findings of this study. Through my

research, I found that little is known about the expectations of an international mail order bride, expectations that significantly affect her chosen experience. Very little research specifically illuminates the acculturation process and the outcomes from the bride's point of view, especially relating to her language and biliteracies. Many internet services such as Goodwife.com, promise women a loving household where "your opinion matters and... you have freedom with the family finances" (Goodwife.com 2008). Are these circumstances the measure the international mail order bride uses to base both her expectations and success upon, and more importantly is this what is actually happening from the bride's point of view?

The bride's biliteracies have a significant effect on her quality of life once in the United States, yet 95% of these women arrive possessing extremely limited language skills (E-Data Pennsylvania Department of Education 2008-2009). Of greater significance than their initial lack of English literacy is the fact that this population typically fails to develop these skills as their time in the United States continues. This crucial lack of English language and literacy skills potentially hinders their acculturation process including identity formation. My work with these women as ELLs indicates persistent and difficult development toward acculturation and English language literacy. Moreover, loss of her first language, L1, from lack of use and her limited English proficiency accompanies the international mail order bride to her new home in the United States.

As an educator, I began to notice a pattern among some women who entered my classroom, a pattern that was borne out with students who differed in what seemed to be all areas with the exception of three factors: gender, location, and a stabilization of the

language acquisition process. As a classroom instructor, I continually analyzed potential barriers for my students and attempted to overcome them. As I reviewed the students whose learning seemed to be falling below expectations, I began to notice one dominant sociological factor among several women: each was married to an American male and upon further inquiry; the process which introduced my student to her American husband was of the mail order bride “business.” All of these women exhibited spotty attendance, tentative attitudes within the class environment, and in most cases, eventually left the class completely prior to raising their fluency levels.

In order to determine the breadth of the problem of language and literacy acquisition among these women, I conducted a phone survey of 20 community-based ESL programs throughout the State of Pennsylvania. Overwhelmingly, I found that these international mail order brides often seek information regarding second language literacy instruction but seldom, less than 4 % of the population, maintain consistent attendance in an adult English as a Second Language program. These women often access educational venues providing English language classes but would rarely attend for a sufficient amount of time necessary to raise their fluency levels.

During the discussions with other ESL programs and their staff members throughout the state, I ascertained that these women are not participating in social venues offered at the local church, their children’s school, or recreational events within their communities. They are seldom seen by their community and do not interact with even the closest of their neighbors. Furthermore, with only limited pockets of other women who immigrated from the same culture in their rural area, the IMOBs enjoyed little interaction with speakers of their native language offering no community of practice.

Even for those IMOBs who seriously pursue second language instruction and maintain consistent attendance in the educational venue, their language and literacy acquisition process proves to be significantly slower than other students. According to this preliminary finding, I saw the potential for sustained problems of isolation, economic instability, and cultural miscues all relating to language for these international mail order brides.

After a phone survey of 20 community-based programs, I found 15 that, at the time surveyed, indicated they had students who may be international mail order brides. These IMOBs generally become an invisible population once they reach the United States, often found only through an accidental opportunity, as was the case that initiated this study. My intent is to bring their story to life, not only for their own validation but also to present their biliterate practices to the field of SLA. Ultimately, I am pleased to present the literacy stories of this particular population as it offers first-hand information into this atypical ESL learner's world.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The overall questions that this study answers is; "What are the biliterate practices of international mail order brides within their languages?" The study targeting specifically, those IMOBs residing in rural setting such as Pennsylvania. Although a number of immigrant spouses are male; the number is low and the males have a very different sociological profile than the women. For this reason, mail order grooms are not included in this study. Of those individuals immigrating to the United States from 1991 to 1997, between 20 and 30 % were those entering or having recently entered a marriage to an American (Immigration and Naturalization Services 2006). Most specifically from this

population are those individuals who have met their American spouse through a commercial service tailored to matching American men with women from other countries solely for the purpose of marriage and ultimate residency for the couple in the United States. These matchmaking services should be distinguished from those aimed only at providing a vehicle for individuals who would otherwise not have contact through proximity or shared interest to meet; such services are commonly target a pen pal or dating acquaintance. Although commercial, internet businesses such as Match.com and E-Harmony do promote the marriage and relocation, the commercial matchmaking services associated with this study have the primary purpose, whether stated or assumed, of introducing Americans to potential marriage partners from other countries, with each partner having the intent of marriage and subsequent residence in America. This mediation is done for profit and to promote political residency.

A National Generalized Profile of the International Mail Order Bride

In an attempt to begin to define these women and set the stage to unfold their biliterate life stories, I begin with general factors offering a lens through which to view them. The profile of these participants contains a variety of factors such as age, gender, country of origin, economic level, and language proficiency in both their first and second languages. In order to begin to understand the population in this study, we can describe these factors. This profile is intended to apply to specific international mail order brides especially in rural areas of the United States.

Across the United States, 89% of IMOBs are under the age of 40 (Scholes 2006). The ethnic background of the lower register of the age ranges, 25 years old and below, varies: 61% of Asian brides are 25 years or younger while only eight percent of women

from Russia fall into the youngest age category. There exists a large population of younger girls\women, ranging in age from 12 to 21 who are considered sexual slaves and are not being considered in this study, as they would skew the findings. Additionally, these girls\women, are a “trade” commodity that is most commonly associated with having a final destination in Asian countries not the United States (Erez 2007).

Overall, while most mail order brides are 40 years or younger when they marry; the age of the American spouse of the mail-order bride differs significantly from his potential bride. The median age for the male spouse is 37 years old (Scholes 2006). Moreover, in many cases a difference of 20 years or more between the mail order bride and her American spouse exists. Finally, the American spouse was male Caucasian in 94 % of the cases whereas the International Mail Order Brides were 100% foreign born women (Scholes 2006).

The Office of Immigration finds that 87% of lawful permanent residents (LPRs) are female. This again highlights the fact that the majority of IMOBs are indeed female (Immigration and Naturalization Services 2006). This supports my opinion that including male IMOBs would produce a more convoluted profile of the target participant and offer a lower quality of conclusion from which to base further investigation.

The four major international Internet matchmaking services report that the economic level of these women is “low” by American standards (Immigration and Naturalization Services 2006). The category represents an annual income at the poverty level in the United States: \$10,591 for one person and \$21,100 for a family of four, most likely a mother and three non-wage earning children (U.S. Census Bureau 2007). Most

women are listed with these services as being employed in basic skill jobs, many times supporting at least one child with no other financial support.

In addition to low economic status, IMOBs usually possess a low level of education as well (Kurian 1997). Their education ranges from no formal education on one end of the spectrum to those, mostly from within the Soviet Union, with at least some post secondary training. Approximately five percent have post-secondary training, usually in the form of a teaching certificate for the women of the Soviet Union. Most of the women possess the equivalent of an American high school diploma. However, there is great variance in educational level when comparing the mail order bride to her American spouse. The American male fiancées are “highly educated,” with over 50% having two or more years of college education and of these numbers six percent hold a Ph.D. or M.D. (Kurian 1997).

Limitations

This study will focus on the population defined as international mail order brides who reside in rural areas of Pennsylvania. Therefore, issues specific to them will not translate in entirety to similar populations located in an urban setting. As the participants in this study will be culled from community-based ESL programs in the state of Pennsylvania, two key issues\barriers relating to their access to adult education in general within a rural region are those of transportation and childcare. These issues limit the extent to which this population can be identified, accessed and studied in-depth.

The need for transportation to adult education significantly impacts the student’s initial access to a program and the continued support necessary to allow that student the appropriate instructional time for successful completion of her goal. ARIN Center for

Education statistically identifies that the lack of reliable transportation prevents 27% of students from entering a community-based language program (E-Data Pennsylvania Department of Education 2002-2005). An additional 14% of students attending adult ESL classes will drop out before attaining their language goals because of issues related to consistent transportation (E-Data Pennsylvania Department of Education 2002-2007). This barrier manifests itself either in the form of a family having no reliable mode of transportation or lack of other available modes of transportation.

For the international mail-order bride population, it is the second scenario that presents itself as the most consistent barrier. Usually, the family owns a viable vehicle; however, the husband uses that vehicle to get to his place of employment during the day, usually at the time when ESL classes are offered, an issue exacerbated in a rural setting. It takes in-depth investigation to distinguish the ESL student who does not attend class regularly for lack of transportation from those ESL international mail order brides whose transportation issue masks another reason for inconsistent attendance in language programs.

The second key issue that presents itself as a significant barrier to an ESL student completing a goal within an adult education venue is childcare. Twenty-four percent (E-Data Pennsylvania Department of Education 2002-2007) of adult education students are prevented from completing their educational goal because of a lack of on-going affordable childcare. Moreover, some ESL students have cultural views restricting the care of their child by an individual other than themselves. In this study, careful attention will be taken to make sure that childcare represents a true barrier to attendance in an ESL language program or if there is a hidden causal factor.

A final limitation lies in the fact that all data is collected through adult basic education programs in Pennsylvania. This limits participants to those within the society who elect to attend an adult education program where accessible. Although there is theoretical access to adult English-as-a-Second Language programs for all adults residing within the state of Pennsylvania, there are an estimated 8,000 adults who do not take advantage of these no-cost government-sponsored programs (Pennsylvania Department of Education Special Project 1464 2001). Of that estimated 8,000 approximately 10 %, or 800, are estimated to be ESL students.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education Adult Basic and Literacy Bureau (ABLE), at the time this study was begun, funded 141 adult education programs throughout the state of Pennsylvania. This is a significant number and all counties within the state of Pennsylvania currently host at least one adult education initiative. However, there remain areas where an adult education venue is an hour or more drive time from the home of the participant, thus making access especially difficult.

Many potential participants may not be identified and remain an invisible part of this population. Furthermore, data collected from an adult education program excludes those individuals who may have contact only through a college or university setting, those individuals whose only contact to an educational organization is through their child's school setting, and those individuals who do not have contact with an organization that could serve the linguistic needs of an adult learner. This study does not include those populations, and its conclusions may not be extrapolated accordingly.

Lastly, this study serves to create an *in-depth* picture of international mail order brides and their biliteracies. This study does not represent an attempt to access what

would be considered a statistically significant number of the three-to-four percent of the immigrant population cited to be IMOBs nationally (Immigration and Naturalization Services 2006).

The Bottom Line!

Through the analysis of the life stories told by six international mail order brides, this study poses the question: “What are the biliterate practices of international mail order brides within their languages?” These practices will be defined through the bride’s individual stories, told in their own words, then placed on a conceptual framework from which to fully analyze the International Mail Order Brides biliterate practices.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To expand our understanding of international mail order brides (IMOBs) and their biliteracies, it is necessary to review both the historical information and linguistic studies associated with English Language Learners (ELL's), specifically international mail order brides.

Documented evidence speaks to the existence of international mail order brides as a function of society for hundreds of years (Monger 2004). Throughout history the act of bringing men and women together (who did not previously know one another) for the purposes of marriage was the job of a third party, a matchmaker. Early European village matchmakers brought individuals together to marry, initially from necessity to preserve a population (Monger 2004). Throughout world history, matchmakers were employed to bring together a man and a woman who were otherwise strangers for purposes other than what we today think to be the purpose of marriage, love and companionship. Some of the practical intents of early history's matchmaking were the securing of financial status of a family, cleansing a bloodline of a certain trait, illness or genetic defect, or ensuring the financial and political stability of an empire or country (Monger 2004). Around the world, matchmaking has always been a business, mainly conducted by women. African culture often links a man to the duties of matchmaker (Constable 2003), while it was usually a woman in European culture.

Historically on an international level, mail-order brides were women who listed themselves with a service. This service was initially an individual, again usually a woman, in the village who would find an appropriate husband for the intended

woman\client (Monger 2004). As areas began to populate themselves, the business of matchmaker grew with the technology of the time and eventually presented itself in a published paper format, a catalog essentially. The catalogs listed a variety of available women, each woman's intent, and her positive attributes relating to matrimonial desirability (Monger 2004). The catalogs were then distributed through the mail and posted as public offerings to target populations of men who may become interested in pursuing this venue. Interested men could then contact the service with their choices of potential women and an initial meeting was established.

Typically the couple's first meeting occurred often with little or no direct communication between the woman and her intended husband prior to their first meeting. This initial "meeting" was often the scene for the proposal of marriage, beginning the engagement process. Many times the initial meeting was set up to include the actual marriage ceremony that began the couple's life together (Ben-Ze've 2004). Considering the limited communication associated within the previous business of mail order brides, women knew little of what their new lives would hold (Monger 2004). Communication between the couple increased as postal systems became more sophisticated. However, with the advent of the internet, the business of mail order brides changed dramatically. The opportunity for sustained contact between parties prior to marriage or even physical meetings, if desired, increased exponentially. Additionally, accessibility for both men and women utilizing a mail order bride business or related services has increased, as there currently are over 2,230,000 "hits" (Google 2011) when entering the phrase "mail order bride" on an Internet search engine.

According to a report to Congress, more than 200 international matchmaking organizations operated in the United States in 1998, and the number grew to an estimated 4,000 in 2006 (Immigration and Naturalization Services 2006). These organizations bring together approximately 4,000 to 6,000 couples yearly who marry and petition for US immigration of the female spouse to the United States. This volume represents between three and four percent of the direct US immigration of female spouses to this country and only four percent of all US immigration to the United States (International Matchmaking Organizations, A Report To Congress).

The United States issues a K-1 “fiancée visa” that can be used within six months of issue and is valid for a 90-day entry into the U.S. The K-1 (and K-2 for accompanying minor children) is classified as a “non-immigrant” visa, though all the immigrant visa checks (i.e., FBI check and medical exam) are required for this visa (Rapidmigration.com 2007). While this visa is issued as a single entry visa, should the intending spouse return to her country within the 90 days and seek to return again to the U.S. for the purpose of marriage, the Embassy may issue a second visa document. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), reports that approximately 17,263 such visas were issued in fiscal 2001, about 7,988 coming from Asia and about 4,714 originating in Europe (including all of the former Soviet Union states). It should be noted, though, that the K-1 is used by Americans who met partners overseas and perhaps most commonly, by recent immigrants to the US.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has a population of 12.4 million people; of that population, 28 %, or 3.4 million, live in rural areas (The Center for Rural Pennsylvania 2011). Of this 3.4 million people living in rural areas, 4.8 % are considered

non-white. These numbers indicate that there are not significant numbers of second language speakers located within rural areas of Pennsylvania; this fact will emerge as an issue impacting the participants in this study.

The lens through which the world currently views international mail order brides, and of greater import, the way these women see themselves bears review as we are created not only by our personal history but by the forces history and society place upon us. This chapter reviews the historical, sociological and linguistic issues impacting the international mail order bride in an effort to provide a backdrop for the actual stories of the women offered in this study.

International Mail Order Bride Discourse

Linguistic stabilization, a plateauing of skill levels, began to emerge as a homogenous issue among certain ELLs in my classroom. Throughout my 11 years of teaching ESL to adults, I continued to notice that certain students would reach a generally low level of fluency, then level off without further progress. This factor, coupled with the consistent sociological factor of their marital status as international mail order brides, created a population that I found had a developed discourse, a language defining the population that would perhaps lead to a greater understanding of these IMOBs as I began to research their language and literacy.

Themes

Discourse surrounding international mail order brides creates an ideology, which reproduces their conditions. Each participant in the study used this discourse to find a marriage partner. Among the internet-based services it is sometimes difficult to distinguish absolutely between the businesses that constitute a dating service, a mail

order bride service, or the service solely aimed at the trafficking of women as a commodity. The search of the International Mail Order Bride industry provides one certainty only, that its diversity and potential volatility as an emotional issue presents a wide variety of perspectives within the study. I regard all services associated with any monetary remuneration as a business. These businesses, when searching Google (2011) using the phrase “International Mail Order Bride business,” produces 77,640,000 business-related hits. The terminology used, the particular day the search is initiated, and even the time of day will net a wide variety of results through the Internet. The information appearing as a moving target demonstrates growth within the market, with new businesses opening often. Additionally, such searches may demonstrate the inherent legality (or lack thereof) of some business with the “here one day gone the next” presence on the Internet. The United States government demonstrates a concerted effort in monitoring the industry as it has vast economic and humanitarian impact on our country (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service 2006).

In addition to legislation enacted by the US government to regulate and track the international mail order bride business, Federal grant monies have been issued in order to study the sociological impact of the issue. Dr. Robert J. Scholes and Anchalee Phataralaoha published their findings in “The Mail Order Bride Industry and It’s Impact on U.S. Immigration” (2006) as a body of analysis and subsequent conclusions on the topic. They say:

An American man seeking a foreign bride may avail himself of over two hundred different services in which foreign women advertise for husbands. There are two types of such services. In one type, the so-called “mail order bride” industry

(representatives of the industry prefer the term “International correspondence service”), women’s names, photos, biographical sketches, and addresses are presented in hard copy brochures or on the Internet. In these services, the agency provides the photos and descriptions of the women, prices vary for the listing. Men who wish to obtain the mailing address of any of the women they would like to contact are charged a fee from \$2 to \$5 for each of the mailing addresses.

The other way to contact potential spouses is through e-mail “pen-pal” clubs. These services are generally free of charge. In them, men and women provide biographical data, an e-mail address, and an indication of what type of relationship they seek. Some of the larger more established of these pen-pal clubs are One-and-Only.com, Friendfinder.com, Match.com, Kiss.com and Date.com. In these clubs, one can find nearly ten thousand (10,000) foreign women seeking marriage or long term relationships. (p. 1)

Dating services

Dating services, or pen-pal clubs as Scholes (2006) calls them, constitute a significant portion of the internet matchmaking businesses. Well known services such as e-Harmony.com, Match.com and Chemistry.com are all brokers in what many of the sites call “love science.” This quote from Chemistry.com captures the direction and intent of what I refer to as dating services in this study.

Why do Americans believe that one life long marriage is the only real road to happiness and success? Marriage has changed more in the last 50 years than in the past 5,000. We can no longer expect most people to spend most of their lives in one traditional style marriage. But are we happy?

A search of the phrase “dating services”, finds some 45,600,000 (Google 2011), constituting a category within the industry that brings individuals together to satisfy a broad range of relationships. Marriage is not always the desired end result but as the Chemistry ad states, happiness is.

Matchmaking in the 21st century is big business. The top three dating services declare over 10 million dollars collectively each year in profits (Poors 2009). This industry has become so overwhelmingly profitable and popular that “help” sites have been constructed to assist in choosing the dating site that is best suited for you.

DatingSitesandServices.com, one of the many help sites, offers this advice on their home page “With so many matchmaking web sites available to help you find your perfect date or soul mate it is best to do a bit of investigating first.” Finding a “perfect date” or a “soul mate” is the usual purpose of dating service sites. In contrast, International Mail Order Bride sites have the ultimate goal of arranging marriage partners for a fee. These Internet services blur the lines delineating their purposes. One example is Chemistry.com, which indicates that it is in the selling happiness through the business of “love sciences.”

Industry offerings vary simply by the emotional “store front” of each business; the end result of marriage to an American creates a homogenous group, including most Internet mail order bride businesses. Some of the larger businesses, such as Cherry Blossoms, offer upward of 6,000 women to view (Scholes 2006). The number of businesses alone grew to include upward of 10,000 women in 2009 (International Matchmaking Organization 1999). While the statistics associated with the industry are powerful, Scholes offers a more summative report as to how and why this industry thrives.

He offers,

Why do American men want foreign wives? Most of the personal reposts from American men who have married women through these agencies talk about “traditional values.” That is, American women are thought not content to be wives and mothers but seek personal satisfaction through their own careers and interests, while the foreign woman asks for nothing more than husband, home and family.

(p. 3)

Again, true or not this is the perception purported by the discourse offered on the Internet sites.

The International Mail Order Bride on the Internet

It is important to differentiate between the two broad types of mail order brides in the discourse associated with the Internet businesses. The International Mail Order Bride, the women included in this study, are women from other cultures coming to the United States for purposes of marriage to American men. Other women using the Internet services described may be International—women from all over the world—but these are women who move within their own culture, for marriage and other purposes.

Submissiveness is *the* one word or characteristic that most often occurs in the representation of a mail order bride on Internet sites. One account of a client’s search for a submissive Asian woman reads as follows “Attractive Straight White Male, middle aged business executive looking for that special little China Doll, preferably short, petite and obedient” (Monroy p. 2). Phrases such as these appear in literature written both by the proponents for and against the concept of women obtaining a spouse through a mail order bride service. Whether for or against the concept of a woman pursuing marriage as

an international mail order bride, both sides seem to agree that the concept of a woman who is little more than a servant to her spouse is the stereotype of a mail order bride. Commodification of these women sets fertile ground for a continued misunderstanding and contempt for these immigrants.

The discourse of mail order brides at times offers women as enticements and service providers. This example from GoodWife.com (2009) states: “There's nothing better than having a local native as your personal tour guide, and maybe even your love interest.” and “You’ll make many new friends and acquaintances during your search.” The clarity of who these “friends and acquaintances” are, other than a potential spouse, is left as ambiguous to be interpreted by the consumer. However, GoodWife.com includes this statement as one of the last comments on the site's homepage: “Intercultural marriages are more likely to be successful.”

Other sites, however, are more direct in offering information relating the potential intent of the sites users. BridesAgency.com, for example, uses the following statement to advertise their services: “If you are a SINGLE MAN, and are serious about getting married to a beautiful Russian woman, then our mail order bride’s services are just for YOU.” The male must be single and serious while the female is described as attractive and compliant. The sites prey on emotions. Discourse full of emotional language is common among sites illustrated by this statement from CherryBlossoms.com: “Feeling overwhelmed or alone? Be your own matchmaker! Find your own perfect match; the love of your life.” These powerful statements establish expectations and delineate a final goal for both the brides and their potential American spouses.

Sex Trafficking Through Internet Matchmaking Sites

The service of offering international mail order brides is a business with a lurid side as well. Although none of the women within the parameters of this study fit into these worst-case scenarios of the business, it is necessary to make mention here of what the industry of mail order brides includes. Terms such as “warehouse,” “seller,” and “consumer” find their way into many of the mail order bride Internet business sites, illustrating that in some spheres it is indeed a trade of commodities: money, in exchange for a human being. These aspects can color the impression of both males and females utilizing the industry as a whole, offering a variant set of expectations for both sets of users. Researcher Mila Glodava, after writing her book *Mail Order Brides: Women for Sale* went on to establish the Mail Order Bride Legal Aid Fund, an organization to help women who have been victims of the sex trafficking side of the mail order bride business. This issue of sex trade (or slavery) has larger interests involved than just those of the for-profit business they support. Governments often turn a blind eye to this trade as in some countries it has become an important source of economic growth for the country itself. Profits from sex trade through the Internet in some Asian countries make up to 14 % of the gross national product (Raymond and Hughes 2001).

Representation of Brides and Grooms

This is an industry that sells its product, at least initially, through emotionally charged language. Powerful statements associated with the concept of mail order brides such as “The effects of feminism are perverse” (Clark 2007) appear in literature and analysis of this phenomenon. The websites make it clear that both the potential brides and grooms are looking for a “traditional” family, a concept that evokes strong positive

emotions in potential clients reading the website philosophies. Websites such as City-of-Brides.com speaks of honoring the bride as the “wife and the mistress of the house, caring for your loving children.”

Some bride descriptions offer the typical language associated with American standards of beauty such as “gorgeous” and “exotic” (ExoticBrides.com). The physical descriptors can also be very ethnically stereotypical describing Asian women as “little China dolls,” and “upscale and visually exciting” (OrientBrides.com). But more often, the descriptors associate themselves with deeper emotionally based attributes. The women are describes as being “of quality” and being a “genuine lady” (ElenasModel’s.com) touted as “goddesses,” “soul mates,” and very often as “marriage minded” (MyForeignBride.com), setting the emotional format supporting trust and family values.

The discourse associated with the grooms differs in that it does not focus on physical attributes but on personality characteristics and emotional needs. Descriptions come mainly from testimonials on each website where men are represented as “normal, kind, honest and sincere men, who want to love and be loved” (GoodWife.com). They offer their life philosophies, such as with this example placed on PlanetLove.com: “To be capable of steady friendship or lasting love, are the two greatest proofs, not only of goodness of heart, but of strength of mind.” The purported satisfied customers (men) on these websites define the international mail order brides as a contrasting representation to the American woman: “Do we want her to be the boss? Do we want her to put her career first? Do we want to come home to a bag of delivery food? Do we want to change everything about us that made us who we are?” (GoodWife.com) The purpose of the text

associated with the potential grooms aims at reinforcing the concept that to perpetuate a “traditional American family,” is the normal positive action taken by American men holding traditional values, even if it includes taking a foreign bride.

Additionally, many of the sites offer testimonials from satisfied customers touting the positive effect this service has had on their lives. Sites use statements like this one from a groom using AnastasiaDate.com (2009), “You may contact me if you want 100% proof, that this is a great website, it's always improving and it is fair and friendly people to work with.” Offering this personal contact, plus the “100% proof” is an attempt to create a personal aspect to the business of international mail order brides on the Internet.

Arranged Marriages in Traditional Society

Whether using the terminology of arranged marriages or that of matchmaker marriages, nuptial unions have occurred through a second party format for hundreds of years (Constable 2003). For reasons of preserving aristocratic lineage or wealth, individuals other than the potential bride and groom throughout Europe constructed marriages. In twelfth century France, daughters were seen as an adjunct of the family estate and were used by their fathers to the “best advantage of the family” when being married off to a son of a wealthy and powerful family. Other cultures followed the same principle to preserve economic status. There is a Chinese saying “Bamboo door is to bamboo door as wooden door is to wooden door” indicating that marriage choices were based on the family’s desire to preserve wealth and had little or nothing to do with the choice of either the bride or the groom (Monger, 2004, p. 13).

These arrangements were seen in many cultures as legal or binding agreements. Elaborate ceremonies were developed in many cultures\faiths such as Hindu, Muslim,

and Jewish (Monger 2004). These binding ceremonies were often the first time the bride and groom met and always included the matchmaker to both honor the matchmaker's efforts and act as a portion of the payment process for services rendered (Monger 2004). Conversely, in an effort to create prosperity for a family, women were offered to wealthy men. As one Filipina woman put it, "It is better for our grandmothers to be a foreigner's whore than to be a pauper's wife" (Constable 2003).

Early matchmaking existed as a practice driven by the wishes or need of a larger group, such as maintaining power within a country or region, increasing the wealth of a particular family\clan, and cleansing disease or particular genetic traits out of a population. Although some of the original purposes of the practice continue to exist, especially those relating to economics, the scale of involved parties has narrowed. Today the unions are sought by individuals with little economic input or encouragement from the immediate family.

History of International Mail Order Bride Services

During the westward expansion in the United States, the greatest part of the population was male. The physical hardship of traversing unknown country was best suited to groups of men willing and physically able to endure the initial difficulties of exploration and then settlement. As temporary outposts became permanent settlements where housing could be built and some trade established to support a livelihood, women were needed to join the male explorers and begin families. Several types of rudimentary services involving several people as a "corporate" business venture were begun. One type of service attacked the problem directly by collecting female volunteers and "shipping" them to growing areas to become wives of men they had never met (U.S. Citizenship and

Immigration Service 1999). Another approach taken by U.S. matchmaking services was the publishing of a catalog of sorts, flyers describing a population of women who expressed interest in marriage. The catalogs targeting these early explorers were shipped out to somewhat established areas, or supply hubs, for distribution to interested men who visited these supply hubs for life's necessities. Each party, male and female, had the need for a mate and trusted that the services that had gathered these women and advertised their interest to the men who need them were reputable and would fulfill their need (Monger 2004).

Just as the business of matchmaking moved from the revue of a local and known individual to a business enterprise seeking to satisfy the needs of a growing society in the United States, so did the endeavor remake itself worldwide. Matchmaking services took advantage of the easiest method of reaching a large number of individuals, the mail service, and thus became a worldwide industry (Constable 2003). The evolution of catalogs delivered by the Pony Express to the use of some 4,000 current businesses advertising on the World Wide Web brought the issue of bringing two strangers together for the purpose of marriage to be known as the International Mail Order Bride Industry.

Some of these mail order or catalog services were international as well. In the early twentieth century in the United States, long before the dawn of the Internet, "picture brides" became a well-known phenomenon (Le Espirtu 1997). The picture brides were Japanese and Korean women who came to America by submitting their photograph to a service that distributed them to single Japanese and Korean men living in the United States. These men were either first or second generation nationals who created their professional life first before considering having a family. The men were very anxious to

get on with their lives once they had established themselves financially and did not want to wait to meet their spouse through traditional methods. Women living in Japan and Korea were very anxious to move to what they saw as greater opportunity. As one Korean woman put it, “then I could go to America . . . that land of freedom with streets paved with gold” (Mulroy, 2001, p. 145). Although these women were marrying within their own culture, they were mail order brides with the desired characteristics of submissiveness. This stereotype became prevalent and began to permeate the discourse about mail order brides with little regard for cultural background.

Various religions became involved in the mail order bride business an informal, not-for-profit effort. Flourishing in the 1970s and 1980s, pastors of churches would make contact with their counterparts in the United States in an effort to help relocate young women and widows from poor European countries to the United States. I had direct contact with one of these initiatives and met one of this study’s participants through this process. These were small-scale efforts as the greater needs of relocation for individuals existed in the form of entire families attempting to flee poor countries raved by war.

The international mail order bride of the twentieth century continues to have many attributes in common with her counterparts in history. One consistent factor associated with mail order brides is that a primary motivation is of an economic nature. This financial inequity between the bride and her potential spouse is demonstrated through the fact that most of these women, over 95 percent, come from countries less financially developed than the United States, and the bride is seen as of unequal income status to her more financially stable American husband. Over 50 % of the American husbands have at least two years of college with a mean income of \$42,000. This income

alone is over twice the average mail order bride's income of \$21,000 for herself and three children (Kurian 1997).

As difficult as the search and actual decision to marry an international mail order bride can be, the legal processes can be even more daunting. Mail order style engagements in the United States account for a tiny fraction of all K-1 visas. This type of visa application specifies the applicant's fiancée. If the visa holder does not marry the specified fiancé within the period of the visa's validity, she is required to return to her country of origin. However, if she marries her fiancé, she and her husband can apply to obtain a green card, or permanent resident status, with her husband (and possible co-sponsors) promising to support her for 10 years or until she receives permanent citizenship. This residence status is conditional for a period of two years, after which the couple is expected to apply to have the condition removed. Removal requires the couple to prove that they are married to each other in good faith. If the couple has divorced, the immigrant can apply for a waiver to remove the condition. In all cases supporting evidence is reviewed by the USCIS, often consisting of wedding and vacation photos, love letters, birth certificates of children, and evidence of mutual financial trust such as joint bank account statements, leases, bills, insurance policies and other documentation demonstrating a genuine marital relationship. If evidence is found to be suspect, further investigation by the USCIS may be required. This process is intended to prevent would-be immigrants from abandoning their spouses immediately after obtaining residency and fraudulent marriages solely for the purpose of immigration (Scholes 2006).

The parties can also marry before the fiancée enters the United States, in which case the spouse must retain her residence outside the United States and her U. S. citizen

spouse (or permanent resident alien) can apply for a permanent residence visa for her. In that scenario, the visa is processed at the consulate and she is issued a green card valid from her date of entry into the United States. She may also be subject to the two-year condition as stated above if the date of entry is less than two years after her marriage date. A K-3, non-immigrant visa can be issued to the overseas spouse to reunite her with her husband while the permanent residency visa (green card) is being processed. The average wait for a K-3 visa (6 months to 1 year), is usually a little longer than the wait for a K-1 visa (three to six months) (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration service 2006).

Asia, Russia and the United States are the three areas of greatest activity for the mail order bride industry over the last twenty years. The three areas differ greatly in both the intent and expectations of the brides and grooms utilizing the service and the base culture's accepted norms and mores. Yet despite their differences, there exist many similarities in the business within these geographic areas.

The positive and negative discourse describing the brides changes with the particular cultures on the many Internet sites. Asian women receive descriptors that fall mostly into the category of submissive personalities, a common descriptor found throughout the Internet sites. Additionally, media can reinforce misconceptions relating to foreign women, especially mail order brides. Ryan Bishop and Lillian Robinson (1998) cite the Vietnam War as enormously supportive of a negative stereotype associated with mail order brides. Coverage of the war both during and since its cessation has highlighted Thai women as "exotic, young, alluring yet potentially HIV positive hookers, eager to please western clients or as dutiful and devoted wives of western men who dismiss the

tenets of western feminism and appreciate the financial and emotional support of their generous husbands” (p. 93).

The mail order bride business is currently thriving in Taiwan. Mail order brides come primarily from mainland China and other Southeast Asia countries, especially Vietnam, to settle, often for a purpose other than marriage. The ages of the girls from Vietnam range from 15 to 18 years of age (Snyder 2006). In these countries there is a price paid for each bride, usually being transferred directly to her family. The price agreed upon by the service and the family of the girl is bartered and delivered as either cash or goods (Snyder 2006). It appears at first glance that these young girls are literally being sold by their families and, in many cases, this is true. If the bride is fortunate, she will be delivered to a man who treats her well and with whom she can have some semblance of a normal life. However, in many cases girls are being advertised to men with significant psychological and sociological issues. The Tahirih Justice Center, an organization which seeks to protect women worldwide from the abuses that can come from involvement in the mail order bride business, cites web-based businesses such as www.submissives.net as encouraging inappropriate unions. The message Submissives.com posts on its website reads: “Welcome to Intimate Submissives, where Western Men can find sexy submissive Asian Women selected for their loyalty and zero tolerance for divorce.” This particular business reinforces its message by adding this statement: “Our registered trademark is: It’s good to be King!” (Tahirih 2006). The outcome of a match made through such a venue is unknown but could be assumed to be negative for the bride. Indeed, the Taiwanese government is concerned that the thousands

of girls being brought to Taiwan under the guise of a mail order bride circumstances actually are being brought into the country for the purposes of prostitution (Erez 2007).

Chinese women, traveling from mainland China to Taiwan, are known colloquially as *Dalu Me*; the literal translation is "mainland wench" (Kurian 1979). The marriages and immigration are arranged by licensed marriage brokers. Spousal immigration is the only legal form of immigration from mainland China to Taiwan. Although from mainland China, *Dalu Me* are not normally considered to be members of the mainlander minority on Taiwan. Pro-Taiwan independence parties such as the Taiwan Solidarity Union have expressed concerns that brides and their children from mainland China will adversely influence Taiwan's political landscape as they acquire citizenship. However, these attitudes are not universal as the pro-independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party made a particular point of welcoming these brides during campaign activities in 2004. Their status is thus tentative and ambiguous although they mainly are associated with their husbands politically. Some now consider foreign brides to be Taiwan's fledgling fifth ethnic group (Kurian 1979).

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of Vietnamese stores and restaurants in Taiwan that are operated by Vietnamese brides. Taiwan's Ministry of the Interior has also published domestic violence-prevention materials in Indonesian, Vietnamese, and Thai, as well as a general guide to life in Taiwan (Erez 2007). The concern for domestic violence relating to the issue is worldwide. The United States additionally has instituted significant legislation in the form of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 (Immigration and Naturalization Services) relating to international mail order brides in the United States.

Although Asian women were seen historically as the typical mail order bride, with the collapse of the Soviet Empire a new “market” opened up. The brutal economic conditions of Russian life were suddenly exposed to the rest of the world and the view of women treated by their own country as second-class citizens within a patriarchal society came to the forefront of the world’s view. Hughes (2000) saw a stereotype develop through the media of a “gentle and sensitive” woman, called into labor in an economy where being a single parent was financially impossible. She became increasingly desperate as the economic conditions in Russia worsened and the mortality rate of Russian men continued to climb as a result of a lack of health awareness and practice among most of the male population. Coupled with poor public health care Russian men were leaving young widows with children that they were unable to support financially. Media reports had Russian women flooding into the U.S. as international mail order brides often seen as competing against American women for America’s “dream men”, men who could hold a job, didn’t drink and smoke to the extremes that Russian men did and who were fairly conservative in their expectation of a bride (Layton 2006).

Russian culture, from the earliest times, has deemed marriage as the major focus of a woman’s life. Her role as wife and mother supersedes any other career opportunities she may choose to pursue. It is certainly understandable then that Russian women, and the culture that supports them, see them as failures if they do not fulfill their primary destiny, marriage. Additionally, due mainly to issues relating to health, Russian women are usually married by the age of 21 (Chittenden 2000). Due to a deteriorating health system and high rate of heart disease, the average life expectancy for men in Russia is 58,

in sharp contrast to the average lifespan of 71 for a woman in Russia. As a result of this disparity, women are under extreme pressure to marry early (Chittenden 2000).

Internet dating services exploit the vulnerable economic status of women in Russia. The following is a quote from the web page of the internet “dating service” www.chanceforlove.com: “In Russia, she doesn’t have a choice to stay home and take care of her husband, house and children-for her, it is a dream . . . she is the weaker gender and knows it.” This statement unfortunately sums up what is the reality for many women of low economic means living in today’s Russia. A female teacher in Russia, a position for which it is necessary to possess an advanced degree and certification, makes a lower yearly salary than does a chimney sweep, which is considered unskilled labor. Although Russian propagandists have always highlighted the fact that 80 % of its teachers and doctors are women, they fail to include the fact that in Russia these jobs are among the least prestigious (Chittenden 2000). Russian women are forced to work full time and then face the burden of the entire responsibilities of domestic duties in the home. It is for this reason that many speculate that Russian women see mail order bride service\agencies as offering them a chance at a better quality of life, at least financially (Layton 2006).

Theoretical Assumptions

Acculturation

Acculturation requires an individual to change the values\mores or beliefs held by her original culture into those held by another cultural group. Although international mail order brides have chosen to marry and move to the United States, acculturation is a significant issue affecting all aspects of the woman’s life. The climate, food, and housing

will change; the political atmosphere, medical practices and legal practices will change for her, and the list continues on almost endlessly. Lastly, and key to this study, the vehicle which she uses to navigate these changes, the language of communication, will change.

Shi (2006) uses the term “language socialization” to describe the process that drives an individual’s integration not only into her current social environment but the historical and cultural basis of that environment. Her language permits her entry into new communities of practice and assists in providing her a new role within society. It is then this study’s focus on the biliteracy skills of the IMOBs that will provide the greatest understanding of the role of language in their lives.

Acculturation will occur in one of four ways: she can refuse to adapt, submerge herself in the culture and abandon her own, adopt the culture of the situation she finds herself in at the time, or blend the two cultures into one value set (Romano 1998). These options and the struggle associated with each will define the woman she becomes in her new life in the United States. Many of the brides experience emotional concerns because of the stress associated with these changes. The external changes, although dramatic in many cases, are not as significant as those she will experience internally as she struggles to recreate and define herself. In learning the new cultural practices and integrating them into her daily life, she may abandon many aspects of her own culture. The foods she cooks, her housekeeping duties and interaction with other people will change with her new circumstance. With these adaptations, she is giving up a piece of her identity and with it a defining factor of identity, her L1 (first language). Whether she tries to meld her past and present cultures or adopt her new culture totally, she must make significant

changes that are sometimes defined as alienating herself. Many foreign brides are like actors who put on costumes and are so caught up in the role that they lose touch with themselves (Romano 1998). As one woman put it: “One day I woke up with the strangest sensation of having lost myself somewhere along the way. Who am I? What do I believe in? I’d lost sense of my own past identity and didn’t know what I had become” (Romano, 1998, p. 112).

Eventually many foreign brides complain of the strain of living with a double identity, the identity that existed in her native country and her new identity that is the wife of an American living in the United States (Romano 1998). These women indicate that to learn the new culture, they must learn the language of that culture. For the women in this study, their language and literacy skills greatly affect the issue of acculturation, a tool that defines who they are not only to others within their new culture but creates their internal identity.

Literacy

As this study focuses on the biliteracy skills of mail order brides, it is necessary to review seminal work done in relation to literacy as it relates to second language speakers. I have chosen six individuals and their literacy theories to use as both an undergirding of the questions posed to each of the International Mail Order Brides relating to their language skills and as a reference point for my analysis of their responses. The researchers, Atkinson, Hornberger, Street and Lefstein, Gee, and Norton each offer succinct and intersecting theories which provided a solid basis of analysis for the study’s emergent data. This collective knowledge provided the lens through which we can view each of the bride’s individual literacy skills and the cohesive trends that emerged.

First Person Accounts

I chose the life story, or first-person account method, for this study as I wanted to present the linguistic journey of these international mail order brides through their own words. There was a story to tell, but I knew that the most valid results would be achieved if the story came from the brides themselves. I used a required listening skill that Atkinson (1998) defines as “going far beyond the normal realm of hearing . . . It acknowledges a personal truth from the subjective point of view” (p. 34). Atkinson cites support for the value of first person accounts in studies by Cohler in 1988 and Josselson & Lielbich in 1993. Atkinson offers this culminating statement associated with these researchers in the field by saying that the value of life story lies in “its disciplinary applications in understanding single lives in detail and how the individual plays various roles in society” (p. 3). It is through what Atkinson terms “the personal construction of reality” or first person account that the International Mail Order Brides disclosed their struggles with their literacies.

Biliteracy Framework

Since this study focuses on the language skills of speakers of two languages, I found it essential to define the terms I will use in the context of the study. Each of the participants in the study are bilingual, using two or more languages to some extent; however, questions arise relating to the ability level attained in the first and second language and their similarities and differences. Also of consideration is the question of how do these two, often disparate, sets of language skills relate to the three main components of language: oral language decoded, read language, and written language?

Finally, what is the relationship between each of the languages, their three main areas of use, and the context in which each occur?

Hornberger (2003) suggest that the term “biliteracy” means “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing.” (p. 213). Although this is not a new term to second language literacy studies with references as early as 1979 by Goodman, Goodman and Flores, Hornberger applies the term non-evaluatively to all abilities of fluency including those individuals who are less fluent or without a focus on mastery. Her definition encompasses 12 levels of a continua organized into four clusters (Appendix A). This model affords ease of significant clarity when reviewing the data offered by the participants within the study.

This biliteracy framework “uses the notion of intersecting and nested continua to demonstrate the multiple and complex interrelationships between bilingualism and literacy and the importance of the contexts, media, and content through which biliteracy develops” (Hornberger, 2003, p. 35). The continua model contains four major categories, Context of biliteracy, Development of biliteracy, Content of biliteracy and Media of biliteracy. Use of a continua model allows that an individual could range in ability\skill or circumstance anywhere between extreme ends. For example, within the category of development of biliteracy the subcategory of reception\production exists. This allows each second language speaker to be placed somewhere on the continuum range of only reception to full production of language skills. This model allows us to ask multidimensional questions about literacy and to assess the value of each from one end of the spectrum to the other, giving an unambiguous view of each type of literacy skill.

Hornberger's (2003) model recognizes that language and literacy are situated within the larger environment of each speaker. She aptly states that "Culture provides the tools, including language and literacy, for organizing and understanding our worlds" (p.210). This study illustrates the similarities and differences among this population of English Language Learners (ELLs) whose biliteracy skills define them as the subculture of international mail order brides.

New Literacy Studies

Street (1984) argues that literacy from an ethnographic perspective is social, and the lives of IMOBs fall within this framework. What "literacy practices" does then this population engages in? Street and Lefstein (2007) argue that "literacy practices are ". . . the social process which connects people with one another . . . existing in relations between people . . ." (p. 143). This conception allows this research to discover how international mail order brides use their languages in different domains of life, how institutions and power relations operate on their language use, and if these interactions effect a change on their literacies.

The broadening of the term literacy to include this multimodal approach to biliteracy does present significant impact upon the particular population within this study. Immersion in a new environment and social structure requires this additional dimension of literacy and was addressed by many of the women in the study. Use of this multimodal approach to decoding textual information significantly impacts what the brides are able to decode without the actual use of traditional textual materials.

Street and Lefstein additionally raise the question, also posed by Paul Gee, of whether mainstream education programs, such as community-based adult education

programs, offer language classes with appropriate relevancy to the students which they serve. This issue of relevancy will resonate in the accounts of several of the participants, since adult basic education programs are one social institution that makes the IMOBs a homogenous group.

Discourse

As all of the participants involved in this study were cultivated from community-based adult ESL classrooms, which is a relevant. Through the study's data analysis process we see a trend among the international mail order brides associated with multi modal literacy practices that can be directly associated with new literacy studies.

Additionally, Gee offers a tool this study incorporates to analyze the mail order bride's literacy skills. Gee offers an analysis of discourse using the capital "D" as discourse (Gee 1999). The "big D" incorporates *who* the speaker\reader is and *what* they are doing. The *who* is a socially situated identity of what persona the person is taking on. Think, for example, how differently the discourse would sound from a woman who was describing herself as a homemaker, as opposed to a woman who was describing herself as a school principal or a prison guard. Each takes on a very different construct with consideration to power and intent. Applying Gee's second concept of *what* they are doing then adds a significant dimension on to the language offered. An example of the discourse a homemaker uses may be an emotionless discussion of the quality of a particular cleaning product. Compared this to the discourse used by a prison guard who offers strong emotion-filled directions to inmates while breaking up an altercation, thus adding another layer of meaning to the same piece of discourse. The implication here is

that not only is there a variance in the discourse used but a difference in the fluency required to support the discourse.

This discourse analysis concept that Gee has named the “big D” varies dramatically from one culture to another and certainly as a personal choice within cultures as well. For example, an Asian homemaker may seldom make strong ascertains as compared to American homemaker who often are posed with situations requiring a strong position. Understanding Gee’s concept of the “big D within American culture is a critical factor in the acculturation process for this study’s population. The concept and its ability to dissect the literacy of the IMOBs has proved invaluable in both analyzing their English literacy and understanding each of them as a person within the context of the study.

Identity

Fairclough, in his book “Analyzing Discourse (2003) provides a definition of identity that clearly reinforces language and literacy’s integral role in what each of us considers to be our identity: “. . . your identity, or who you are, is partly a matter of how you speak, how you write as well as a matter of embodiment—how you look . . .” (p. 159). Fairclough allows that language is an abstract social structure, one that is embedded into our social practices and driving our construct of self. It is this construct of self, utilizing her biliteracies, that is presented in each IMOB’s telling of her own story.

The integral link between language and identity was illustrated through Bonnie Norton’s book, “Identity and Language Learning: gender, ethnicity and educational change” (2000) which offers additional research to support the importance language plays in an English Language Learner (ELL) individual’s identity. Norton studied the

effects of the English language on eight international women who immigrated to Canada. Her definition of identity refers to how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person sees possibilities for the future. Norton cites that within the field of second language literacy terms such as “social identity,” “sociocultural identity,” and “voice” are now coming to evidence as contributing factors when analyzing non-native speakers’ language abilities. Norton’s concept of identity within language also addresses the issue of power that is translated through language. She theorizes that there is a level of power within language that is evident when referencing relationships among individuals, institutions, and the communities they travel in. She offers that the question of “Who I am” is closely tied into the question of “What am I allowed to do?” Language and its proper use provide the power to define oneself singly and in association with the world, both human and material, around them. The bride’s identity, as evidenced by the data collected, finds this issue of power within language to be of significant impact in her new role in the United States. Each bride in the study has essentially recreated herself within her new environment through her language, and the inherent power that comes from that language defines her within her new context. Additionally, Norton (2000) points out that each second-language speaker makes an “investment” or commitment to her language acquisition skills that helps define herself and her role within her community. As is evidenced by the data collected in the early portion of this study, International mail order brides throughout the state of Pennsylvania were categorically lacking in investing in their language acquisition skills at the adult ESL classes they were attending. This lack of

“investment” ultimately resulted in a homogenous identity among the IMOBs, which was borne out through the research.

Limitations

Initially it was my hope that I would find some valid informational studies and/or research data relating to international mail order brides as they exist within the parameters of this study’s environment. In looking at research conducted in the past 30 years I have not located specific information that is usable in a research format; all information is currently anecdotal in nature and emanating from unverifiable sources.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study investigates the acquisition of language and literacy by six International Mail Order Brides in rural Pennsylvania. The focus of this study lies in the research question: what are the biliterate practices of international mail order brides?

The six International Mail Order Brides (IMOBs) selected have been cultivated from community-based adult ESL (English as a Second Language) classes throughout rural Pennsylvania. My observation of consistently low English literacy skills among this population occurred through my own experiences as an instructor and program administrator in a community-based adult ESL program. This study examines the biliteracy of IMOBs through in depth one-to-one interviews. In these interviews and through the telling of their life stories, they reveal their language and literacy skills in their first and second languages. Their biliteracies play a dynamic role in their concept of identity and intercultural socialization, significantly affecting their acculturation process.

Philosophy

Clandinin and Connelly give a valuable perspective for this study when they state, “People are individuals that need to be understood as such, but they can not be understood as only individuals. They are always in relation, always in social context” (p. 2). This social context, of coming to the United States as an international mail order bride is the key to this study. It is invaluable to not only look at each of the participants, through the retelling of their life’s biliterate story but additionally to use the lens of proven methods of human inquiry to observe homogenous or heterogeneous issues within their social context that affect language acquisition patterns. This study pursues a

reflective inquiry that yields valid and usable results, providing insight for both the theoretical pedagogy in the field of Second Language Study and the practical pedagogies necessary for successful ESL classrooms in universities, community colleges, and community-based organizations

The method of human inquiry used in the study is relatively new to the overall field of research. In pieces such as Carolyn Heilbrun's (1988) "Writing a Woman's Life" and Donald Spence's (1982) "Narrative Truth and Historical Method," we see the emergence of a change in the field of inquiry. In sociological and psychological studies, individuals are analyzed not solely through quantitative data but through the telling of their own stories in forming ethnographically oriented studies. In 1986 Marcus and Fisher wrote that this is an "experimental moment" in the life of human science inquiry. This "experimental moment" continues to find success and validity providing valuable data when faced with our need to clearly and ethically understand humanistic issues. In the case of this study, the IMOBs use their biliteracies to not only define themselves but to illustrate the status of literacy within their lives. The study additionally enlightens us regarding their potential education and socialization process as both concepts interfacing directly with language.

Although there are significant numbers of women who are international mail order brides in Pennsylvania and the United States, this study is not the forum for creating generalizations. Rather, this study utilizes case study methodology, toward understanding a very specific circumstance, or as Patton (1990) states, "a unique situation" (here, a community-based classroom in rural Pennsylvania) that requires greater depth and detail than a quantitative data study can provide. Patton's theories use

such phrases as “capturing individual differences” and “unique variations” to emphasize the value of the case study method. This terminology defines the very focus of the study and offers a viable template in which all of the information can be placed for analysis.

Most importantly, these stories are offered, serving a purpose in both the telling and the hearing. We all can identify with the idea that “telling our story,” whether short, long, sad, or happy, leaves us with a satisfied feeling. But we often don’t give thought as to why we experience this satisfaction. My sentiments are echoed in a quote from Jeanne Smith (1994), “Telling stories makes me happy. There is something therapeutic for me in the process of selecting, developing and telling a story” (p. 8). For these participants this telling holds particular importance as personal validation of their new identity created in their new environment defined through their new language. As I met these women over the years, I kept hearing pieces of stories that I felt needed telling.

Case Study Approach

This study incorporates the first-person account told through case study methodology as it is to present the linguistic journey of these international Mail Order Brides in their own words. I want the reader to listen to their stories with a listening that, as Atkinson (1998) states, “goes far beyond the normal realm of hearing...it acknowledges a personal truth from the subjective point of view” (p. 34). Each of these women will be heard on an individual basis to procure the intricacies of their biliteracies that can only be achieved through case study. Atkinson highlights the value and use of narrative-inclusive case studies, beginning with Freud 1910. The method, including personal narratives, has spread and become valued for its in-depth inspection of data. More recently, Brunner (1986) uses case study methodology as a means of discovering

how we “construct” our lives. Hence, this study provides an intimate look at how these women constructed their lives through their biliteracies. Anne Dyson (2005) offered a quote from Baylor & Parnell (1978) that sums up both my purpose for this journey and my methods of inquiry; she states, “. . . get to know one thing as well as you can.” And there was only one way to achieve this knowing, documentation of the IMOB’s stories told in their own voice.

I consider myself essentially a translator or instrument that will allow the biliterate story of the mail order bride to be told (Atkinson 1998). The body of knowledge obtained from this study offers what Patton (1990) describes as “. . . enhancing the researcher’s direct experiences in the world and insights about those experiences” (p. 278). Offering a concise view of these participants’ literacies can be done most thoroughly through the actual words and context created by each woman.

Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993) cite conventional research as beginning with a hypothesis to drive the design of the study ending with offerings of conclusions and recommendations. However, the case study method “allows for thick description that puts the reader vicariously into the context and allows him or her to interact with the data presented” (p. 40). It is this participant-driven approach that is the undergirding of this study, beginning with no preconceived notions relating to the international mail order brides biliteracies—only the desire to investigate their biliterate practices. Additionally, I found the rich description evolving from the personal description of their lives to be essential in developing an understanding of these biliteracies, their evolution, and their impact on the participant’s lives.

Although maintaining neutrality is essential within academic research, I took care not to become detached by excluding the ethical empathy necessary to offer viable analysis to complete this narrative inquiry. The findings presented through these stories holds value for the participants themselves and for the audience of women in similar circumstances seeking to understand their own issues of biliteracy. The study offers valuable insight into this population of international mail order brides to the field of second-language acquisition professionals.

Feminist Methodology

As a female conducting this study I inherently incorporate a feminist perspective that may offer value that would not occur with a male researcher. Australian anthropologist Diane Bell's study of aboriginal women within their culture and Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Global* both illustrate the need for feminist research, especially as it relates to cross-cultural research. Bell offers that "we need to increase our ethnographic understanding of women's domain ... knowing too little of the female half of society in general" (p. 131).

Shulamit Reinharz, in her text *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (1992), highlights many of the reasons that a feminist researcher, utilizing the "feminist consciousness," achieves exemplary results. She speaks of the researcher's "self-disclosure" through same gender experience as developing an intimacy with female participants. This intimacy inherently produces a "researcher-informant" relationship that potentially extracts a more comprehensive body of data, or at least a different body of data, from the participant. I believe that the level of connectivity that I have experienced throughout the study validates the quality of data presented within the study.

Reinharz supports Bell's research of feminist issues through her own studies by focusing on how much women in disparate societies have in common. This issue of commonality plays a critical role here because these IMOBs differ greatly in their first cultures yet share similar lives and literacies in their second cultural experience. I find great continuity among the brides directly relating to these issues, and this provides the strong base of validity for the literacy findings that emerge from the study.

Qualitative Study

The qualitative nature of this study allowed me to gather the in-depth data necessary to understand the circumstances within the life of an international mail order bride and the effect these life circumstances have on the IMOB's language and literacy acquisition process. This is in contrast to a quantitative study which uses many subjects and has the experiences of the participants fit into predetermined categories. The qualitative study allows the participants' data to formulate the categories, essentially creating a "data picture" that ultimately defines the study itself. Validity within the qualitative study then rests heavily on the researcher, placing her as the actual "instrument" that creates a well thought out canvas on which the picture of the study will emerge. This validity is directly relational to the researchers ability to lay the proper groundwork, research and develop of the appropriate questions create an environment in which the questions can be elicited and provide skilled analysis in presenting the results. These factors and appropriate attention to their execution defines the great advantage of this approach for this study. Guba and Lincoln (1981) offer their perspective relating to the concern that the qualitative study may lack the rigor provided by quantitative study through the following statement; ". . . this loss of rigor is, in Guba and Lincoln's account,

more than offset by the flexibility, insight and ability to build on tacit knowledge that is the peculiar province of the human instrument” (p. 11). There exists no current categories in which the participants and their responses can be placed, no predetermined slots that represent them well that has the historical research backing to support predetermined classification, and herein lies great value of this study for the field of SLA.

The Undergirding for the Journey

Just as every substantial building has a firm foundation as its base, so does the same holds true for every substantial story. Not only must the information within the story be accurate, but its method of presentation must be well chosen and possesses a clearly delineated timeline. Narrative research presents a specific number of challenges as a research format. Clandinin and Connelly in their book *Narrative Inquiry* (2000) describe this research approach as a “grand contraption” built on multiple fluid foundations and formed into ambiguous shapes . . . ,” certainly a truth regarding the narrative method but a definitive advantage when collecting data through the case study method (p. 154). Although daunting, their description allows the researcher to formulate a basic plan as in Dewey’s (1929) notion of an “ends-in-view” format. It does not limit the researcher with strict parameters in which the data must be forced to fit and conform. Case studies and the data elicited through the narrative approach allow the participant’s story to be told in their own words, using their own specific perspective with no preconceived agenda created by the researcher. The “end-in-view” then is the complete and accurate data as told by the participant in her own words. Data categories conform to responses and boundaries are set only by the amount of pertinent information they are willing to present. The challenge lies in presenting the case study as an historical event

(not a static moment in time) data is linked to the on-going process that is the participants' life.

While narrative research faces criticism for examining too much non-essential information especially in case study research encompassing whole life stories, this study examines a finite piece of information: the IMOB's language and literacy acquisition process as it relates to her unique life circumstance. This draws all other life and cultural factors to bear on the participant's specific language skills.

The Actual Study

Participants

All of the women in this study are non-native English speakers who have established relationships with Americans (men) in most cases as a result of an online commercial dating\marriage service that culminated with marriage.

The participants within the study are all female, although throughout the research process males have been found to be a part of the mail order bride population. Gender differences and the associated cultural mores (both in the United States and within their own native countries) could significantly alter the findings of the study. Consequently, only female IMOBs are a part of this study.

Several factors emerged as particularly noteworthy in grouping the participants for study: the participant's age, her educational level, her economic level within her native country, and her length of residency. The women of the study represent an age range from 35 to 63. This range afforded the data collection results to represent a broad perspective as opposed to limiting the study to studies from only young international mail order brides, for example.

Varying experiences with formal schooling was an anticipated difference as the study dealt with participants from vastly different cultures. Each culture's view of education, coupled with the IMOB's individual economic levels and her personal view of education, created a usable base from which to compare the participants.

I defined the length of residency as the period between when the participant entered the United States until she entered this study. The participant's length of residency emerged as a significant issue relating to her language acquisition. Her residency period illustrates the concept of "participation metaphor" within the study. Building on the acquisition metaphor, which addresses language as a commodity, Sfar's (1998) "participation metaphor" addresses 'a process of becoming a member of a certain community' (Sfar 1998). The whole question of the IMOB's English language acquisition process is borne out within this study as being directly related to membership in a certain community: the greater community that includes the IMOB, her family and neighborhood in rural Pennsylvania.

Therefore, family structure is a key factor among the participants. Four of the six women in the study, with the exception of one who did not have children prior to marrying an American spouse, either brought their non-adult children with them or sent for the children within the initial six months of arrival in the United States. The natural children of the International Mail Order Brides within this study range in age from 14 to 24 years old. Five of the children are female and five are male, and all had little or no English language fluency upon entry to the United States. Two of the children were born in the United States. The remaining seven children are all step children for the IMOBs.

All of the participants currently reside in a rural area in Pennsylvania. The participant's countries of origin are Nicaragua, Korea, Poland, Argentina, China and Colombia. Demographic information delineates rural or urban environment of the participant within in her country of birth. Additional information on each bride's economic level, employment status, and educational level prior to coming to the United States is presented for each international mail order bride.

Location and Identification of Participants

My initial contact with international mail order brides was through my adult ESL class at ARIN Center for Education. In an effort to learn more about the biliteracies of these mail order brides, I felt it key to find participants in similar circumstances throughout rural Pennsylvania. It is for this reason that I will describe in detail the setting in which I eventually identified five of my six participants. The remaining participant was identified in very similar program operating in Pennsylvania. During the initial identification process adult education programs in Pennsylvania suffered significant cuts in funding, which resulted in the closing of many ESL classes across the state and limiting my pool of valid participants. The classes within rural programs across the state, their environment, methods of recruitment, and basic student population are very similar to those of ARIN's ESL program. Parameters imposed by the funding source for these classes create a relatively homogenous environment among the many Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) funded adult ESL classes within the state. Thus, I feel that it is essential to the study to offer a clear description of the programs in which the IMOBs were enrolled.

ARIN Center for Education is a department of ARIN Intermediate Unit #28.

ARIN IU #28 serves the 11 school districts (heretofore named ARIN's "member districts") located in Armstrong and Indiana Counties. The Intermediate Unit's charge, as issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, is to provide those educational services to the member districts and subsequent populations within the service area that are not within the ability of individual districts to provide.

Two such programs offered by the Intermediate Unit are the ARIN ESL Children in Schools Program (serving school age ESL children and their families within K-12 public and private school settings and the ARIN ESL Adult Education Program.

ARIN's ESL Children in Schools Program offers support for districts that have children within their school population who are non-native English speakers. Examples of such services are diagnostic testing, direct instruction, professional development, and curriculum development. It was through conducting diagnostic testing of the Intermediate Unit's ESL children and facilitating the associated family\school conference directing the child's curriculum that I developed contact with one of the study's IMOBs. Upon initial contact with each family, typically after registration, the school collects certain information regarding the child's home situation. When necessary, the district requests testing services through the IU (Intermediate Unit) and the diagnostic testing is begun to determine the child's language experience, parameters, and fluency levels.

As program coordinator, it was my responsibility to test all ESL students as requested by ARIN's member districts. After I tested the child and analyzed the results, I presented them to the family, then discussed an appropriate course of language study and associated curriculum as it relates to other content areas for the child. The meeting(s) in

which I discussed these results typically include various staff members: teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators were all represented. The meetings were carefully scheduled not only so that both parents may attend, but also so that any family member who had consistent contact with the child may do so. If fluency is a concern, the family had the opportunity to bring a translator with them or they had the option of having the schools provide one. Typically, there were one to three initial meetings regarding the child's course of study followed up by meetings scheduled every six-to-nine weeks, depending on the concerns expressed either by the child's family or the school. Meetings were usually an hour to an hour-and-a-half in duration but have lasted longer when serious issues present themselves. This concentrated amount of time spent with the family provided insight into the home environment and family structure.

During the evaluation process children who possessed some language fluency often shared pieces of information, especially as much of the oral portion of the test is based on lexical items relating to the child's home environment. These facts, coupled the information offered by others previously mentioned, created a rather complete view of the family's life. This portion of my work, therefore, is invaluable for identifying potential adult students, and subsequently women who fit the definition of an international mail order bride.

In addition to providing ESL services for children to its 11 school districts and approximately ten private schools, an adult English as a Second Language (ESL) program has been established. The ESL population, both school age and adult within ARIN's two-county service area, is not large enough in any one town to warrant most of our individual school districts addressing the need internally. It has then become the task

of the Intermediate Unit, as the broader education provider, to offer ESL services for both school age and adult ESL students.

The adult ESL program component offers adult non-English speaking students both basic and advanced language acquisition skills. Students are provided with both class time structured in a lecture format and the opportunity to obtain an individual trained tutor who meets with the student as a response to very specific student need or goal. All services are free to the student, funded by grants offered by the ABLE Bureau of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). The students meet as a class four times weekly for two-and-one-half hours each class period. Classes operate continually throughout the calendar year. However, the basic curriculum begins in September and continues through May, leaving the summer months for special topics and remediation. Attendance is based on an open entry-open exit policy, allowing students to attend when their schedule permits.

Performance does not receive a letter grade for the class; instead, the CASAS Test is utilized to provide a diagnostic profile of each adult's current English language fluency skills and subsequent fluency gains. Classes, conducted by an instructor with a Pennsylvania Teaching Certificate, focus on language skills, both written and oral, that are necessary for everyday life within the United States. Additionally, one class per week is held that targets student interest and goals as they associate with topics such as citizenship, employment, and advanced academic endeavors. This class draws upon the student's goals to determine curriculum and level of material presented. Classes are limited to eight to 10 students per class and are not restricted to similar first languages, L1's, associated abilities, or gender. Students are offered individual tutoring as a part of

ARIN's ESL program in order to address issues that are either not pertinent to other students within the class or best serve a particular student's personality and cultural mores. Tutoring occurs year round on an as-needed schedule for each student.

The description of ARIN's Center for Education class and subsequent procedures are representative of the format found within all of the ESL classrooms surveyed within the state of Pennsylvania. Other agencies that have offered participant referrals to this study are additionally funded by the ABLE Bureau of the Pennsylvania Department of Education and must support offerings to students that are similar to the format and presentation of ARIN's Center for Education ESL classes.

Protection of Subjects

The participants each received and signed a consent/confidentiality form (Appendix B). Likewise, the translators completed a confidentiality form (Appendix C). In the study all participants were given pseudonyms and their location generalized to protect their identities. Names of all participants and their family members were changed to assure anonymity. No specific identifying information regarding the participants was used, other than country of origin and first language of the IMOB.

The Researcher

My first contact with an ESL mail order bride was over 25 years ago as ARIN Intermediate Units adult ESL instructor, a position that I held for eleven years prior to my current position as the Intermediate Unit's Adult\ESL Program Coordinator. The responsibilities of an adult education ESL instructor include a wide variety of tasks: recruiting students, introducing tutors into a student's experience, developing a curriculum, and executing that curriculum. Although time consuming, this vast array of

tasks force the instructor to become acutely aware of the student's life and how it presents itself both educationally and sociologically.

During my initial two years as an instructor I became aware of the various influx of a particular non-native population due to a local church's missionary relocation efforts. I became involved in the program and witnessed the process that moves an individual or family from their native country to the United States. This experience permitted me first-hand knowledge of the challenges facing immigrants in the United States.

Specifically, I was a working member of the "resettlement team" of a local church assisting immigrants from Russia and Poland in the acculturation process necessary to make their permanent move to the United States, specifically rural Pennsylvania, successful. In assisting these individuals, many of whom would become students in my classroom, I was able to collect authentic stories of my student's lives in these European countries and the individual reasons for relocation.

Often times a church's "missionary" efforts of the late 1970s and 1980s sought to assist in bringing to the United States women who were involved in mail order bride services through their church in their native country. Many women, mostly those who were widowed early in life, would seek the assistance of their local pastor who could then put them in touch with a church-affiliated mail order bride "system." This system, although not utilizing a typical Internet mail order bride service, relied upon written communication between clergy in Europe and America for the purpose of finding American husbands for these women. These systems provided aid to widows and young women from particularly poverty-ridden areas of Russia and Poland to find American husbands of the same religion to marry. Although these church-based systems did not

have a published fee schedule, the American spouse was assessed a "donation" upon involvement. Many of these widows came with families, also from the most poverty-ridden regions of Europe, looking to make a new life in the United States. These women were often matched with men older than themselves, and in the case of the women from Poland, the American husbands were often men who had served in World War II and had visited eastern European countries. The thinking was that these men possessed greater cultural empathy. It was through my work with an international mail order bride from the church-based system that I became aware of the unique population of ESL learners.

I remained ARIN's adult ESL instructor for 11 years, recruiting and instructing ESL adult students. As the non-native adult population grew in my rural area, so did the non-native speaking population of children. In 1995, I was approached by the Intermediate Unit to develop ARIN's ESL Children in Schools Program. Until that time, and for the following six years until 2001, Pennsylvania's school systems were reliant upon local control to provide direction relating to the language education of ESL students in public schools. I developed a comprehensive language learning program based on standardized programs found in states with a record of longevity as it related to educating ESL children. As ARIN's ESL Children in Schools Program Coordinator, I administered all assessments, constructed diagnostic profiles on the students assessed, and at times work as an instructor for the ESL public school-age students. In this capacity, I was a part of the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) Team in the public schools where I met yet another international mail order bride.

At present, due to the growth of ARIN's ESL Children in Schools Program, I hold the position of ESL Adults\Children in Schools Program Coordinator. This administrative

position includes responsibilities that range from writing the grants necessary to support the adult components of ESL to supervising the staff who conduct the instructional portion of the program in ARIN's two-county service area. I am currently in the 25th year of my career in the field of Second Language Acquisition.

Additionally, I have completed the required coursework in the Composition & TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) doctoral program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. This study serves to satisfy the dissertation requirement within my PhD program.

I placed myself in the position of the skilled questioner and attentive listener in order to know the experiences of the participants. I personally witnessed the stunted language growth of these particular learners and saw a homogenous lack of progression in their language skills. I have seen what initially appears to be disinterest in pursuing the language in which they have chosen to be immersed. I began this study with the premise that gaining insight into their lives will lead to answers to these questions so that we may fully understand their language acquisition process through their biliteracies.

Data Collections Methods

Data collection in this study began with identifying the ESL programs, through the Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) Bureau of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, which may have students fitting the definition of participants needed for this study. After acquiring a list of rural ESL programs funded through the ABLE Bureau, I began contacting each program by phone to explain the purpose of my research. I used an interview guide so that each program staff member contacted received the same information regarding the study. If the program agreed, and fifteen of the twenty

programs contacted did agree to participate, they received a survey through the mail helping to determine if they had current students who fit the description of international mail brides. Upon receipt of the program surveys, I was then able to identify participants for my research.

Contact with Programs and Their Staff

In speaking with the ABLE Bureau chief, I explained the purpose of my study and its impact upon the field of adult education through the data I proposed to collect and present. As a former ESL instructor himself, he was able to share a story of two International Mail Order Brides that passed through his classroom during his years of teaching. He shared that each of his students demonstrated significant fluency needs yet did not attend his class long enough for him to know either of them well. He indicated a strong interest in my study and identified 20 rural community-based programs as having consistency and longevity in providing ESL language acquisition classes.

For the next step I contacted each program staff member (administrator and/or instructor) by phone and interviewed them regarding their identification of potential participants in order to ascertain that all identified participants fit the criteria of this particular study (Appendix D). I used interview guides as outlined by both Patton (1990) and Lofland (1971) when first approaching administrators and instructors in the programs, indicating that they potentially served students that could be labeled as international mail order brides. The interview guides provided a list of the study's specific goals and procedures so as to maintain consistency when contacting various professional staff. I anticipated that conversations would digress significantly unless I explained the concept of international mail order brides and ascertain that the students

identified actually fit the parameters of this study. I spoke with at least one representative (administrator and/or instructor) from each program identified. Most seemed to be receptive to the intent of my study and promised to complete the survey, the next step in the identification process of IMOBs.

Surveys were sent to all fifteen programs (Appendix E). All fifteen programs completed and returned their copy of the surveys, netting a return rate of one hundred percent. As expected, the most specific replies came from ESL instructors (as opposed to program administrators) as they have consistent, long-term, intensive contact with ESL students. The programs were asked to return the surveys two weeks from initial receipt, allowing each program staff member completing the survey to collect the necessary data associated with their ESL student population and accurately assess their current population.

The survey is a nine-question instrument that asks specific questions requiring either a “yes” or “no” response or questions requiring a specific piece of information, such as the age of a particular student they are identifying or the potential participant’s country of origin. Additionally, the survey asked the program staff member whether they felt that the individuals they were identifying would, in their opinion, be willing to participate in the study. Lastly, the survey contained a comment section, offering the respondent an opportunity to include any type of information or opinion that they may have relating to this particular population. When I spoke with each staff member during our phone conversations, I indicated that the survey had this section for comments so that they may begin to review their experience with international mail order brides and offer any professional assessments or insights into their experiences with this population.

I was pleased that I had the opportunity to speak with each program staff member prior to his or her receiving to the survey. I feel this afforded them time to consider their individual professional experiences and formulate the rich remarks, (Appendix F), providing corroboration for my theory of a wide spread population of IMOBs within rural Pennsylvania. Additionally, comments such as “the more I reach out to the wife, the greater the chance that she will stop coming to class” and “the women never seem to have definable goals” validate many of my own experiences with international mail order brides.

It was obvious through the data collection process that there existed a definable population of international mail order brides that would be usable for this study. The data collected through both the phone interview and the surveys indicated that program staff had contact with a total of twenty-two potential international mail order brides. Factoring out the identified students who lived in urban areas, male students, and those students for whom data was inconclusive, I found a potential pool of 15 mail order bride participants from four different adult ESL programs.

After narrowing the list of potential participants down to fifteen, I made a second phone call to the survey respondent at each of the four sites represented by the fifteen participants chosen. During this call, which occurred approximately a month after the initial phone call to the programs, I verified with program staff that they still had a valid candidate. At that time one potential participant left her program and the number of potential participants narrowed to fourteen.

Also during this second phone call to the program staff, I asked if they would participate in a conference call that included the program staff, the potential participant,

and me. I felt it critical for them to be involved in this initial call, adding a comfort level for the student. I indicated that for ethical reasons it was necessary that a translator be present to inform the participant of the parameters of the study. I asked each of the four programs involved if they would be able to provide a translator for their student.

Fortunately, in each case the instructor or program administrator was able to identify a reliable translator. In three of the cases, the translator was either the family member or friend that accompanied the student to the initial class. The fourth program had a staff member who was fluent in Spanish, the native language of the potential participant.

Lastly, I asked if I could use their facility for our face to face interviews, to which all programs agreed. It was at this time that I set up dates to call the potential participant with their program staffs present at their class site. I had dates set with each of the programs to conduct a conference call involving myself, the student, the students instructor (or program administrator) and the translator and was ready to continue the process.

A Need to Change Directions

During the period of time that I contacted programs to determine if they had potential participants, some of our discussions revolved around a potential funding cut to adult education in Pennsylvania, specifically ESL classes. Although I progressed to this point of setting up initial interviews with the students at their program site, I had concerns as to the ramifications of the impending funding cuts. Unfortunately, my concerns were realized, and a redistribution of funding from the state left three of the four programs supplying potential participants closing their classes. Because of the timing of these closures I could not pursue the remaining thirteen students as there would be neither

teacher nor site to support our meetings. This dramatic occurrence left me with only two class sites, ARIN and one other rural community-based program with three students currently enrolled in classes. I began the process with these three students with hopes of identifying others through alternative sources.

Initial Contact with the Potential Participant

On the date arranged I initiated a conference call to the ESL class site other than ARIN. I felt that talking to the student over the phone while the student was physically located at site where her ESL class was held and including staff familiar to her afforded validity to my request and provided the least amount of initial perceived threat to the student.

The call was conducted with the following participants: the program's ESL instructor and/or administrator, the potential participant student, a translator speaking the student's native language, and myself. I provided consent forms to the program prior to the call (Appendix B) via regular mail. I reviewed the information on the consent form describing the study and asked the potential participant to sign the form if she was interested in being a part of the study. I explained that this was only a preliminary step and that she was still able to change her mind after she signed the form. During the conference call, I reviewed of the intent of the study and the format, which included one face-to-face interview and follow up phone call(s), also to be conducted at the class site. I also indicated that if any time during the study she wished to stop participating, there would be no ramifications. The program staff members reiterated that they would not think badly of their student if they chose to discontinue their participation in the study.

This was a spontaneous gesture on the program member's part but one that was a welcome addition to the process.

All potential participants received not only my verbal confirmation that all information would be confidential but a signed statement by me (again sent to the programs prior to the phone call) indicating the purpose of the study and confidentiality promises that existed as an additional document to the confidentiality statement and which pertained to the first phone call or contact. The potential participants were given several days (1-3) to consider the option of being involved in the study and were told that if they decided to participate, they must return the signed consent form to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope I had provided. I felt that this step further cemented their commitment to participate and gave them an active participant's role in getting under way with their involvement in the study.

I replicated this process with the two students involved in the ARIN Center for Education ESL class. However, instead of phone contact I met with the student, teacher and translator personally at ARIN's ESL class site.

There were three criteria I used to determine if a potential international mail order bride would be part of the project: willingness, environmental stability, and emotional stability. Willingness was indicated by the participant through her return of the signed consent form. Environmental stability factors were demonstrated through her regular and reliable class attendance, considering such issues as regular on-time class attendance and residence in the United States for one month or more. It was essential for validity to work with participants who fit the profile described and who I would have consistent access. Emotional stability is subjective, but I felt strongly that the participant must be able to

respond rationally and logically to the questions. She must be able to accurately represent and assess her past life that led her to the international mail order bride option and clearly describe her biliteracies as they relate to her current life situations. I felt that I was somewhat able to assess emotional stability through brief conversations, over the phone and in person, and more importantly by trusting the judgment of the potential participant's classroom instructor.

After completing these initial contacts, I received the signed consent form from all three of the potential participants indicating their commitment to participate in the study. I reviewed this information in a final contact with each ESL program and solicited their opinion of the participant as it related to my three criteria for participation. All three participants met the criteria from the point of view of both the program staff and me, and it was time to begin conducting the actual face-to-face interviews.

Where to Find the Remaining Participants?

After recovering from the shock of having my population limited, I gave serious consideration to a source for additional participants. As the funding cuts were so widespread most ESL programs were affected, if not through complete cessation of services, then by significantly limiting the services provided. Classes that were meeting twice weekly were changed to monthly meetings and many times staffed with volunteers as tutors. This did not provide the staff nor the intensity necessary to get a strong commitment from the participants nor an in-depth knowledge of the participant from the staff at the ESL class site. I wanted to stay within the parameters first outlined in my design, the concept of a participant related to a free non-certificated program. I felt that college and university students who were IMOBs would have very different

circumstances and goals from the population I sought to study, thus eliminating those venues as potential referral sites.

I chose to contact two women who were in the ARIN ESL program previously to see if they would be willing to participate in the study. Fortunately, each of them was very excited about the prospect of being involved. The last participant I identified was found by sheer accident. She had been my first international mail order bride from my early days of teaching ESL. During our accidental meeting I explained to her my study and she immediately asked me if she could be involved.

Each of these three additional women was afforded the exact same process that the first three participants experienced. The purpose of the study was explained, each had appropriate time to (re)consider their involvement, and all signed the necessary consent forms.

Interviews with the International Mail Order Brides

I decided early in the planning stages of the study to collect my data through one face-to-face interview and then follow up with one to four phone interviews. I decided this as a result of contact with IMOBs in my classes, which taught me that these women deal with significant issues emanating from their families and often enjoy limited amounts of time for external endeavors. I had significant concerns that some of the participants would begin participation in the study but be pressured to drop out of the study prior to the completion of the data collection phase if there were numerous interviews. In addition, I felt it most judicious to place these interviews in close proximity to one another, allowing a one-to-two week lapse between the face-to-face interview and the phone interview(s). I conducted four of the six interviews, both in-person and phone

at class sites to avoid additional transportation burdens, and to tap into the comfort level afforded by the known class site. Moreover, although these precautions were taken, the participant's time at the class site was extended by her participation in the interviews and this did necessitate some changes in transportation schedules. Public transportation was an option for only three women and the remaining participants needed to make transportation accommodations. These changes took the form of changing pick-up times when receiving a ride from a friend or family member or if driving herself, changing expected times of arrival home.

Many researchers such as Atkinson (1998) are strong proponents of interviewing in a home setting as it provides the most relaxed atmosphere. However, he also states the advantage of doing the interview; "in the closest possible setting to the natural context in which the event would normally happen" (p. 81). As the participant is attending an English language class and the purpose of the study is to study her biliterate practices, I felt it best to choose the classroom site from which to conduct the interviews. Although it would have solved the issue of adapting transportation, there exists an issue of candor on the part of many participants that I do not believe would have been achieved while at home in the potential presence of family members. There were two single exceptions; the participant whom I have known for over 20 years requested that the interview take place in her home and an additional participant requested that the interview take place in my home.

The Face-to-Face Interview

The Environment

With the six participants chosen and sites established, I began the process of the face-to-face interview. Atkinson (1998) warns that not only is the text the story but that the context can and does affect the story. For this reason, I felt it critical to conduct the interviews in a positive or at least neutral environment for the participant, and for four participants, this was the site of her ESL class. I did this for the both the IMOBs who were currently enrolled in classes and those separated from class. The remaining two participants each expressed a strong desire to meet, one in my home and one in her own home. Every attempt was to schedule an interview at a time most convenient for the participant, in one case meeting in a participants home on Easter Sunday as that was the day her daughter, our translator, could join the interview.

I conducted the face-to-face interview with only the participant and translator present. One participant's husband was permitted to attend the interview as requested by the participant; I felt that this may be integral to this woman's continued participation so I permitted this one exception. This was the only request of this nature.

The interview space at each program site was comfortable and welcoming. None of the interviews were conducted in the participant's classroom but rather at an alternate space in the same building. I arrived early to make sure that the environment was confidential, with a door that shut and no unnecessary distractions such as telephones or computers. Each interview began with what I refer to as a "warming up" period where introductions were made and I began to tell the participant a little about myself and the purpose for this study. When each participant called to confirm her involvement in the

study, I encouraged her to bring any photographs that she would like to share; I felt that this would be a good tool to use as an ice breaker and would help facilitate this “warming up” period. I also brought a few pictures of my family and myself as I felt that my own willingness to share personal information would help put the participant at ease. I will certainly not take credit for this idea as Atkinson (1998) suggests photos also as objects of memory to help the participants recall.

Recording Data

All interviews were conducted in the language in which the participant was most comfortable. When necessary, I utilized the translator that the participant was familiar with from the initial phone interview. This translator was provided at the time of the group interview (the phone interview that included ESL program staff, the potential participant and myself) either by the program with which the student is associated with (and in the case a staff member who was fluent in Spanish) or someone who was brought in by the student herself. Translators also completed confidentiality forms (Appendix C) at the beginning of the face-to face-interview.

It was necessary to tape record each face-to-face interview as well as the follow-up phone interviews, so I chose a small, relatively innocuous tape recorder placed between us that maintained as natural environment as possible. I informed the participants, prior to beginning the actual interview, that I will be taking notes during the interview only for purposes of clarity to compare with the tapes. Participants were instructed that the taping procedure can be stopped at any time in order to take a break, ask a question for clarity, or to provide information that the participant is not comfortable having recorded on tape. I took the initiative several times to stop the tape as I could see

that the participant was becoming uncomfortable sitting for a prolonged period. Field notes also proved critical and allowed me to track telling body language exhibited by both the translator and the participant.

Environmentally, I also decided to include a stack of magazines and an Oxford picture dictionary on the table for the participant to use when expressing herself. Dyson (2005) discusses successful data collection as including a variety of data collection methods: audio taping, field notes, and transcription, but through her example of collected data offers the value of environmental context. This familiar context of picture and print that the participant utilizes in their classroom environment was an additional method of communication for the participants. Many chose to utilize the pictures in the magazines and text instead of always relying on the translator or their own English language skills.

All tapes were heard and transcribed only by myself. No real names were used in our conversations on tape, allowing for the participants' further protection. After the tapes were transcribed and the dissertation process is complete, the tapes and field notes will be kept for a three-year period in my personal safety deposit box, after which time they will be disposed of.

Transcribing Data

A word to the wise: test your recording equipment prior to your first actual interview! The following is a description of how easily one can get carried away with enthusiasm to begin the work before the dull tasks of testing and retesting your equipment.

I had contacted Ester, my first participant, presented the purpose of the study and received an enthusiastic reaction from her regarding her participation. We set up the time for our first interview. I had even given her time to consider her participation, asking her to give it some thought, then following up with a second contact, at which point she seemed even more enthusiastic than when we first discussed the study. She requested that I e-mail a copy of the questions to her so that she could give the questions thoughtful consideration before our interview. She came prepared to the interview with her answers written out, and two hours later I was ecstatic to have completed what seemed like a very thorough first interview.

As I sat down to transcribe the interview the next day, I found, to my great horror, that the tape had malfunctioned and was blank, leaving me with only field notes as a record of our interview. After giving it careful consideration, I called Ester to let her direct how we would move forward from this point. I asked her to choose one of the following options: I could present her story through my notes, making it significantly abbreviated because I did not have many of her quotes in my field notes or we could meet again to redo the interview. I started to ask her to give it some thought but she interrupted saying “Oh no, I thinking about our talk and I have more other things to say and want to do it again.” Gratefully, and with a new tape in my tape recorder, we scheduled and completed a two-and-a-half-hour interview the following Saturday afternoon.

I consider myself very fortunate to have had such a willing participant for this first experience and caution all to not make my mistake of eliminating a test run on your equipment. I felt that my theory that participation in the study helps to validate the

IMOB's story was borne out through this experience. Of equal importance, I learned a very valuable lesson in conducting research.

The Questions Themselves

This study follows the naturalistic inquiry method, and as Guba (1978) defines naturalistic study as “discovery-oriented,” I chose open-ended questions to avoid placing constraints and categories on the information collected. I wanted to capture the participants' life stories most accurately in their own words. The open-ended questions allowed each participant to critically reflect on her life. The initiation of this critical thinking process allowed the participants to begin the process of defining their life in content-based segments. Atkinson (1998) says this process has the ability to act by “. . . increasing our working knowledge of ourselves because we discover deeper meaning in our lives through the process of reflecting and putting the events, experiences and feelings that we have lived into oral expression” (p. 1). This effort that each of the International Mail Order Brides undertook, this retelling of their life stories, forced the reflective thought that led to the findings in this study.

My list of questions (Appendix G) for the face to face interview consists of four main questions each associated with one category of Hornberger's Continua of Biliteracy (2003). These four categories – Context, Development, Content, and Media – represent an individual's dual literacies and the placement of each biliteracy on a discernable scale. Given the complex interrelationship between bilingualism and literacy, it was essential to determine where each participant fell along the continua in relation to her first language, the development of her second language, and the medium she used to express each language.

I began the official interview session with the contextually based question, “Can you tell me a story of when you first began to learn English in your country?” The open-ended questions provided a template or framework for the participants to begin contextualizing their biliteracies within their lives and to examine, through narrative, their linguistic journey through stories.

Additionally, they were asked to make value judgments relating to their literacy practices. These value judgments offered greater insight into some of the responses to the interview questions. There are cultures, especially Asian culture (Wang et al. 2000), and their circuitous sociological process of evaluating happiness that do not consider her own happiness, hence it was critical to have each of the participants view her biliteracy through her own perspective (inclusive of their individual cultures) and then from the perspective of how she fit into the sociological structure of her new environment in the United States.

Additional questions such as “How did you feel about that?” were often a part of the questions asked. I felt it absolutely necessary to obtain as much clarity as possible from the stories the participants were offering.

Intensive investigation of a topic integral to identity such as language is can be exhausting, and as I stated earlier it was necessary to take breaks during the interview process. Although the face-to-face interviews were a difficult task, each participant expressed gratitude for the opportunity to tell her story, a process that offered her validation in her new environment.

The Follow-Up Phone Interviews

I conducted one to four follow-up phone interviews to clarify points as they related to the data collected in the face-to-face interview. Consultation with the translator, when one was used for the face to face interview was essential during these calls. There were a few issues associated with translation and interpretation that I needed to clarify in order to be confident of my observations. I asked the translator if he was willing to receive a call from me if I needed clarity and he agreed that this was not a problem and gave me a contact number.

The first follow up interview(s) took place within two weeks of the face-to-face interview. This was a difficult time frame because processing all of the oral and written information was time consuming, but again I was concerned about losing a participant with a more lengthy process. Subsequent phone interviews took place over a longer period of time, additional questions developed during my analysis of each IMOB's story.

The study takes into account the IMOB's relationship with their families in their native country, their previous life experiences both sociologically and educationally, and cultural attitudes that surround these issues. Issues relating to the structure of the participants' new family, the brides' capital in the families' decision-making process, and her role in the larger community were all issues brought out by the participants during the interviews. However, mainly the study focuses on the International Mail Order Bride's biliteracy. It is that biliteracy and its relationship to their new lives that formed the template that was used to form the data categories used in the study.

Quantitative data has already been collected on these women, as with all ESL learners participating in state-funded adult education programs. Data was available

relating to the number of times they attended class and how long they stayed during each class period. Programs are required to collect data relating to their students gender, locale, marriage status, number of children, and standardized test scores as they move through the program. Yet none of this quantifiable data answers why these women as a group are consistently falling behind in their acquisition of the English language. Nor was there insight from the data already collected as to why they finally leave the program before achieving what is considered a basic level of fluency in the English language.

By contrast, the data collected through this study augmented the previously collected data to compile a true picture of these International Mail Order Brides and the language that defines them. It was through case study of their individual stories that the true picture of who these women are, in the context of their daily lives, allowed their individual stories to emerge. The participant's responses were not succinct responses that could be easily aggregated for analysis without the use of the Continua of Biliteracy.

Organization and Analysis

Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer the following constructs relating to data analysis and organization: "Data analysis involves taking constructions gathered from the context and restructuring them into meaningful wholes" (p. 333). The meaningful wholes are the product of this study, the stories themselves. These stories were a product of my research, conducted by interviewing this homogenous group of adult English language learners (ELLs). Two factors made this group of ELLs homogenous: an arranged marriage to an American spouse and the stalled English language acquisition of the participants within the study. This set of circumstances formed the baseline for the study, drove the linguistic inquiry and formulated meaningful wholes through the stories elicited from this inquiry.

It is necessary here to provide a key point of clarity relating to analysis within the study. I use the term “analysis” both in the title of this section and throughout the study, as it is a term found throughout scholarship when viewing a collection of data. Analysis, as it relates to this study, is simply the act of reviewing and presenting the stories, in essence thoughtful listening. The study does not propose to have the participants themselves nor the researcher evaluate their language practices. Rather the purpose of the study is to allow these women to tell the story of their languages and their use of their languages, their biliteracy, within their lives. The meaning wholes that Lincoln and Guba speak of are neither an evaluation of the skill level in each language nor the ranking of the participants’ acquisition process. The meaningful wholes are the language stories themselves placed in a construct that provides close examination.

The making of these meaningful wholes from the interviews involved a process of what Lincoln and Guba define as “unitizing data, disaggregating data into the smallest pieces of information that may stand alone as independent thoughts in the absence of additional information . . . (p. 181).” A significant amount of life information was collected; deciding what of this information bore significance on the participant’s language skills involved “emergent category designation.” It is simply the process of sorting data, unit by unit, to define like content and characteristic in order to build a framework that provides us with the template that illustrates these women’s biliterate lives. My construction of meaning that evolved upon analysis of data must be understood as only one possible construct of meaning drawn from the data. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) indicate, it is my “personal sense of justification” that drives the construct that I have chosen.

Throughout the process of sorting field texts, journals, and oral notations, I relished allowing the stories to simply emerge as these are engaging women with fascinating stories of personal, cultural and linguistic struggles. Their struggles and successes frame a life that is both culturally fascinating and rich with linguistic detail..

To capture meaning I broke the interviews into material, typically in paragraph form, whose content is then classified into categories. As in a study of worker behavior in 1991, Hodson saw the emergence of pairs and triads of information within content areas. The information found in his research was derived almost solely from interviews. He indicates that after transcription of each interview, the material, typically in paragraph form, began to fall into general categories that he had created. As each block of information was filed, specific categories began to emerge. Those that he created initially began to become more specific, and some categories disappeared over time. These pairs and triads that formed became the categories that then defined the body of knowledge that became basis for analysis within his study.

This follows Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen's (1993) concept of "emergent category designation." These emerging categories, although they can be somewhat predetermined, offer a greater sense of objectivity as they become the driving factors from which patterns can emerge. Categories such as age and age of arrival, length of residency, previous marriages, children, preset expectations of the participant, economic circumstance, family circumstance, and educational levels relating to both first and second language skill level, are some of the categories that drove the initial divisions of information categories.

An early decision of having six participants within the study was driven by the desire to present a sizable enough group for analysis without offering an unwieldy amount of data from a larger group of participants. Within the study I often paired the women on the basis of both similarities and differences relating to their circumstances, experiences and context in their current lives and the lives they lived in their original culture. Since each of the International Mail Order Brides were considered for the study based on the three factors of marriage circumstance, length of residency and their limited English language fluency, it was necessary to base their pairing on other factors in their lives as well. Many of these factors or circumstances related to their responses within the four major categories in Hornberger's Continua of Biliteracy. These four areas – Contexts, Development, Content, and Media – permitted a delineation of attitude, experience and skill within the study of language and literacy that offered similarities or differences that spoke to a significant findings relating to biliteracy. Experiences with schooling and language provided a basis for one pairing, dramatically divergent attitudes toward language and its place within social setting proved the basis for another pairing and significant life experiences proved the basis of the third pairing.

The Study's Specific Presentation of Each Story

Many years ago when I was presented with my first international mail order bride in my classroom, I saw her story unfold and saw only the problems created with the lack of her progress toward fluency in the English language. I saw this as we see any problem, something that, if given enough consideration and effort, could be resolved. I continued to see her life as being plagued with this "problem." It affected her at home and when out in public; it affected her children, her new husband, and most other aspects of her life to

which I was privy. In addition, I defined the ways in which her lack of fluency affected her as primarily negative, a problem that needed resolution. However, try as I may as her teacher, I could not "solve the problem." I could not get her to class more often; I could not insist that she stay longer when she did attend, and I could not seem to change the attitude that her husband seemed to express relating to the usefulness of the class to his new bride. With subsequent international mail order brides who came to be my students, I still saw this problem and yet again no viable solution. My initial impetus for beginning this study was to address the problem, research the issues, identify the causes and find a solution to offer these women. But as I began to hear their stories, to really listen through Atkinson's (1998) definition, which "goes far beyond the normal realm of hearing . . . it acknowledges a personal truth from the subjective point of view" (p. 7) I began to realize that there may not be a problem needing resolution thus changing the type of narrative inquiry that I would use.

In Clandinin and Connelly's book *Narrative Inquiry*, they describe narrative research methodology and its value to the field of qualitative research. They highlight two basic research methods utilized in presenting narrative data: the Problem-Solution Approach and the Three Dimensional Space Approach (p. 144). Initially I felt that I would represent each bride's literacy story through the problem-solution approach logically presenting the data that illuminated her lack of English language fluency and highlight the steps each bride took, or could take, to help solve this problem. There certainly seemed to be a problem: the lack of English language fluency that hindered each international mail order bride's life pursuits in almost every aspect of her life. Because of the lack of fluency, it was difficult to communicate with her spouse, to make new friends,

and to navigate the totally new environment in which she was immersed. The Problem-Solution approach seemed to fit the population perfectly. The approach organizes the raw data taken from each interview through five elements of plot structure, characters, setting, problem, actions and resolution, then presents the data through these elements as the issue(s) to solve so that analysis may generate a solution. This, then, is the framework I used to approach the data collected.

There was never a question for me as to the mode of presenting the data; from the many years I have spent teaching ESL, I knew that collecting the life stories from these women was the only way to give authentic voice to their lives and literacies. As I began the interviews and truly listened to their stories, I realized that the fact that there was a problem to be solved was my perception, not theirs. They did not come to class and continue until they had achieved fluency; they did not seek alternative methods of study when they could not get to class, so how could I presume that they felt that there was a problem to be solved? With this realization, I chose the other method Clandinin and Connelly outline as an approach to narrative research, the Three Dimensional Space Approach. Clandinin and Connelly based this approach on Dewey's philosophy of experience that examines personal experience as well as the continuity of interactions with other people. Dewey's influence assists in taking a narrative and making it reducible, separating the stories into definable portions and categories that offer useful insight. The two basic premises of this approach are life context and personal experience. Clandinin and Connelly state that; ". . . all experiences occur in context; in this study there is extraordinarily rich context", for each of the mail order brides have experienced dramatic contextual changes and contrasts within their lives. It was my responsibility to

extract this rich data through both the questions I posed and the shared (each bride and myself) revisiting of the bride's responses to assure accuracy.

The second premise of the Three Dimensional Space Approach is that understanding grows from knowledge of the individual's personal experience and interaction with other individuals. This inquiry methodology positions the researcher to analyze the contextual and experiential data through what Clandinin and Connelly describe as the four dimensions of inquiry: inward, outward and forward, backward. They define inward as the emotional and esthetic dimensions and outward as the environment. Backward and forward represent the concept of time: past, present and future. Again, this construct aligned with the participant's data within this study as the bride's literacies and biliteracies are shaped by each personal experience they had, both past and present and their perceived needs for language in the future. Their lives are shaped by who they understood themselves to be in their native country, and who they were becoming in the United States and the direct effect this had on their English literacy skills. Their journey from one culture/language to a completely different culture/language is the narrative tool for both and can then be represented by categorizing the data into the four dimensions of Clandinin and Connelly's inquiry. Viewing both the context and personal experiences of the international mail order bride's literacy lives using this framework presented the most valid representation of the literacy stories of these IMOBs. Thus, without the tension of a problem to solve through data analysis, we are afforded the opportunity to see each story for its value as a continuous narrative in the Three Dimensional Space Approach. Utilizing this approach has produced a narrative that consists of information on a time

continuum, imbedded in a rich context that emerges through each bride's personal experiences.

Data Interpretation

As this study uses qualitative analysis as opposed to quantitative analysis, it must be remembered that the information presented within the study will provide a picture of each participant's language story. The study will not offer the predictions and generalizations that a quantitative study would, nor is that the intent. Rather, the intent of the study is an intensive examination of the biliteracies in the lives of women who have made a very specific choice regarding their life circumstance.

In analyzing the data, it became clear that causal analysis was the most useful mode of analysis for the study. It was illustrated early in the interview process that the "x causes y" method was most appropriate as there emerged one universal issue impacting the lack of progress each woman made in her language acquisition process. The holistic method is useful here as with most circumstance within the human condition many smaller issues are "contributors," issues that offer some small impact upon the final outcome but existing in isolation would not singly produce the final outcome. With the emergence of this single issue impacting the participant's language process, the mode of analysis was driven by the data.

It was however, essential to make a concerted effort not to over-simplify the issues within each of the participant's lives that brought her to her present circumstance. It was the interdependencies of human activities that formed not only the course their individual lives took, but the course our understanding of their lives brings us as we unfold the contributing components affecting their lack of English language

development. This account of the participant's life story as it relates to her language and literacy will now unfold in what narrative research considers "restorying." Through restorying narrative I offer the participants' literacy stories in their own words.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEIR STORIES, THEIR LIVES AND LITERACIES

Introduction

I have chosen restorying as a narrative approach as it was the most authentic and accurate representation of each participant's personal literacy story. It is clear that the definitive definitions of literacy and biliteracy have yet to exist largely due to the sheer scope of the concepts. Hornberger offers Hakuta's (1986) perspective on the definition of literacy and biliteracy in the following statement: "In both fields the complexity of the subject; the multidisciplinary nature of the inquiry including historians, educators, sociologists and psychologists make unity and coherence elusive objects" (p. 5). I agree that it is a continual process of refining literate practices such as offered within this study. The data represented in this study, the literacy stories of the international mail order brides, is a valuable piece in compiling the definition of literacy and biliteracy for the field of second language acquisition. It was essential to gather not only their stories but to utilize a methodology that most closely represented each individual's information, the story of her life, from her perspective and in her own words. The actual process of restorying produced two key results for the study, assuring authenticity of data and providing feedback for use by the story tellers\participants. Restorying methodology is supported with comments such as this offered through Hornberger (2003): "Telling stories helps people think about and understand their personal or another individuals thinking, actions and reactions". The inherent value of this method provides both valuable research for the field and affords the participants a clear and holistic view of her life and its literacies.

The study represents a collaborative effort between each participant and me. Questions were asked, answers given, and after review, I revisited each response with the participant in an effort to negotiate the exact nature of what each of these women wanted to say regarding their literacies. Clandinin and Connelly in their book *Narrative Inquiry* (2000) explain it as “. . . negotiating transitions from gathering data to writing the story, and arranging ways to intermingle with participants in a study” (p. 63).

I felt that the key concept in this statement for me was the “*with*.” My goal was to represent these women I so admire by not only using their exact wording in restorying but by working *with* them. Working with them entailed going back numerous times to a statement in order to completely understand what they were experiencing. By finding new ways to ask the same question and reading their responses back to them, I was able to achieve increased accuracy. This negotiating of meaning that I chose as the standard interpretative practice for the study produced data that was both rich for purposes of analysis and satisfactorily accurate for the participants. What I am not doing in this study is pursuing the grand narrative; the data here represents only those women participating and I do not delve into every aspect of their lives offering a complete ethnography of an international mail order bride. My ultimate goal was that this study become populated with their literacy stories, in their words describing their lives so that we may benefit as a field from the intimate details of the biliteracies of these international mail order brides. Or in Atkinson’s (1998) words to offer “. . . a primary document created by a collaboration of the researcher and the interviewee but also a secondary research tool who look to the life story for narrative information or data” (p. 34).

The Study's Unique Participants

The six women who participated in this study represent a unique population whose lives offer great contrast from one another in some areas yet share essential characteristics that provide the undergirding for this study. The women were chosen first and foremost due to their lack of fluency in the English language coupled with their status as international mail order brides. Additionally, I chose these women because each demonstrated the following unifying characteristics: their gender, their attendance in a community-based English as a Second Language class, and the rural nature of their current homes in the United States. With only four contextual similarities, there are a plethora of factors that were dissimilar among the women, such as initial first language, native country and associated culture, age, number of children, work experience, and economic status – both in their native country and now in the United States and educational levels in their own country and length of residency at the time of this study. Although the list could continue almost endlessly, these are the areas this study focuses on because these are the areas the brides chose to form their literacy stories around. These are in essence the areas that occurred consistently throughout each bride's story when she described her biliteracies.

A General Profile of Each Participant

With the unifying characteristics of their status as female international mail order brides attending community based ESL classes in a rural area, let me now begin to enumerate some of the characteristics that presented diversity among the women. These six women speak the following languages: Spanish (Sol, Maria, Gabriella), Polish (Agnes), Korean (Ester), and Chinese-Mandarin (Rose) as their first languages, L1. Two

of them additionally speak German, French, Latin and Portuguese. Each was born in a different country and into a different culture; these are Nicaragua, Korea, Poland, Argentina, China and Colombia.

The women range in age from 35 to 63. In regards to children, all six brides have biological children; two brides have adult stepchildren. Two of the women had both their children by their American spouse, and one bride had one child by her American husband and one or more children by a previous husband in her native country. The remaining two women were single mothers in their country; one woman brought one of her two children to this country, and the other woman left her only child in their native country to attend a university.

Families of four with an annual income lower than \$ 22,050 are considered to be at poverty level in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2009). Using this criterion, four of the six IMOBs came from what we would consider exceptionally poor families, families that were not able to value education and who encouraged the children to quit school in order to become employed so as to supplement the family income. In three of these families both parents were employed but the family “sometimes didn’t have enough money to have any more than beans and rice to eat for a week” in one of the bride's words. One of these four did not know her father, and her mother died when she was eight years old, leaving the participant and her siblings to move from one relative's home to another while working to help support themselves. One international mail order bride grew up in what we would consider lower middle class. And the remaining IMOB grew up in a middle class environment. Five of the six brides raised their economic level considerably upon marrying and coming to the United States.

One, although a single mother, dramatically increased her economic level to middle class from poverty level by receiving advanced degrees while in her native country.

There exists an enormous range of work experiences among the women in the study. One bride began in a janitorial position and worked her way to become what we would call an administrative assistant; one was the equivalent of an American Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN); one is a licensed Psychologist with an advanced degree, one a medical practice bookkeeper; one was a waitress, and one was a clothing store manager. A variant collection of jobs and the associated literacy skills necessary to execute them are represented among the women in this study.

The women also varied significantly in their length of residency in the United States. The shortest period of residency was 10 months for one bride, and the longest period of residency was 33 years. This variance, as with all of the other factors has its effect on the international mail order bride's fluency but not necessarily in the anticipated sense.

Now that a very general profile of this group of these international mail order brides has been presented, we will begin to see each of the participants in detail. Their stories are formatted utilizing the IMOBs' responses to the questions in Appendix G. All stories are told in a historical format beginning with their childhood literacy experiences through their current biliterate experiences. Most importantly, the retelling of each story is in the participant's own words.

Sol's Story

Sol chose her pseudonym because she said, “Sol is the sun, it is bright and happy like me. I have good life, I care for me and both boys are live with me, I have two good jobs.” Her husband passed away several years ago from an age related heart condition, he was over 25 years her senior. Sol was a bright and willing student of mine 22 years ago, but she became pregnant three months after she entered classes and began having fainting spells that worried her husband so much that he forbade her to continue to come to class.

In a face-to-face meeting, I outlined the parameters of the study and caught up on old times. I see Sol periodically in our community, less than once a year, and have maintained an acquaintance relationship with her since her time as a student in our program. I did not feel it appropriate to call with the proposal of involvement in the study as it was a time commitment with more than one meeting and various phone calls. Additionally, I wanted to give her time to consider her involvement so I agreed to stop at her place of business fifteen minutes before her shift started to explain the project. Sol determined that it was not necessary to have a translator present, as she felt confident in her fluency; although I had an online translation program available if she needed some assistance. She rejected this idea both initially and during the actual interviews. When we ended our first brief meeting, she was very anxious to be involved in the study; however, I would not take this as her commitment of involvement and gave her my phone number asking her to think about it for two or three days then call if she was still interested. I did this with each bride so that they did not feel any pressure or obligation for involvement.

Sol reported three days later, “You knows me Beth, I am liking telling my stories so if it helps other peoples coming to here” showing that she was committed to the study and that she felt it of personal value to be a participant.

At our first taped interview we met at ARIN’s ESL class site. She reminisced about her early days in the United States and she remembered clearly her reasons for quitting the classes. “Do you remember me that first day I was fainting?” she asks. “I remember I was lying on the floors and I looked at you and said.”You should sit on the floors too, you looked all white.” She was right; as a new teacher having one of my students slump out of her seat and land, fortunately, in the arms of her friend sitting next to her in class was a little unnerving. Sol suspected at the time that she was pregnant but hadn’t told anyone other than her new American husband Peter, so I and the rest of the class were very worried about her. She came back to class only once after that day to say good-bye to her friends in class and let us all know why she was leaving us. She remembers that:

After get sick Peter don’t let me go to school anymore because it was dangerous, he said to be in a school like that. But sometimes I was at home cleanin dishes I was doing something else and I start getting sick like you gonna pass out like that and you can fall. So he said that it was not safe for me to be out of that house like that cause I could be crossin that street like that sometime that and I could get hit so he don’t let me go to school anymore.

Sol's Early Life and Literacy in Nicaragua

Sol grew up in a village close to a large city in Nicaragua. She was one of five children in a farming family. The family hovered around poverty level as Sol indicated that:

My sisters, three of us, had keep the house work done and all cook for our family. My both brothers two, Rafael and Jose worked all days with my father in planting and selling all the foods it grew. We could go with my father, he took my sisters, he took me into the city for days and sell at the markets sometimes. It was fun, we sleep in the cart that take the food from our farm over the night. He is not talking much to us girls, but it was always Spanish in our family. I don't think my mother finish school and my father did not finish for sure. My mother and father had no English. I never heard my neighbors speak English when I was growing up.

Sol's excursions into the city occurred less frequently as time went on, though. Her brothers finished what is the equivalent of fifth grade in the United States. They worked so many days with my father that they stop all going to school, special for my brother Jose, his body was so much big that that he stop school first and he still help my father today. But it is much more his full job now and he let my father, eighty years help because he's old.

Sol and her sisters were encouraged to stay in school, Catholic school, as long as possible. "Most people in Nicaragua finish high school, especially the cities. We have college too, it's expensive." She wasn't sure if her parents paid tuition for her schooling or not. If tuition was necessary, she guessed that it would be minimal. She describes her schooling as "Mainly girls we study to be workers in beauty shop and office secretary.

They talking us everyday because they know we need talking most for jobs in special after high school was finish.”

Her description of her family home is very rustic with all of the children sleeping in one room and much of the cooking occurring out doors until she was a teenager and their home was fitted with an indoor stove. Additionally, it was only recently, within the last 10 years, that Sol’s family was able to afford a used truck to take the farm goods to the city market. Prior to getting the used truck the family relied on a series of donkeys all named “Tippy” to get their produce to market.

Sol remembers none of her primary education including a language other than Spanish. She describes her primary years:

We mostly singing and talking stories in Spanish. We hardly never write much and most of the nuns they read story to us all day. School was nice, I like it more like fun than school for childrens I see here for my son. He worked hard when he was in early school grades.

Her first exposure to English was in high school,

Few words, few words when I went to the high school there there is one of the teachers there say teaching us English. One of she was a nun and her name was Nala, Sister Nala. Yeah, I still remember her and then there was an American sister she was one of our teachers who teach English too, but little bit like a subject in all class. Just a few words and we go all kinds of school with her (the American nun) and we play basketball and volleyball she was very strict and we have to win in every game and she was so mad.

When asked if they practiced English skills either in school or as homework assignments her answer was that, “We never practice. We never practice, they just teach this and that but really we never talked English there.” Things have changed from what Sol can gather from her trips home. “Oh, right now there are (English being taught in school), like if you go to the Embassy, in the Embassy they speak English and they speak Spanish too.”

Curriculum content was up to each teacher with some teachers focusing on basic courses like science and others, like the American nun Sol describes above, as focusing on physical activities and games played between rival schools. Neither of Sol’s sisters completed high school; they each chose to be “married off,” in Sol’s words, starting families in their late teen years. Both girls continue to reside near their parents and give support to and care for their elderly parents. Sol was the only sibling who completed high school and proceeded to a life outside their village’s agricultural life style.

Sol’s Adult Life and Literacies in Nicaragua

Sol moved to the city at the age of 20. “My mother she always wants me to have a better life, she see’s that I’m staying in school and she sends me to lives with a girl from another family from ours village that’s already live in the city.” It was in the city an unexpected promotion within an international environmental agency that Sol was first exposed to and expected to learn English. She tells of getting a part-time job cleaning at a large company in the city, moving to their restaurant as a cook, and finally moving into a typist position that forced her to learn English in order to perform her daily duties.

I work at that place for five years about in that office I was maybe working in that office for two years because I start from the bottom. When I went to work for that

place I really really need the job but they don't have anything else to give me and they told me that they only have need somebody to help in the kitchen to cook at the cafeteria and then I tell them I don't mind I have to mop the floor or clean the floor whatever what I need is a job. So they give me that cook job then they tell all us ladies one days that we have chance at head cooking job they gonna give us a test. So we have a competition there was going to be hers so they give to her one week and they give me another week so everybody know when I was cooking and when she was cooking so I win that time so I only work as a helper one week and then I got the job head cooking. We have to fix the lunch for 200 people daily, in that place in the environmental office.

Although Sol's job as a cook for the cafeteria in the environmental office was financially lucrative, she wanted to move up within the company. She remembers her mother's wishes for her as she was growing up. "My mother she would say, Sol you are a good girl and a smart school girl. You will be a business girl for me." I asked her if she encountered any English, spoken or written, either living in the city or in her work place, and she said, "My friends we no speak English or go to places clubs, and stores that speak English. I see only kitchen girls in cook at work and Spanish is all there was." But after three years in the kitchen, Sol tried for a secretarial opening that she saw posted on the lunchroom bulletin board. "I was take typing class in Catholic school and I was so fast so I try for this new job. I am telling you this because you ask about English in my work." She got the job and describes how English became a part of her literacy format at work.

What I was do I type in English but I don't speak English, I was typing about typing the orders when I was working in the environmental office and the next day when I came back to the office there was all the orders back to me all long and coming down on the floor so I have to pick them up and divide them up and give them to everybody there and I type English but I never speak English there.

She was typing purchase orders and sending faxes to many different countries with a majority of the communications being formatted in English from her particular department. From what she saw, different departments dealt with different countries and subsequent languages. She told me that her supervisors never spoke in English, and that all oral directions for her work were given in Spanish, but all written information from her supervisors was given to her to retype, format, and send in English. She offered, "Yes, all the orders were talking about like seeds and trees and animals you know because I working for the environment, that's what it is about."

Sol discussed her days as a bilingual secretary. She explained,

When I was there working in that place I had to go to school too because I had two kids at that time, I had Jose and I my daughter so I have got to school, I have to work, that's why I went to this place to get a job and I say I don't care what kind of job you have. So I was going to school then I was paying on my loan for the business class, it was a business class.

Her obvious willingness to improve herself as evidenced by enrollment in these business classes that she paid for herself afforded her the promotion from cook to secretary. I asked if these business classes included any English language training, she said, "No, there was only bookkeeping and shorthand remember that I show. That's what

you have to do in the bookkeeping you have to have the shorthand. And after they move me from that place they make me a manager.”

Her consistent exposure to English at work expanded with a location move of her desk within the office. She had her desk positioned near the front door. As customers come into the office, some of them English speakers, they were referred to her as she puts it “So I because I was the time I was in the high school I learn a little bit the words I get there so I took care for all these people”. In addition to her typing English on a daily basis, she began to use English language for oral communication purposes at work. Her role as unofficial “translator” for the environmental offices’ receptionist area went on for many months with an increase in her communication skills. This increase in fluency, “I still very baby English another word here another word there,” also led to an introduction to her soon-to-be American husband. The reception area is “. . . where I met my husband I met him first time right in front of the office where you receive everybody whose come.”

Peter, Sol’s future husband, traveled to Nicaragua on what she calls a “man’s mission trip,” a trip offered by his church.

...to help poor people in Nicaragua and maybe be lucky to find a wife for bringing home too. My friend that I live was talking for us to go to married service we have in the city that find American men for us. She talk of it so often we finally go. Them I met my Peter and I stop talking to the other men on the married service.

Peter came into the environmental office to apply for some type of permit for the group to clear land outside of the city and begin building a church to use as a mission

base. Sol and Paul met at the office, him with no Spanish skills and Sol as an interpreter for her company and had a very brief and intense courtship. Life was very difficult for Sol at that time; she was a very hard worker raising two small children on her own, finishing business school and working full time at a taxing position at the environmental office. She explains her typical day:

Rafael was at that time like a four years old I was dropping him on my way to work and go to school and I back to the lady and I pay her a little bit more so she can keep him a little bit more so she can keep him long or my sister can pick him up and my mother was helping me with something.

Her family was not close enough in proximity to babysit her children consistently, but as she indicated her mother would come and help, mostly staying at Sol's apartment for days at a time. She was very guarded about two pieces of information: her relationship with the father of two of her children and the details of her courtship and marriage to Peter. She didn't offer anything more of their time dating nor the decision to marry but to say that "Peter, he was one of the lucky men to come home with a bride, many man's had to go on the trip two or three times to meet a wife." She offered that she and Peter were married in Nicaragua and returned to the United States as man and wife one year after first meeting. Peter traveled back and forth at least two additional times to meet with Sol's family, ask for her hand in marriage and arrange for the wedding. Arrangements were made for Sol and her youngest child Juan, a seven-year-old son, to come to the United States with Peter. Her daughter, who was 12 years old at the time, remained in Nicaragua and was raised by Sol's mother. She seldom spoke of her

daughter, but when she did it was always with great regret that her daughter was not included in her new family in the United States.

Sol's Life and Biliteracy in the United States

After settling in with her new husband and son in rural Pennsylvania, Sol began English classes at ARIN Center for Education almost immediately. At age 32, she met the challenge of this new culture and its new language by immersing herself in a solution; she enrolled in both ESL classes and the one-to-one tutoring program offered through ARIN. Peter would often stop in before class asking for materials that he could use at home to help her English progress. Sol offered, "Peter, the first times he tries to take me to the grocery stores I am get lost and can't ask for help to find Peter. This happen three time and then he say "You need English, you are no safe here without me. He was right, I worries all the days at first if my son is accident how am I finding help" I asked about her first English class with me and she was wonderfully candid.

I'm going to tell you the truth, The first time when I was start going to English class I was sitting there just a listening to you and you know what I feel, I what I feel? I feel I want like want to run away and go because I don't understand nothing. And that was the first year and even when it was the first time see snow and I see snow and I don't even want to get my nose out of there out of my house cause it was too cold and I never see snow. There was two things that I want to run away from, from English and from snow. But you know how Peter he was he wants me to learn. He was a good for that he took care for myself and Jose and then after we had Juan but he was very restrict. You think I'm going to go to him

and tell him I no want to go to school anymore? NO! So I give him some time the way he wants it that's why I learn English.

She was attending class regularly, working with an individual tutor at ARIN to quickly develop her skills, and showing great signs of improvement when she began to have the fainting spells I referenced earlier. She was four months pregnant with her third child, a son to her new American spouse. As she stated, her new husband was worried about her health and forbade her to continue classes. Undeterred she states:

See I start learnin before that because at home I push myself because after I get sick Peter don't let me go to school anymore because it was dangerous he said to be in a school like that. I tell everybody that come to this country I tell them what my experience was that I learn because they tell me how do you learn and I say I don't go too much to school when I got sick I can't do it so I so what did is I have a cassette. I put the cassette in the tape recorder and I rewind it and listen little bit an I rewind it again and what I was doing was teaching myself. I rewind it and start writing writing writing what they was sayin and I don't have enough time to write it again so I rewind and start again all over and I was stop it.

I asked her what kind of tape she used and she explained:

I have a book, I still have the book you open that book and one side was English and one side was Spanish and you listen a cassette, I still have that book. So that's what I was doin and when I was watchin TV and I have my dictionary and my tablet and I watch TV and sometimes recordin the way they talk and I repeat it and repeat I was doin that myself I was studying that myself at home.

In addition to teaching herself English, Sol had the issue of her first grade son and his language learning experiences. Sol and Peter enrolled Juan in public school immediately after getting settled in the United States. I asked if Juan had been exposed to any formal English language training in Nicaragua and she replied:

Nope never a word, that's why when he came here and he start the school because I have to tell that he was in first grade they put him in second grade here. Then he don't pass, it was too much he don't know English it was his first year, he don't know English that's why he so bad Spanish because he don't talk that and Peter he was so restrict (strict) and he said because they told him we went to the meet at school and they say pass his grade and they told him that maybe Juan and I we always speak Spanish at home and that's why he wasn't learnin English. So they cut it off and they said no more Spanish at home, that's right they why Jose don't speak Spanish because they told Peter that and every time he listen us we talk Spanish Jose has to learn English or he's gonna have to repeat the second grade again.

Sol's husband took the school seriously and took Juan under his tutelage each evening. When I asked who helped the first grader with his homework each night she replied, "We would sit with that and I was doing my work and Paul was be helping Juan." I asked if those evening homework sessions included English language lessons with the husband as teacher and the wife as student. Sol's response was:

Yeah. He was trying to teach me too. He speak just a little bit of Spanish, just a little bit. It was the time that this was happening. And he would get mad or I would get mad and I had to think of something else. Sometime he wouldn't

understand and I was mad and he didn't know what I was sayin. Cause at that time I don't talk in English so I was yell in Spanish and he don't understand and it was like nothing! I write and then practice a some and I learn to talk to him.

Sol laughed when she told me this part of her story, she felt that this was a wonderful arrangement; she could say anything she wanted in frustration and her new husband literally and perhaps figuratively did not understand. She said that it made it easier to calm down then, "kiss and makes up" and move on. She did indicate however, that he was never her primary teacher and that she seldom used him as a translator.

When I asked her if it was easier to understand what someone else was saying during this early learning period or easier to speak, she responded by saying:

It was more easy like when I listen but sometimes the peoples was talking too fast and when you learning English you can't do it when somebody's talking too fast. If they go slow and sometimes when I looked at the word and I look at my dictionary and then I translate it I look what that means so that was the easy way for me because I was putting together.

After leaving class Sol began working with a workbook and cassette that offered basic English grammar based lessons, a book she brought from Nicaragua. Although this was helpful initially, she felt the need for interaction to begin using what she had learned through her classes at ARIN and in her English-Spanish workbook. She is a pragmatic person and began to seek out people who were accessible to her physically in order to continue to improve her English. As stated, her husband was not the one to take the successful role of teacher; in Sol's case it became her American neighbor. She developed a plan to cultivate one particular neighbor as her teacher. She said,

I watch who work every morning and she no go out of the house so I go out in her yard and start her talking little bits. And the first month I start talking with my neighbor like that. I went with my tablet my dictionary and my pencil so she start talking to me and I told her to write it on my paper and then after I put it all together and I got an answer for her.

As she said, Sol began by having her neighbor write down questions she had in conversation that Sol could not answer. Sol would then take the question home, translate it, write up her answer and practice with her neighbor by reading the response to her neighbor's question back to her. She was engaging both her writing and speaking skills relating to the same piece of discourse, as she had learned to do in ESL class. Sol continued this process until she felt more confident in her speaking abilities. She shares:

I have different words that was difficult for me so I start writing and writing I fill up a page in my tablet just to practice for that word just like I was in first grade. So I start writing and writing and I fill up a page in my tablet . . . And that's the way I was trying to learn myself and put it all together.

Her tenacious approach continued throughout her pregnancy, but as it came closer to the time of her son's birth, her neighbor as her language guide was replaced by her sister-in-law. Sol shares, "When my sister-in-law started teaching me English she was at the house sometimes when Peter he comes home. She yell at him always."

But his sister was getting mad at him because he was atalkin to me in the broken English. So that's why my sisters-in-law Anne and Kath are getting mad at him. "You're not teaching her, you're not helping her! Why you a talking a broken English?"

Anne then took over many of the English lessons, focusing on Oral skills mostly and those most closely associated with becoming what Sol calls “an American wife” additionally helping to prepare for the birth of Sol's first and only child with her husband Peter. Sol remembers, “Anne she comes everyday for me and is talking and making me talking until I am too very tired.” In the months after the birth of the baby Anne, her sister-in-law continued to be her connection with the English-speaking world; Sol additionally tried to enlist another neighbor. “I have another neighbor who lives close to the house and he works at that time at the high school and I talk to him. But he never learn nothing in Spanish.” Sol wanted all of her learning experiences to be an exchange of language, “a littler bits of Spanish for a little bits of English,” but she became disheartened with her neighbor who was also a high school teacher as he showed no proclivity for Spanish.

When I asked Sol to reflect on her early years and how much Spanish she was speaking as opposed to the amount of English she was speaking daily, she says, “Well sometimes, we was speaking half and half, half in English and half in Spanish. And when I was talking to Juan, (her oldest son) we talk in English cause the school they say we need to speak in English all the times at home. So when I try to talk to him in Spanish he say, “No Spanish, only English, remember what they said in school.” The English only oral environment in her home forced Sol to improve her oral communication skills along with those of her older son's. She saw him as a very quick learner once saying, “Yeah, he doesn't even have an accent now, I always do.” Although helpful in forcing her oral English language skills to develop, this English-only environment was difficult for Sol.

Sol recalls how few of her contacts were native Spanish speakers, “When at the first years when I came here I feel lonely because I don’t know the many people I know now. Before it was about three or four at the most.” When asked if any of her Spanish contacts were from Nicaragua she shared, “There’s only one lady here for Nicaragua and me is the second one. No more from Nicaragua. Everybody wants to come here from the Mexico and Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela I know all the people like that from other countries but Nicaragua, there’s only that lady and I.” And although she was able to identify Spanish speakers from other countries that she would meet in the community, she says, “The food is almost similar. Like Mexico they make tamales. We make tamales too, but they no seem like me.”

However, as her children grew, her oral skills also improved through informal practice. She never returned to formal schooling in English. Summing up her schooling she told me:

I went a little bit cause you know when you don’t have a high school diploma or even if you have your high school diploma from like a high school diploma from my country that is not valid here. So all the classes I take there even my business classes not valid here and so they tell me I have to go there and get a GED also I went for a short time to those classes and after a while I was looking for a job and I could not go to those classes so I never get that. But I never get it so I say now I’m too old why I have to get it.

I feel bad that I never get to my GED and I want to do it but not right now. I have too much working to do right now.

Sol's Life and Biliteracy over the Last Ten Years

During the last 10 years, Sol felt most comfortable speaking English in her words “Everywhere!” Her husband, after a prolonged illness, passed away and she became the sole financial support for her household. Peter’s years of illness forced her once again into an English-only environment. This environment was a world filled with English speaking doctors, nurses and medical insurance companies. Her husband’s language abilities became more limited as time went on during his illness. I asked her if their modes of communication changed over the years, especially as he become more gravely ill.

Peter, he was never a writer. We nevers write to each other. And that was always okay good for me. I am not good writer it’s the toughest and he is okay with me not writing. I am good Spanish writing, Sometimes I write things in Spanish when I don’t want anybody that speak English to know what I writing (laughing). It’s good to be a secret.

Sol devised alternative ways to accomplish many of the written tasks, such as grocery lists and notes to deliverymen dropping off packages when she is not at home.

I now talks to my phone for memory schedules and lists. And I have good neighbors to help if I need them for if I’m not home. I write Spanish all the times to the boys too so they can get Spanish backs," Sol shared.

Sol values her Spanish literacy abilities, because they play a significant role in her job almost daily. She works at a major chain store, and although starting at a branch an hour’s drive from home, was able to transfer to the store in her hometown due to her bilingual abilities and the store's need for a translator. Her position is cashier; however, in

retelling she says, “That’s what I do here at Superstore, I translate there. Cause I am the only bilingual.” She feels that her value as an employee lies in her bilingualism, not necessarily in her abilities as a cashier. Essentially her bilingualism makes her unique and offers great capital to her as a worker for this organization. I asked her if many Spanish speakers come into the store. She replies:

Yeah, a lot are mens, few women. But, whenever they need me to the pharmacy, to the jewelry, to the electronics to monogram. When they do something wrong, I fix it. They call me from wherever I am so I have to go there to talk to them. Talk to them in English and then in Spanish and translate it back to the Mexican people. I see guys in there that I think work at the farms like Moores. They work at Growers Farm, they work at Harvest Farms what is the other guy, I can’t remember his name. This is a vegetables. They are usually start coming on Friday evenings, Friday evenings and Saturdays and Sundays. They buy a food for a week, so they buy every week. Others are from Honduras and work at a local scrap yard. Maybe eight or 10. This job is very dangerous. Always they look for me they said they don’t care how long is my line.

Because of her value to this store and the obvious number of non-English speakers that frequent the store, Sol finds both fulfillment and security in her job. She takes her responsibilities very seriously. When I asked her if she was able to take vacation time to visit her daughter and other family members in Nicaragua, she said, “Even if I not work I can’t stay more than three weeks. Cause you know I’m the head of my house or I have to be payin my bills if I stay more than three weeks when I come home going to over and be nothing there no utilities.”

Her first priority continues to focus on her two boys, both still living with her as adults. When I asked if she considered moving back to Nicaragua after her husband Peter died, it did not seem to be an option.

Maybe someday when my kids you know they still here with me in the house after Peter dies and I thinking it be difficult for Juan and Jose. So I still have my house here. Sometimes I get tired and I feel like I'm getting older and my knees hurt and I need no stairs.

In addition to her cashier job Sol sells international phone cards from her home. She works five or six days at the store each week and the other two selling cards. The boys obviously appreciate their mother's work ethic, as they appear to help with responsibilities at home. "Some times when I get home I'm so tired. Sometimes Juan cook and he have the meal ready for me. I say thanks God I was wondering what I was going to have for dinner today. He knows how to cook.

Although her Spanish abilities are both valuable and useful for Sol every day, she does have regrets relating to her schooling. "I feel bad that I never get to my GED and I want to do it but not right now. I have too much working to do right now."

As we complete the interview process, I note that Sol exudes a great sense of accomplishment. She is obviously a woman confident in her life choices and thriving within the life she has created.

Placement of Sol's Biliteracies on the Continua of Biliteracy

Through the telling of her story, we can see that although Sol resides permanently in the United States, she is Bilingual with a balance of power of between the English and Spanish languages in her life. Sol's emigration to the U.S. shifted the Context of her

literacies from the Spanish Macro level to English Macro level. But, because she uses both English and Spanish at work in the US, we can regard her literacy as shifting from Spanish Monolingualism to Spanish/English bilingualism. In her early years in the United States the Context of Sol's life, her husband's monolingualism in English and the need to raise her son in a monolingual English environment required Micro-level Spanish skills necessary for her translation of Spanish to English. As a mother and wife, English was placed at the Oral-Macro level. In subsequent years, however, after her husband fell ill, Sol was immediately thrust in a position that presented a need for Monolingual English Literate skills. Her oral discourse with doctors relating to her husband's care required a more Literate level of English as did written interactions with financial and medical entities.

The development of Sol's literacies in Spanish ("sing and talking stories") remained consistently focused in the areas of Oral Receptive with none of English language learning present as a school age child. What little English skills learned as an adult in Nicaragua were Oral Receptive. Upon arriving in the United States, her acquisition of English, learning informal practice with family and neighbors, was Receptive Oral L2 discourse. Later, when her husband fell ill, Sol's English Productive-Receptive skills developed through necessity. This empowered her to develop and use her Written literacies within the specific contexts of work and personal finances but in other respects her use of Written skills are limited. She also continues to demonstrate a greater balance of Oral Reception and Oral Production usage producing the ability to provide Spanish\English translation at her workplace.

Currently in her life, while English is the Majority language, she exhibits a balance in using L1 and L2 for Content purposes more than any other IMOB. Sol's use of each language is very Content-experiential driven, both in her personal life and her work environment. She uses Spanish to speak with her family in Nicaragua and Spanish speaking customers at her job and English socially and at her workplace. Most oral language use is associated with the Vernacular at work assisting non-English speakers navigate purchases, occasionally utilizing more Literate skills associated with translating medical information relating to prescriptions in the pharmacy department at work. In most instances however, her activities are primarily Oral and highly Contextualized.

Sol acquired her literacies Successively, first Spanish followed by limited English in Nicaragua. Since taking residence in the US, her literacies became simultaneous using Spanish at home and adding English socially and at work. Spanish and English share Similar Structures and have Convergent Scripts, which facilitate her use of both languages.

Ester's Story

As is the case with all of the participants, Ester chose her pseudonym for the study. She chose Ester because "In the Bible Ester she was the strong woman you know and she was so helpful to saving the Jewish people, I like to be this woman too." The Ester of this study was born in a small, rural village in southern Korea. She was raised in what is considered folk religion or ancestor worship but became a Christian when moving to Germany in her early twenties. It can be seen throughout her story that her faith plays a primary role in her life and that it has greatly affected her biliteracy.

Ester was a student at the ARIN Center for Education classes for a short time, but responsibilities associated with her family caused her to leave the classes after less than a year. She was not a student I taught, as I was the program director by the time she entered the class. This allowed little interaction between us prior to her involvement in the study as she dropped out of class eight years prior to this study. One of my instructors recommended her as a potential participant, and I used my colleague's name when I made initial contact with Ester. After I identified myself, she indicated that she remembered seeing me at the Center when she attended classes.

I described the basic content of the study and asked if she would be willing to meet face to face to discuss what involvement in the study would actually entail. She seemed very anxious to meet me, telling me that she has been interviewed by several IUP college students on issues relating to her status as a second language speaker and that she enjoyed “telling my story of me.” We met in the evening at my home two days after my initial phone call. She insisted that we meet at my home and said that she did not want to inconvenience me by having me come to her house and that “It is always noisy with my children being around and it is a small, small space just right for us.” Additionally, she did not want to meet in a public place like the ARIN class site but would not give me a reason. She was very punctual in arriving, having driven herself, and seemed excited by the concept of the study. I explained that there would be one longer initial interview that would be taped and that it would be necessary to validate the information on the tape through several subsequent phone calls or face to face meetings after the initial meeting. She currently works as a housekeeper for several families and indicated that she would be happy to meet me on Saturdays and talk on the phone in the evenings. “Something good

that does good for other people is a big job and takes many times, I am very happy to help with you talking about my coming from Korea to the United States.” With this response, I felt that she understood the time commitment, and we went on to discuss the nature of the study. I explained to her that I chose her because of her unique status as a second language speaker. Her status as an international mail order bride was the primary consideration that caused me to choose her, but I needed to gain some amount of trust before I could determine that she was truly an international mail order bride and an appropriate participant for the study.

After we discussed the basic purpose and parameters of the study, I questioned her regarding the manner in which she met her husband. As indicated by her remark she was indeed an appropriate participant, “Oh yes, we were in very funny dating services that helped God bring us together.” Ester took the interview very seriously; she asked for the questions in advance. “I am been making notes in my life and wants to get so very much to you.” At her request, I sent her daughter the notes via e-mail, saying “I am not doing the e-mail any yet, my daughter’s she getting it for me and print the papers.”

We met the following Saturday, a week and a half after our initial contact again in my home at her insistence. She brought my list of questions with pages of responses. Her notes during the interview were interspersed with English words. Approximately 10% of each sentence was written in English, mostly nouns and informal English phrases such as “hanging out” and “Hi, how are you?”

During the first two-hour interview, Ester was very relaxed yet animated in her responses. She said repeatedly, “I’m so lucky, so many blessings to be here” when

responding to my questions. The initial interview lasted over two hours with several breaks and I felt that it went well when we were finished.

Ester's Early Life and Literacy in Korea

Ester grew up in an isolated rural area of Korea, one of three children. Her family raised bamboo and sold it as both a food source and for use in making small furnishings. Ester loves bamboo. She saw a dish at my home during the interview that had a bamboo design on it. She picked up the dish and said:

Would you like to know story of bamboo? It grows in many countries Korea, China and Japan and is so very hold dear by Korean peoples because it has two things everybodys need in life. It is strong and it is bends at the same time. It has so many uses and knows when to be strong and knows when it needs to bends. God gives us the bamboo to learn that we need to be like the bamboo.

Her family was completely dependent on their bamboo crop financially and they grew all of their own vegetables. They got their meat from one of the other farmers in their village, "The peoples there all help each other live and it makes everybody so happy to help. We live in very Korean family, children talk only little to mom and dad and mom do all talking to children."

When asked about her first school-based exposure to English, Ester said, "No English when were little only for older children. She discussed her first exposure to English, "We get to hear English in junior school and high school. We were old but we sing the ABC song (she performed it for me in both English and Korean-both with the same melody). When I asked her if English was a part of other subjects or a stand-alone

course, she indicates that it was “a regular subject for everyday.” She explained the part English took in her school experience:

It was memorize words only, more speak not so much writing in the school. It was same for Korean, we hear words, speak and speak again, not so much writing paper for every student and not many books even in the Korean. Outside the school we memorize word and study for the how speaking how writing that it every single day that how we study. But mostly ever what we have at the school is tests for other than that we use no use the English so much at all.

Ester offered the following to demonstrate the place English held in her daily outside the classroom:

My friends, yes we are asking for questions and answer yes we did for school. For the same time exciting because it's so fun learning some time we are asking simple language “Hi how are you?” something like that communication like that just we taking communication as practice.

Ester seemed very positive about learning English even though there did not seem to be much use for it in her daily life. She offered this opinion related to the value of learning English:

When I was little I think speaking is harder the writing is more easier earlier I give opposite, the writing is more easier case writing any time you want but speaking is hard not so many people around you have no chance to talking to American people. We have nobody's around we live in country not missionary no American people what so ever I never see in my life other country people at that time when I learning English time.

Ester spoke English with “nobody” at home. When discussing her three female siblings, Ester denied speaking English with any of them:

No, because they not have much chance to learn. They only learning only long time ago we have not much money to go to school. Korean doesn't have any free junior high school, senior high school. Doesn't covers from the government, you have to pay for. You have not money you not go to school. That's why speaks a blessing so that why so may people drop school because you have to pay. My sister is so smart she cry for two times she have a chance to go to school but my daddy drop out and he not go to school. If she does go to school like regular other people she going to be somebody else right. She's, my one sister, very smart, huge good memorizer, teacher recommends it she go to school [You have to go to school] teacher say. My daddy said is also huge smart too and he goes to elementary school only, he take care of whole neighborhood, all people he take care of everything. They ask to my daddy “Did you graduate college?” they have educations not enough. She dropped junior high school, she's disappointing about it, she give up. Her friends all the same, when you go to school it don't matter grade it is only limit of grade you go to school.

Ester's Journey to Germany

Ester believes that Christianity played a large part in the direction of her life. Her aunt lived in Germany and was part of a local Christian church that brought Korean women out of Korea, in Ester's words, “to find a good life.” When Ester was 22 years old, her family encouraged Ester to visit her aunt and see if she liked life “outside my home.” This life consisted of a job and a matchmaking service within the church that

found American husbands for its single members. The matchmaking service was advertised at the local American Army base, and soldiers who were interested came to the local church, signed up essentially and were introduced to Korean women.

Ester's trip to Germany was fraught with challenges as she shares in her story about her trip to this new country.

I don't think it's as easy come. I have one problem with an episode in airport I just came from Korea to Germany, I was in the airport and Frankfurt and I don't know what "suitcase" is. And everybody get out of gate and I have to find my suitcase and I don't know way, nobody with me and body else, I never go out of country with ever before and then I was first time. I was twenty-two or three and then I never go anywhere nobody anybody had around so I just need a suitcase so I prayer so hard and then I want am I going doing now just keeping worrying. Finally, I go to the office and then I need suitcase so I don't know how to pronounce suitcase so I put them like (made a gesture with hands outlining a suitcase) and they say "Oh baggage" and then they guess and they say yes that's right. I was so much worried about and I was looking for everywhere to find something then I just go office and then asking . . . I just more scares me is they I didn't see any other country people in the my country so I don't know exactly looked like when I went Germany. I see so many Asian people there when I see them I'm so happy to see I thought it was Korean and they speaking different language oh makes me so scares me because oh they looks like Koreans people is totally different language so I have no clue get my baggage. And just go and finally I office the only place I asking them and they guessing my words and they

find for me and after the Korean people waiting for me whose say all you help that was so scares me.

The move to Germany provided Ester an apartment with her aunt and a job in a Korean restaurant that precipitated the need to begin to use the English she had been exposed to in school. Ester discussed the make up of the restaurants clientele saying, “About 20% German people 80% American an around one percent Korean.” The restaurants staff also reflected this mix of ethnicity as well as the clientele. Ester discussed the difficulty of this transition at 22. She commented on the language barriers she faced:

I have a speaking right now then I haven't not much to know about much even very very simple word its as very hard a communication because when you don't know much English it's a very nervous other people talking so you nervous so you afraid of mistake (laughing). Instead of asking you ask someone else to help put. So what I do is get dictionary so we have to copy a lot of dictionary so any time I don't understanding I say “I don't understanding so would you tell me again?” and just keeping repeating what I just tell them I just a little bit English. They try to help out and speak slow to me and they explain different way and then also sometimes I language I use sign language.

Ester used different modes of communication with her English speaking contacts so I encouraged her to tell me more. “Yeah, somethings we think and they are thinking very hard and they are having to understanding us too and then so that how we communication and then day after day after day getting better and better.”

Ester expressed a great deal of frustration with her English language skills when working at the restaurant in Germany. She shared a story of an experience with language when she first began working in the restaurant.

I have very very episode story. I have that one day the lady, she's a waitress and I'm working inside kitchen and cook. And then she order that woman and she order tea and I say "When they need a tea and then she say "now" and then also I waiting for so many minutes and then I never give then mad she coming back to me and she say "I wanting tea" when you say that and I say "now" and now means immediately. And I never understanding what now means and I was so embarrassing and then I huge embarrassing and I say "Oh my God" now means now immediately and since then I never forget that word and its so important one word mistake especially business- so I never forget that story.

She recognized how one word can completely change the meaning of an exchange. "Yes because important to customer. I don't know she's just worried because she didn't know I not understanding that word and they don't understanding me and my language skill." Ester worked mostly in the kitchen at first but at times was required to fill in for wait staff. I asked if when wrote her orders in English or Korean and she replied "Korean."

Ester's life outside the restaurant did not offer her much chance to practice her English skills, and she indicated that she never learned German as "It was less speaking than the English." She shares this,

I just speaking Korean, in grocery store and to Korean people I live with. Not much time for friend I also work in Korean grocery store that restaurant owner

have. And they have Korean food and also Asian food and I myself in the store opening the store three or six months. He wants me cash and I working in there many things I know why or how counting money and then sometimes scares huge tall black peoples come in and (laughing) and in the morning around 9 to maybe 8:30-11:30 I working in the store and then after that go back to restaurant until 12 o'clock.

Ester's limited social life revolved around her church. She met her future husband through the church matchmaking service that she and her friend signed up for one day after the church service was over. She says:

My friend from restaurant she wants to leave Germany so she tries to find an army guy for husband. I not really like my husband at first but all Army men paid monies to meet us so I feels bad. We were matched and he seem like a nice man, he never speak much even when we had his friend translate English to Korean. But then one of the Korean girls told me he drinks a lot and I don't want to talk to him no more. But he keep coming in the restaurant after that day after day and sitting to talk to me. And I get to know him better.

The couple communicated at the restaurant without a translator by teaching each other a few words every day when they talked. Apparently, Ester's new beau was a music fan. "When he see I really didn't want him he would tell me American music songs and I am loving music so I listen to him." His persistence eventually paid off Ester stayed in Germany for three years, and the last year was spent dating her current husband, Sam. At the time, she said, "I told him, no drinking for me if you want me to be your wife and

eventually he was never drinking even at night and I see that under all that he is a good man.”

Ester and Sam were married after dating a year. Nine months later they were the parents of their oldest child, a daughter. Their friends from the church in Germany were the only ones in attendance at both the wedding and later the birth of their daughter. Ester’s family could not afford to make the trip, and Sam’s family chose not to attend either of the events. With Sam’s tour of duty over and three years after the “suitcase” incident in the airport, they traveled to the United States with their toddler.

Ester’s Biliteracies in the United States

At age 25 Ester arrived in Pennsylvania with her American husband, a toddler, and with limited English speaking skills and few possessions. The couple found refuge with Sam’s family. Ester began to learn about American culture and the subsequent language necessary to navigate her permanent home. She offered this story:

Okay, um when learning more English I lived with my aunt, my husband aunt, we live with her two years and half, anything I don’t know something I asking her. And she’s householder and when I coming United States I have little children already and no body home. I’m afraid probably I’m most afraid of answering telephone so she there always for me two years and a half. So it’s much much much relief anything I don’t know. She takes us for restaurant, grocery store, gas anything my husband . . . she always there for us. She help out everything and now I know what’s going on American. And then after two years an a half I move in Connellsville I went to I just live. Regular children to raise I have one-step son one my daughter and my son and all three children live with us. So, I learning

every day daily language because speaking everybody not speaking Korean so I have to leaning every single day I learning every single day new word. Learning don't matter how much I don't want to learn speak I can learn a lot of thing from TV, from store and from family and then after the grocery shopping, restaurant anywhere I going I just look around and learning around.

By the time Ester and Sam left his aunt's house, their second child, a son, was born and Sam's son from a previous marriage was living with them. Ester, Sam, and the three children settled in a compact house, the house where they still reside, in the small rural town where they first settled with Sam's aunt. Sam's aunt continued to be a source of great help navigating the culture and with Ester's language needs. "She always there, is important for to her to help me to raise our childrens with lots of things to do and lots of places to go. She drives me and my kids to places around here for seeing new things."

Ester discussed the materials and modes of learning English she relied upon other than Sam's aunt.

When my daughter in elementary school and I follow my skill too with her. Now feel comfortable so all get through my daughter's sixth grader. Then my sons' much easier already I been through one time, I help my son until third or sixth grade and third grade I don't have to help him. He go to preschool. He fine in the house, he little it behind but he maybe caught up and he completely fine now. He better because of me, my English better."

Ester spoke about the types of things outside the home she did when she first came to the United States. She said, "When I coming United States, my husband used to be working by self I raise children so I'm no working much I don't working at all for 10

years because I need a raise my children and then when I my husband have a stroke so the government said you have to work.” It was this quickly that Ester’s life changed again in a very significant way. Although Sam’s stroke changed Ester’s life dramatically, forcing her to be the breadwinner, she talked very little about the event. Instead, she focused on the positive, what she did to respond to her new circumstances. She steered away from the subject when I questioned her about his stroke and I respected her privacy relating to the issue. Apparently, Sam lost all ability to speak for over a year and it was during this time that Ester needed to formulate a plan that would allow her to take over many of the speaking duties that her husband previously executed. Although Ester had Sam’s aunt to rely on, she was caring for three school-age children and a husband that needed significant nursing care after his stroke. Discussing her critical need to navigate the English world both in writing and orally, she only offered; “I try hard and sometime Sam’s aunt help me with hospital bill reading.” She minimized how difficult it was to assume these duties! she only spoke about how she moved forward. Ester recalled that her first brave step alone was the acquisition of a driver’s license.

Oh, myself I go to the learning drive license. I have to drive license, hard for me to study it take forever I have pass drive license I was so worried about and all sudden I go to Monroe church and pastor he training us for that drive license, easy way to do it. And he explaining everything out loud, no reading for me and then I passed writing test and driving test pass everything he help out easy way and simple way driving always sooo blessed. He teach me with the English with the Korean he explain what’s going on drive license rule. They both teach that makes me happy. I tried little bit come United States since have baby, I carry Maria and

then I studied everyday with the dictionary books, and take forever, I was so worried when I'm going to get drive license? And also I go to pastor church anybody have the drive license pass its hard for you come to my class and Wednesday night in the church and we will training you. I say ohhh the pastor asked one of the girls and I say what about me can you do that for me I come too and say yes you can come too so we do the class every Wednesday evening at the church and maybe two months or one month something like that and just so I'm glad. I took the test out of here so I can write, here in town the test is on computer and I did not learn computers. Before I go to test I was really really prayer, I prayer, prayer, prayer then all time about test. He's polices officer so calm and I asking question and her giving all direction he's just so much helper I am so impressed about how you test in United States. United States and Korean different thinking failing a lot of people make them money.

Ester elaborated on her comment about how money comes into play with the test in Korea. She offered:

Yeah, you have to pay more, more, more I have their times to fail each. And then one of I pass and one guess what happened? I missed retuned a paper, after pass and then nobody tell me and I not know what's going on and then I came back you are not pass anymore because you miss the date and I say I give the money I need to give the pass and they lessons and then I have to do it again. After that I have to buy some gifts and that's when they let me pass. So shamed of it I hate it and I hate it and I hate it! And then I come to United State they are this so for people I just so happy in United States every rule it's just for people they willing

to get away for people. But Korean people they are try to when you asking to you have to pay for something they always have money being one of collecting money that's what they are. I know that's how they are it makes me so disgusting that's reason I do not like the country (laughing).

Ester added that she acquired an International Drivers License in Germany and said, "I never drove because it's not my car and I did know how many cars breaking and how to fix. I am not the English at that time either so I am no bothering whatsoever so my expiring one years past."

Now that Ester had the independence to drive she moved on to address her formal English skills.

I need go to work so before go to have a job so I'm go to ESL class and that's how my first step of my job for all. I got another step, I want to go to computer class, computer class first and then I go to the ESL class and that's even before I finish to try work in nursing home.

Her job application at the nursing home was turned down because of her still limited English skills. This rejection prompted her to seek more formal help with her English. She said that:

I could never write even easy things they ask me to write in a note and that my speaking was hard for to understand. So I finish computer class but I can not go to ESL class because then I work went to. I notice my speaking is not very good as American people so what I want to do is my speaking better yes that's how when my husband go to the doctor hospital speech therapy one of the ladies speaking therapy she introduce to me go to University go to speech therapy. They have a

program for the speech therapy they have a program for me. Then I go there oh man this is big treat awesome they make a busy for me-its huge! It's so great a freedom of pronounce the fixing for me so University fixing speech therapy program makes me so huge difference. And then computer class and then the ESL class. ESL class is really 10 years later so I know pretty much speaking still I notice at the ESL class I got two benefit they got picture dictionary I really one from them its just so good, it's Korean and English. This helps me to learn first time to write down and see English and Korean words together. I love them the books and I order them and the lady give to me the other books help me teach me cause I can not go there all the time. I left so that all the step, foundation for all me to English learning and also my children go to school. All homework it's just so hard for me to help them so what I do I call my aunt, my husband aunt, any thing I don't know history, something I don't know I asking call her and all give me information, That's just allow I figure out so day after day I learning and learning and I ask questions some times teachers helping me out. I tell teach I don't' know much would explain to me one more time it just like the how I got all information that's how I learning about English, Just by talkin.

Ester did benefit from class in her opinion. She says the repetition practice helped as well as the texts provided in class. Since she was not able to attend regularly, she was encouraged to take texts home to study when she could. However, after a year of being enrolled in class, she dropped out to acquire a full time job. That job, cleaning offices, has supported her and her family for the past 12 years.

Ester discussed her use of her Korean language in her life currently:

Because I think if I don't hang out with Korean people I have none, I don't have to.

Maybe once a week, maybe two times a week my Korean friends call me. We speaking half an hour and then my daughter is speaking Korean right now so she wants speaking Korean so extra 10%. She wants a Korean speaking so I speaking more Korean now than before. Cause someone I can talk my friends pretty much and but anybody don't know Korean people I probably don't have a chance to talk.

Did her participation in a Korean community based church expose her to more of the Korean language? She said:

Right now with go to American church, too far to Monroe every week so I don't have much chance to talk Korean either. And then I call Korean in my country I can talk maybe once a week and maybe two times a week. Every two weeks I have many family so I talk sister one week next week I talk another sister that's we are continue talk, all Korean. She indicates that no one in her family speaks any English.

I asked if her family was happy that he lives in American and speaks English, she says:

Yes they are very happy me because one of lady pastor I call her sometimes and speaking English "Hi how are you," now be laughing when I'm talking to my Korean family in Korean and my family coming American "What they talking about" they are so interesting about it. When I speak English "We want to speak English like you."

Ester's frequency of use of the Korean language has changed as she converses in Korean with her daughter who has recently taken a great interest in the Korean language.

Oh, I am surprised and happy maybe is it doesn't matter happy if American language is so beautiful. My daughter likes it the Korean language she say to me when I speaking American she say it is a little bit rougher, pronounce cut when I speaking Korean language she say tender and then like this way (demonstrates in Korean) "Mommy would you talk Korean speaking to me I love you talk more Korean speaking, more tender speaking more softer this is the accent. Also, if you know how speaking English very well can be very soft too. Some word looked prettier in American, Some Korean prettier in (demonstrates again) so my daughter wants when I speaking Korean she's more happier more softer and tender. Then also she speak Korean is so cute, so cute. She lesson from me before and now we practice. Some I don't teach she practice and teaching. Anything she want to learn I'm just teaching right away. She make the sentence so funny totally opposite, totally not make sense and then I make straight.

Ester doubted that speaking the Korean language with her daughter would help her fluency.

Oh, if she Koreans speaking it doesn't helping me, if she speaking English she's helping me speak . Whenever you speaking new language more helpful. Cause we speaking 100% mostly she asking about I already know in English if I don't know anything its more easy to teach her my way, she doesn't know both yet. This better for her- not me, doesn't help me.

Ester spoke of her English language skills since she first came to the United States.

Speaking better but (laughing). We dealing with the speaking always ay first. But I am writing a little now. That is why I am no good at computer still and no e-mail for me. I have a hard time writing, we never write much in Korea too so I never be a real writer. I am still working on writing with a sentence, if I master that then I can do everything.

Sam's illness apparently did not prompt more writing for Ester.

We never write notes, stroke make his right hand weak that he writes with, he never much like writing. We played games of guess a secret. I act like on TV to make him understand and try to guess him what he wants to say to me. It made us laugh and that makes me very very blessings to see Sam happy. I always been talk to Sam and talk out to me to helps me remember.

At the end of the interview Ester responded to the question, "If you had a choice now to be with your family in either Korea, Germany, or the United States what would you choose?" as follows:

I'm happy in the United States absolutely I liking the Untied States, reason is this country is everybody have a choice to education and open the door also anybody willing to leaning. I am so much surprising about my son my stepson. He's so bright guy but problem with the mental but government supporting 100% I am so impressed, he go to college this year, he waiting for 10 years and they supporting he now for college. I know is say it's the beauty of all people so may benefits so he cried for that.

Another worked in the United States many many good programs if you find a good program you in the right field. Its so wonderful country. And also my own story and when I'm not working and my husband work and we have low income the first time he give him food stamps and we get help, no way in my country! Every single step by step is so easy. And driver license thing is so easier people and when you go to high level people, more education they more helpful. More humble than people in Korea.

Ester and I spent many hours together, in part because my tape recorder malfunctioned and in part because she was very anxious to share her story. Her enthusiasm was contagious and instead of leaving her story with a sense of pity because of the hardship she has endured, I left encouraged. Ester's perspective on life is optimistic and does not leave room for considering her less than fluent English skills as a barrier.

Placement of Ester's Biliteracies on the Continua of Biliteracy

Through the telling of Ester's story, it can be seen that English is placed on the right side of Hornberger's Continua, affording it the language of greater power for Ester. Her life now in the United States has redirected the Context of her literacies from Korean Majority to English Majority. Her attendance at a Korean speaking church for the first few years that in America afforded her a Micro-Oral use of her L1 at the time, but the remainder of her environment, then and now, places English at the Macro-Oral setting of both focus and power. Although she indicates that she prefers oral English, at the time of her husband's stroke it became necessary to focus on the Literate level of English skills. The daily requirements of her life, with the exception of her brief attendance at a Korean speaking church, place her in a Monolingual English context exclusively.

Ester's Development of language in Korea focused primarily on Receptive skills with no English offered during her childhood education in Korea. English language learned during adulthood, in both Germany and the United States, was Oral-Receptive. Ester's Bilingual language learning has included little focus on Written Development with a personal preference on the Oral-Receptive in both languages.

English is the Majority language, limiting her Korean interactions to Minority activities as speaking with family in Korea and limited tutoring of her daughter in basic Korean. Moreover, even though Ester was required to interface with medical personnel and manage her family's finances for a time, she is limited contextually to those specific linguistic instances for Literate English and operates currently exclusively in the Vernacular.

Ester developed her literacies Successively with exposure to English only after reaching adulthood in Germany. Korean and English possess both Dissimilar Structures and Divergent Scripts within each language.

Agnes

Agnes was one of the 10 women that made up my original class in 1986 and attended classes off and on for the next eight years. Although she sparked my original interest in the topic of international mail order brides, I had not seen nor spoken to Agnes for 10 years prior to Christmas 2009. During those 10 years I had lost track of her, and although I had tried to reach her several times while in the formative stages of this study, I failed repeatedly. It was with great regret that I began setting up interviews for the study as I felt that I owed Agnes the recognition of inclusion in the study as she was my original impetus for choosing to conduct the study.

I had reconciled myself to honoring her through a credit in the opening comments of the study when by the greatest of luck we stumbled upon one another. I had been thinking about her often when writing the opening chapters of the study and to actually find her accidentally seemed unreal for the first few moments after I spied her standing in a department store checkout line. After a copious amount of high pitched squealing on each of our parts and simultaneous questioning, Agnes and I made plans to meet after the holidays which became a springtime visit as that was the next time her daughter would be home to help with translation. Mary, Agnes's daughter, was crucial to our both our interview as Agnes's English skills had degraded to an almost survival speaking level. It was of significance to offer Agnes's story as a part of the study and to give her, her rightful place in this study.

Agnes and I exchanged telephone numbers, and I contacted her in late January of 2010. I attempted to explain the purpose of my study and my desire to have her participate but I was very concerned with her limited English skills that she understood the exact nature of the study and could agree to participate with full understanding of her decision. Agnes offered Mary's e-mail address so that she could act as translator. Mary, an adult now, remembered me and was very happy to act as our translator when I contacted her a week later via e-mail. Mary and I emailed each other several times over the next few months, and it was decided through phone conversations with her mother, translated to me through e-mail, that I would be the family guest on Easter Sunday. The initial interview took place through a delightful visit with Agnes and her family. Agnes's husband and son were present for most of the interview with Mary acting as translator and present for the entire interview. We sat at their dining room table for most of the

afternoon, lunching on the same type of extraordinary pastries that Agnes brought to class many years ago. The atmosphere was exceptionally congenial and the process seemed familiar as if the family often interacted with company in much the same manner, the language of friendship occurring both in Polish and English as if intermingled, the two languages become one complete communication tool. Mary translated and Agnes's husband and son sat and listened with almost rapt attention to the retelling of the life story of their wife and mother. Agnes has always been a very determined and independent woman; she was able to reply to many of my questions without the need for translation, when she was not sure she addressed her daughter in Polish to translate. Mary has a Masters degree in International Studies and has traveled extensively; she is a bright and articulate young woman. I was initially concerned that Agnes's story would be infused with her daughter's interpretation when she was needed to translate. However, I quickly learned that Agnes carefully monitored the answers Mary supplied to me. And often would check Mary's response and require Mary to edit her response to me until Agnes was satisfied.

Agnes's Early Life and Literacies in Poland

Agnes was born in the early 1950s "I will not tell you exactly when, even my husband is still not sure how old I am after over 25 years of marriage. But Polish women do not easily tell their age because we always look younger than we really are." Agnes, an only child, grew up in a suburban environment.

Agnes says:

My mother was a school teacher and my father worked for the Polish government. They no speak English, maybe know a few words but all Polish I hear. We were thought of by our neighbors to be rich but not rich by what you think of as rich here in America. My mother was trained as a schoolteacher before I was born and only worked after I graduated from high school. My father, because he was a government worker, had a high status in our neighborhood. But even as a government worker we were on a list for a dishwasher. That was the judgment of success, how long did it take your family to get a dishwasher! We were on the list for a dishwasher for three years before we could actually get one. We had the money ready but a dishwasher was one thing that was hard to get for us in Poland. Things were important in helping you to keep your social standing in our neighborhood. I remember going to the jewelry store with my other when I was very little to look at a crystal bowl. It was a beautiful cut glass bowl and I loved the colors it made on the ceiling when the sun hit it. We “visited” our bowl in the jewelry store every week for two months to give the jeweler money until we could bring it home. It was a very happy and proud day when we went to the store with the last amount of money. My mother dressed me up in my Sunday clothes to go and pick it up. She said “We will have friends come and see our bowl all weekend to show how important your father is at work.”

Agnes attended school for 12 years in much the same format as our public schools in the United States. Her elementary school was close to her home, and her mother walked her to school every morning and picked her up every afternoon. “It was very like

school here that my children went when they were little. We listen to story teacher reads and we read in school books. We taking some tests and write stories, but always in Polish never English. My mother help with my homework every night.” Students moved directly from elementary school to high school as there is not an intermediate step, junior high or middle school, as in the United States.

Agnes’s high school, although farther away than her elementary school was accessible through public transit. “Workers going to their jobs hated for the school children to ride the bus, we were noisy and moved around in our seats a lot.” She knew that her family did not pay tuition for her schooling but “Maybe this is because my father worked for the government, maybe government workers children go to school free.”

When I asked Agnes if she learned any English in school she said, “No, nothing. Not in high school, nothing. I learned Germany in High School. Germany, Latin language and Russian, that’s all. Russian we learning eight years in school this is program. In Poland children fifth grade start learning Russia language.”

Agnes’s Biliteracies as an Adult in Poland

Agnes graduated from high school and then attended a business college for two years to learn to become a bookkeeper. She completed business college and immediately was hired as a bookkeeper for a local hospital. I received another negative response when questioning if English was a part of the curriculum in her business courses.

I have no English even listening until I started working at the hospital. Yes, in my job is doctor and my friend go a special class learning English only I no like is go. I talk “I no need this language,” so I no go. This is I think first and second steps for her job. All doctor and people is work have University need to talk

English language in Poland. We didn't need in my hospital English, so I no go classes. My friend keep asking me to come to class with her and one time I go to university have free English classes and I go is one time and teacher talk "Good morning, What is yours name?" I open eyes because I understand nothing. People coming, have little bit talking English maybe high school, I no talk nothing only to much for me, so I quit. Never I need to go to English class.

When asked if anyone at the hospital spoke English, she said "No, no one. My friend try practice but I say no too hard when we are meeting for talking and just fun." When the topic of English being taught in her high school she said, "No, but French, Germany but no more Russia is." Asked if she remembers any of her German, she says "No, but some Russian I can speak. Maybe so much like Polish."

Agnes's First Trip to America

Agnes, at the age of 22 and with no English language skills, is coerced by a girlfriend to accompany her to the United States to try to get a job. "My mother and father very very upset, I leave good job, I leave them. My mother cry every day before I leave." Agnes and her friend, Rose, traveled to Boston as Rose had family in the city. The girls took a room with Rose's cousins. "Rose could speak pretty good English, and she got a job in a department store selling perfume right away. I was job as baby sitter. I go is small class is second language, is English language. "How many times a week did you go to class?" I asked. "Only one time, Saturdays because my friend is work everyday and take me Saturday evening to this class." When asked what type of things she learned in class Agnes replied, "Ah, its only use word I must use, 'Open door, close door.' With name of things in classroom. Only speak, only speaking. Teacher talk and you talk and

say the word and no correct us. Because I talk is my children one student talk “Thnk you, Thinks you, Tahnks you” is only teacher is happy student talk something.” With little chance to hear the correct pronunciation of words, I assumed that there were other aids for classroom learning. “No, we no have book no have book, no have tape, no have nothing. Is only blackboard in class.” Class structure seemed minimal, perhaps the teacher, being a volunteer, had little training and fewer resources. To add to her frustration with class she could not entice Rose to practice with her outside of class, “I come in home I like is talk little bit she say “no, no, no we have Saturday, we have vacation that’s English, we talk English only in work and job.” And although she doesn’t know why, all 25 of the students in class were of Polish descent. “I only go two or three times with my friend Rose, I no like this class like the first English class. I know no English and I am embarrassed and I no need English for my babysit all day.”

Agnes spoke of her stay in Boston by saying, “Only half year. Yes, I think its five months I think its close to summer time till cold. I stay from February to August.”

A Return to Poland

Agnes continued her story by offering this next step in her life’s journey.

I am getting feeling very lonely for my country and peoples who speak Polish and my mother and father keeps asking me to come home so I went back to Poland in September. My mother is very happy I am home but tell her that I am lonely that marrying is for me. I know no boys that I want to take care of me here so I find a church, not my church that helps to find husbands for Polish girls. We argue much but I no want to be alone and I am getting old.

Agnes describes getting in touch with a local pastor who operated a matchmaking service. “The pastor he helps my friends many friends get husbands and I am looking, so he finds me Johnny.” Apparently, the Polish pastor has a counterpart in the United States who advertises by word of mouth the matchmaking service. A potential husband is found and he is a very attractive possibility as he “Has his house and Cadillac and is good, safe, kind man.” Johnny is an American, is widowed, who was married to a Polish woman. He is 25 years Agnes’s senior and against the wishes of her family, Johnny comes to Poland to meet Agnes and they begin a courtship. “We are going to meet Johnny. And Johnny coming to Poland marry to Poland. And I coming to the United States.” Agnes’s English deteriorates as she becomes excited telling of a short courtship. “We meet and talking a little bit, his first wife was Polish speak Polish with mother was Polish. Johnny understand Polish, little bit talk Polish this time, little bit understand.” Again with disapproval from parents Agnes makes a decision about her future. “Johnny asks me marry him on second time he come and see me, we spend lots of time at my family’s house and slowly my mother and father gets to know him.” In addition to the “donation” that the men accessing this church-based service were required to make, Agnes’s parents found Johnny to be generous. “Johnny made a big money gift to my home church and this made my mother think that he was serious man and she’s not so sad anymore.” The couple were then engaged and Johnny had to make two subsequent trips to both prepare for and marry his bride. “We were marry here in Poland big in church, many many beautiful flowers.” And after one year from meet Johnny we moved to United States.”

Agnes's Biliteracies in the United States

Agnes spent a very quiet first five years in the United States. Johnny had a home in a small predominantly Polish town where four of the five Catholic churches in the area had mass conducted in Polish. Agnes had two babies during this time, Mary and Christopher, Mary being two years older than Christopher. The family settled down in small town America that substantively resembled Poland. Most of her neighbors spoke Polish; store owners either spoke Polish or were able to communicate in Polish, and Johnny's family spoke some Polish, requiring little use of the English language. "Then one day Johnny wants me to speak English to him. So Johnny gets me a book to study Polish-English." Agnes gets up from the table at this point and brings this book to me.

I uses it still almost every day, Polish-English book. And I ask Johnny some word I no understand. Its example it's ask what is this word- noses notes (giving pronunciation example) what is noses in hospital? What is word Johnny tell me word, correct word and I change say again, again, again. Johnny talk "I no tell you five times" (laughing) And couple lessons with Johnny, I quit. I quit ask Johnny we fight little bit.

The book looks like a very large dictionary, and when I check it was published in Poland in 1965. In addition to having content-based sections such as "Household words," "Mathematics," and "Health" with individual words appearing first in Polish then in English, the text offers writing examples. There are sections that include thank you notes, letters to a child's teacher and sentences to include in a sympathy card. There are sections that guide a homemaker in doing laundry correctly, in both Polish and English and how

to set a proper table for a Christmas dinner. It's obvious why Agnes values it as it translates many of the important functions of her daily life.

Johnny was Agnes's third English teacher. When I commented that the first two didn't last long, she and Johnny both laughed. "I fired him, I fired Johnny." It took a while for all of us to recover from the laughter this comment initiated, but when we did we spoke of Agnes' English skills.

Asked what was the best way for Agnes to learn English, she answers quickly "Is talking. This is help me most. Same thing again and again." I asked if cassettes helped, "Only cassette no help for me too fast for me. Is no possible make slow I need in this time the same word many time."

When asked who she practiced her English skills with outside the classroom Agnes said:

Nobody! Nobody only school. Only this time I no coming school full time. You remember I stay only to lunch after lunch we take because Johnny wait with baby and hard. But class is two hour, three hour but I only stay two hour. You school help us moving to, United States Doctor, you learning us what ask I need to know how to get help – ask for a doctor, hospital, etc. "My child has an itch or My child has a scratch", is people sick we have some problem small and big problem and this is important know this is United State office work. Because it very different.

It was gratifying to hear that the adult class offered practical for her. Agnes enrolled in the survival-skill English class, offering daily living language that afforded a student some independence within the culture. The more advanced class then moved the

students on to more complicated grammatical and syntactical structuring of the English language.

Agnes's attendance became more sporadic over time and eventually Johnny, although retired by that time, became reluctant to drive the fifty minutes that it took to get to our class site. So I asked Agnes what she relied on once she stopped coming to class. "When I go make some business— going to the hospital, children's doctors – I need to communicate was the problem is. I need a translator." Again she got up from the table to show me a large electronic translator, a precursor to the pocket variety that is popular now. When asked if it helped, she replied:

Yes, but it was too big. Now I bought a smaller one but it's not as good because it has five languages many buttons confusing. I don't want a translator, I want a quick dictionary. I show you mine, small is no good, only for travel, wholes sentence- too difficult. Too many programs, have idiom, has sometime no word. I need basic. This is no good, I no use. Takes too long to find one word.

This is very much a woman's problem, the family depends on the woman.

I think its Polish marriage man Polish and woman Polish.

Mary inserted one of her few comments during the interview. "If it's purely Polish marriage they are integrated much faster here. Every family I see because I have friends, who have four children and have big job, many friends, American, both are Polish.

Agnes agreed with her daughter on the interesting point that life would have been much easier if she and her husband had both been born in Poland. In order to completely understand, I asked if it would still be easier if one or both of the Polish born couple had

low fluency skills. Agnes answered, “Yes, everybody thinks that your husband, your family can teach you English but if husband and wife are both speaking only a little bit then everybody outside comes and helps until they can speak good.”

Agnes’s Life and Biliteracies in the Past Ten Years

When posed with the following question, “Now that you have been in the United States for almost 30 years what did you think is most useful for you to do every day to learn to speak, to learn to talk?” Agnes doesn’t hesitate when she replies:

Speak, because I go outside I must speak with people. I love to be with people so I must speak to them. I go to make hospital or beaches (vacations) I must talk I must explain what is the problem what I want. Sometime I ask Johnny, sometime Johnny does not understand my Polish. I must look in my book.

Added into the language concerns at home is the fact that Johnny is in very fragile health and has a series of mini strokes over the past 10 years. He lost his driver's license eight years before and has experienced significant impairment in speech off and on. During that time neither of their children has lived at home for the past five years, which has forced Agnes to get a driver’s license with the help of her children. She is responsible for getting Johnny to his many doctors’ visits. Because one of the strokes weakened his left side, she is very reluctant to leave him alone. Even when grocery shopping, Agnes must take Johnny with her, and at age 91, that can be a daunting task.

With Agnes’s forced independence, it became necessary to investigate how much English she needs to support herself daily. I listed household chores such as grocery lists, bills and recreational items such as reading the newspaper and books. Her response to these questions were, “I read only Polish books and Polish magazines.” Mary adds, “I got

Mama two Polish television stations on cable and that's the only station she watches." I asked about Johnny's TV habits and mother and daughter offer, "Oh he never wins with the TV, the Polish station is always on, even if no one is watching it!" I had noticed that the television was on when I came and stayed on in the living room even though as they said no one was paying attention to it.

Agnes also said, "This is a Polish house run by a Polish woman, everything I write is in Polish, Polish grocery list, Polish letters, everything. No e-mail! Only send a letter only Polish language." Mary adds though, "She writes English when she needs to. We do have some family friends that are always giving gifts and she needs to send thank you letters and she writes to my friends that don't speak Polish." I ask if Agnes and Johnny communicate through notes. "No I talk Johnny. We need cheese, bread, milk. We never write down to each other. Johnny writes the grocery lists and he writes the checks for bills."

When Agnes is asked what language she and her husband speak to each other after some 30 years of marriage she offers, "I speak English to my husband, little bits of Polish words. When I write, I need a dictionary, too hard to everyday." And when she wants to speak to her children "Almost all Polish now that they are grown up. When they were little I tried to speak English when they were in school but now they help me and speak Polish to me on the phone." "And how much phone?" Mary adds and they all laugh. "We have big International calling plan that we use when I am out of the United States on business. We talk everyday, Mama and I."

When asked what types of places Agnes feels most comfortable speaking English outside the home she replies:

At the mall because they need to understand me. They need understand me because they want to sell me things. When I speak English, sometimes they don't want to understand me but that is only other people in store not workers. And they don't make problems that my grammar is wrong or my vocabulary is wrong. The doctor's office I think they understand too. Now we don't go outside anymore, only to doctor and shopping, we don't have friends anymore, they all died.

Sometimes brother-in-law comes to visit and I speak a little English but that's it.

When asked whom Agnes feels most comfortable speaking English to, Agnes and Mary discussed this question at length and Mary offered:

People with a world view, not small town people who never venture outside of this country. Those that can sympathize with me. Small towns have the same demographic and stay away from people who are different. I think big city people are more open. Everyone is so different there. In close small town, people are very close minded because it's so small there and everyone is the same.

Finally, Agnes reflects on any additional parts she would like to include in her story, after serious contemplation, she offered these thoughts:

I have problems this year going to confession. Because I only go to Polish confession. This year I had no opportunity. I forget everything in English. I only went one time in English and I said never again. I now look for Polish priests. I no like this change.

When I asked what Agnes felt motivates learning a new language she offered:

Polish student travel to this country to learn English. Here in the US, they don't do it. This is very important for students. It's a motivation for learning it. I had no motivation for learning English, I would go to Russia, Hungary, Slovakia, etc. I never thought that I would travel to the US and I thought I would never need it when I was young.

And lastly when asked what type of things offered Agnes the greatest assist to learning English she says:

Textbooks did not help me. The phrase books and dictionaries were more useful to me. When I need to go to the grocery store, hospital or store – it's easy to find. Even if I had no husband or children, a textbook is still not helpful if I don't have someone to help me. I need someone at my skill level or a teacher to walk me thru the textbooks.

Despite all the barriers and difficulties, Agnes assured me that, “These are just little problems that’s in everyone’s lives. My English, my Polish doesn’t make me happy or sad it is important this.” And she gets up from the table and kisses each of her children and her husband in turn as evidence of her contentment.

Placement of Agnes’ Biliteracies on the Continua of Biliteracy

Agnes moved from Monolingualism in Polish in her own country to Bilingualism in Polish and English here in the United States. When she first emigrated to the United States from Poland, she settled in a community that supported Polish at the Macro and most powerful level. In church and neighborhood, Polish was the language of capital. However over time, a shift has occurred, through a significantly diminished Polish-

speaking population, English exists at the Macro level outside her home. She is Bilingual in her home environment, using Polish exclusively with her children and acquiring information through Polish television and print, speaking a variety of English\Polish with her husband and English only in all areas outside the home. The agency of each language holds significant contextual value in her life. Her Polish literacies exist mainly in the Vernacular, as does much of her oral English communication. She does possess Literate English skills developed as a response to her husband's significant health issue.

Her Development in Polish took place using both Receptive and Productive skills, with no English introduced either at home or in the schools. English occurred only as an adult and occurred mainly through Oral Receptive skills in a more formal learning environment. She continues to rely heavily on Receptive skills when translating phrases from her Polish\English "phrasebook" and focuses almost exclusively on Oral Productive in her daily environment.

The Content of Agnes's daily language usage places Polish in the Majority usage. As she ages, Agnes interacts only with the English speaking world outside her home for necessities such as doctor's visits and grocery shopping, both utilizing a Vernacular-based format. All interactions, inside the home and out are highly Contextualized.

Agnes acquired her literacies Successively, learning English only after arriving in the United States. Polish and English possess Similar Structures and have Convergent Scripts potentially offering greater ease of transition between the languages.

Maria

Maria came into my professional life through contact with her daughter as an ESL student in public school. In September of 2008, I received a call from one of ARIN's

member school districts that there was an eighth grade female student entering their high school who appeared to need ESL services. I made the usual appointment to test the student and upon arriving at the school found Sophia, a vibrant young girl who had been in the United States for three months. Although Sophia tested at a low fluency level on the standardized diagnostic test that I administered, she had a good grasp of low-level Vernacular and could conduct a basic conversation. We talked both before and after the test, as it is critical that I have a clear picture of the student, his or her language needs and any historical or environmental influences that could influence his or her acculturation and language. I learned that she had moved from Argentina to the U. S. in June with her mother and new stepfather. She indicated that she had been studying English independently everyday online since arriving and practicing at night with her stepfather. Sophia seemed genuinely excited to be starting a new school as I began to tell her what to expect from her ESL classes.

Upon completion of scoring Sophia's diagnostic testing and developing recommendations for her course of study, I forwarded the information to her school and a meeting was established with myself, Sophia, her mother and father and appropriate school personnel: principal, guidance counselor and classroom teachers. During our meeting a week after Sophia's initial testing, I met Sophia's mother, Maria, and her father Paul. Sophia spoke little during the meeting, yet she still seemed very positive about the experience. I felt, and was ultimately correct, that she would assimilate easily into the school culture, even though she was the only non-native speaker in the school. Paul, Sophia's middle-aged American stepfather, was very vocal and did most of the speaking during the meeting. Sophia's mother, Maria, only uttered a hesitant "Hello" and "Thank

you” so I offered Paul a flyer relating to ARIN’s Adult ESL class. He called a week later and enrolled his wife. Although I was not Maria’s classroom instructor, I was very involved in her life as I continued to monitor the family through my connection with her daughter. I would stop in Sophia’s school to monitor her progress, and we often had a chance to talk. It was from Sophia I learned that her mother was a mail order bride. She always spoke positively about her mother and new stepfather, but some of the things she shared painted a very isolated picture of her mother’s life. Sophia often shunned offers to come to new friends’ homes because in her words, “My mother she is never leave the house except for class, Dad says he needs her at home all the time and she cries. I go home after school to play outside with her.”

Maria came to class only once a week as her husband worked shift work four days a week and could only bring her on his day off. They lived over a half an hour away from Maria’s class site, and all of the other students in class at that time walked to class, precluding her sharing a ride with a classmate. Maria tested at a very low functioning level for speaking and reading with no score available in the writing section of the diagnostic test given to ARIN’s adult ESL students. We would often talk before class, as I wanted to assure her that her daughter was progressing academically and adjusting well emotionally to her new school environment. Maria began coming to class early and stopping in my office weekly to “visit.” We often had her mini- English lessons during our visits in the guise of speaking about her daughter’s school experiences. During these sessions, she was very candid about her home life and was anxious to have someone outside her home to speak English with.

In early November, five months after arriving in the U. S., Maria shared with me her status as an international mail order bride and I decided to ask her to become a part of my study. There was a translator present for our conversation regarding Maria's involvement in the study. It was critical that she, of course, understand the parameters of the study, as with the other participants but also that her decision would in no way impact her educational experience or her daughter's experience in school. I asked her to think about her involvement and let me know the following week. Maria came back a week later with a hand-written note indicating that she would be proud to be involved. In the note, she said she talked the study over with her husband and he helped her write the note. His support of the effort could only help her participation. We conducted the initial interview the following week at the ARIN Center for Education with the same staff member\translator present. The translation portion of the interview constitutes less than 25% of Maria's responses and all translation was very literal, using Maria's grammar and syntax.

Two weeks following our interview Maria experienced the second dramatic change in her life. Her husband was in a near fatal accident on his way to work, and Maria was catapulted into the role of head of the household and caretaker for her seriously injured husband. This tragic event dramatically changed Maria's life and subsequent literacies literally over night.

Maria's Childhood in Argentina

Maria grew up in a somewhat urban environment on the edge of a metropolitan city in Argentina. When asked about her childhood she offered:

We never speak English at home, my mother and father did not finish high school and only spoke Spanish. My mother wants me to go to America from since I was little girl with her. She would say that she want to come visit me with the America and tell her friends that she go to America to see her important daughter. My father never no like this talk and my mother said to me that in quiet time she always always want for me to go. My father he never talk like this to my brothers, they were to every day always work with him in the city helper as electrician.

Maria talked about her childhood with fondness, always expressing great affection for her mother and respect for her father.

My father thinks boys very much different from girls. He has my brothers go to work with him from when they were small. They make good money bring home to us and he never let the boys talk like leaving and other jobs than this. My brother Michael, the older, was bad beating from my father when he said he going to be a man and work in the big office buildings in the city, he was 12 and he never say that again. My littlest brother Pepe, always always stay with my father and work hard for him at the market. Pepe never he finish school like Michael. We had good life, easy and good money.

When asked Maria about her experiences in school, Maria outlined her experiences by saying:

We all go to Catholic school, it was maybe expensive for my father but he say it was important. We didn't learn much as English in school. We had all nuns teaching us all everyday so much religion need as to be in Spanish, my family never know English but they know it was important to me to some day know some English. One of our nuns were the missionary nun and she was in the from America and all girls love her and try to get her to talk the English after lunch when the boys play rough outside. She maybe teach us funny things to say like "Hello" and "I love you", we pretend we together then that we all go to America and have our babies play together all the days. I would come home and show my mother I could speak English and she would be makes her very happy to hear me, but she never learn. I and the girls only listened to the sister and talked, we never write down what we say. Later when I went to hair fixing school we only learned in Spanish. We don't study English in school like the mathematics.

We study mathematics from book every day and writing every day on paper. We sometimes write in Spanish, sometimes when we were in high school girls would love to write love stories for school. We write some little when we were small in school.

Maria did graduate from Catholic school and went on to become the American version of a LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) after having her daughter Sophia a year after graduation. Maria did not offer any information relating to Sophia's father other than to say that she and her baby daughter lived with her parents while she went to a trade school

to become an LPN. This course took several years for the young mother but she finished and found employment at a hospital close to home. This offered her greater flexibility in caring for her daughter. Maria felt assured that her daughter was being well cared for in her absence. “She (Sophia) was my mother’s sunshine love. My mother took very good care of her and Sophia had very much love when she was little. I think she never miss have a father.”

Maria and Sophia lived at her parent’s home for 11 years when Maria presented the idea to her mother of joining an international dating service.

My mother was very happy and sad at same time. She knew my friend wanted to do the same thing with me and she thought that if we go to America we could live still and be friends. She was always proud to be a Mestizos and would be happy for me to marry a European or American man.

You give marriage business your picture and they ask Spanish questions about you. It was a place for girls, not old women, to find their American husbands for to get to America. Then you go to them every every week to see if any American man has choosed you for his bride. Then he comes to meet you and your father and he can then take you to America if you want to.

At age 32, Maria indicates, “I was old girl when I sign up to date.” Maria signed up for the service and quickly met Paul, an American 20 years her senior. Maria and Paul “conversed” for several months prior to Paul’s first trip to Argentina. Paul did not speak much Spanish but the online dating service “. . . taught me somes English, I try hard and studies every night.” Maria was also provided language tutoring. The service provided a small group English tutoring class for the brides in Argentina.

Paul he's pay extra monies after he first meets likes me for me to learn English.

We only listens in class and learns words for things in your house, chair, table . . . like that. We do some write on computer to practice for our husbands. My friend helped the first day and she went with to my father on the two time my husband come to my country to ask if I will marriage him. She help my father English my new husband asking me to marriage and so very soon at first my mother like my new husband before marriage but my father not at first. It was took three times my new husband come to my country to my father like him and say yes, he very mad first visit.

During his visits to her small town in South America, he proved most respectful of her family, requesting Maria's hand in marriage in a private audience with her father, and winning the affections of her mother with his respectful demeanor. He planned a church wedding at her home parish to honor the family's religious beliefs and provided evidence of his financial stability to Maria's father. Maria and Paul were soon married and made the move quickly after their marriage to Paul's home in the United States.

Maria's Biliteracies in the United States

Maria's first three months in her new home were a period of significant adjustment.

I comes here and right aways Paul he have to go to work again. He work very hard and I am alones with my daughter and never nobody sees for the days when Paul is working. Sophia has on computer many day but I have much to do in Paul's house. He nevers clean good like a woman clean and I am many day scrubbing and making curtains for windows. Now it look likes a womans live

there before Paul he say “It looks like a man house only”. (laughing) He was right.

I wondered if during this time Maria had made any progress toward learning the English language but she reiterated that:

I sees too much work to do and I likes to cook and make Paul fatter so I busy, busy, busy all days. Sophia does practice speak to me but I can’t help fix her if she wrong so she waits for Paul to come home to speaks. He talk every night some time to speak to her. We eat dinner Sophia is never quiet she speak some English, some Spanish and we just listens and smile at her, happy girl. She say to me in Spanish “Mama, you needs to talk to me too so we can go to stores and speak to the people about American clothes.” But I tell her I have to be good wife first them I learn English. Paul says it’s okay for me to be slow at English. He want me home to see him everyday and not out with English peoples. After we go to school with Sophia that first night she asks him every every day “Papa, mama needs to speak English. Please take her to school.” So he brings me here to school.

When asked what effect her English classes have had on her everyday life, Maria offers this story:

One day we come home from class, after I be in class about four weeks, and Paul has to go right away to works. So I sit down with the television and I tries to write what they are saying. I writes what Oprah says about movie stars children and I get to write down maybe twenty words. I was so happy, I can listens every day that Paul work and surprise him. I even didn’t tell Sophia right aways and then

one day she didn't have school and we watch Oprah and she sees me write down many things that they says on the TV. She started jumping up and hugging me.

"Mama, we are going to learn English you and me", she say. My daughter is now helping me many times to learn writing and speak. Some times she will not speak only write to me every day so that I learn to write. So she write to me about everything. She write me little note and leave it in my kitchen drawer and I write her little note and put it in her lunch bag. Funny writing so it feels happy and not like school time. She is so good to me and she speak English perfect now and help me when I can not. She make cassette tape of her speaking and I talk with tape when she is in school to practice again and again. Now everybody say I sound like her voice when they talk to me.

The weeks after Maria completed the interview in November, Sophia's school called indicating that Maria's husband been in a near fatal accident on his way to work. I called the people who had come to support Maria since she had started classes, my staff member who did the translations, the parish priest in Maria's home parish, and several colleagues who spoke Spanish. Paul had refused having this group of people befriend Maria prior to the accident saying that, "Maria needs time to become an American wife." But thankfully they had each kept in occasional contact prior to the accident so that it was not difficult to form an initial support system for Maria. She was forced into making decisions as head of the household and with her support group and daughter, she was able to get the family over the initial crisis.

Nonetheless, this was a horribly difficult time as Maria shares in our follow up interview:

As my husband get in accident and so sick almost die for long time I learned with my daughter from school every day when after she come home. I need to help my husband get better and I needed help at first with doctors so hard understanding and I so sorry about my husband that he may die I cry many days because I am no English good enough to talk to doctor and hospital helpers.

In the weeks following, the accident Paul's brother came to stay with Maria and Sophia taking them to the hospital every day and helping to decipher the myriad of paperwork that began to envelop Maria regarding Paul's care. At least one of this group of friends who spoke Spanish made contact with her daily to offer support as Paul's brother needed to return to his job after the initial crisis was over. Two and a half weeks after the accident Maria was left completely alone at home with Sophia.

As Paul began to recover and was moved to a rehabilitation facility Maria's confidence grew. Her first major independent decision was to acquire a driver's license. Prognosis for her husband was unsure as he had a stroke after the accident as a reaction to one of the medications he was given. She told me on the phone, "I am going to study hard every day and every nights, and learn to drive." She did not have a driver's license in her country, and although it was a significant endeavor requiring friends taking turns taking her out to practice driving, she was able to pass the test. "I studies every day while I sits with Paul and a dictionary in the hospitals. I have lots of times and I can work hard." Not only did she pass the test, but two months later when her husband came home from the rehabilitation facility, she returned to class. I met her at the door of her classroom that

day to welcome her back and she said to me, “A nurse she is staying with Paul and he is mad I goes to class but I knows I must help my family.” Maria continued to attend class regularly, and when Paul was permitted to travel she brought him in a wheelchair to class with her. “He wants to gets out so much that he says I can’t drives the car if he isn’t coming along.”

After she returned to class nine months since she arrived, she offers these thoughts relating to her English language skills:

I still am happy only speaking to my daughter and my Spanish\English friend and maybe my priest to be best. But I am okay pretty everyday in store. Bank scares me at first because so much is wrong if I make mistake, my husband get mad like my father did when I was little. He worry I make money mistake and he makes my daughter go to banks with me every every time. But she go really to have company for me, not to help so much anymore. We go to look at clothes for her after we do errand so we have fun together. But I am very happys that I now speak two languages pretty good. When I was in hospital, I go every every day to see my husband in hospital and good after hospital place. I found a woman who has sick baby who did not speak any English and I help her every day for one week to understand what all hospital doctors say to her about her baby. Her husband was spoke Spanish and he could not speak English to the doctor so I help her when baby was very sick with breathing machine and to help her be not sad we sit and I learn English for her to speak about the baby. I feel so happy that I help another mother. She give me help too to learn English with her. I teach her write baby’s name too. It was hard very much to come here to America it was not

like me little girl thinking it was. Even when I was old I did not thinking it was now so hard. But now in my English is better every every day I feel like I am a good mother and vey good wife. It is my job to help my family now like a father but and it takes hard for my husband when he thinking this so I never say this at him. He is always father in our family. But now I have give my daughter more than I have, she go anyplace and keep herself job not like me.

Maria continued to grow in her skills and manage the household as Paul regained his health. He would never be able to walk again, but his mental capabilities were intact. She would drive to class, bringing Paul. He wanted to sit in the hallway looking into Maria's class, but that was distracting to the teacher and students so he was relegated to an empty office in our building. Things continued for six or seven more weeks with Maria's L1 fluency increasing to a low intermediate level, a significant gain considering the amount of time she spent in an formalized educational setting, but motivation played a significant factor in her growth. Suddenly Paul called the Center indicating that the family was moving south and that Maria would not be in class any longer. They were gone within two weeks, moving themselves and a few possessions, coming back to retrieve the rest of their belongings a month later.

Sophia's school contacted me wondering if I knew of the impetus for the sudden move, but I could offer nothing. Maria did contact me once after they moved, saying that Paul was lonely for his extended family and that he felt it would be better for his family to relocate and she accepted his judgment. I have kept up with them only through one of Sophia's school friends who indicates that Maria and Paul appear to be happy and that Sophia is in the process of applying for colleges in the United States.

Placement of Maria's Biliteracies on the Continua of Biliteracy

Upon emigration from Argentina, Maria's Spanish moved quickly from the Macro level to the Micro level. English immediately became the language of power in her new environment. Having the second shortest residence in the United States, Maria's use of her L1 is at the Micro-Oral level. Her L1 is limited to conversations to her family in Argentina. Her daughter's English developed rapidly and became her daughter's preferred mode of communication shortly after moving to the United States. The opportunity for bilingualism is marginalized by the lack of consistent contact with Spanish speakers in her immediate environment. Her husband's accident, occurring only months after her arrival in the United States, exacerbated the need for both Oral and Literate English skills, placing these skills at the Macro Monolingual level.

Developmentally Maria's Spanish skills were balanced between Receptive and Productive as a child. This was also the case for her initial L2 skill acquired as an adult in the United States. Although she was forced to develop Literate skills quickly in English to fulfill her role as temporary head of the household after husband's accident, her L2 Majority currently exists as Literate level skills. Her acquisition of a driver's license and ability to understand the family's finances demonstrate her progress in English literacy.

English remains the Majority language for Maria as her Spanish has no capital within her daily life. She expresses less than complete confidence in her oral skills that exist almost exclusively in the Vernacular. Her English usage is highly Contextualized which was most likely an aid to her learning progress. She was required, by circumstance of her husband's accident, to perform in an English Majority Contextualized environment, as her duties within the family unit temporarily shifted from dependent

member to head of the household within a matter of months after her arrival in the United States.

The acquisition of her two languages was Successive, receiving little English preparation in Argentina. Spanish and English share Similar Structures and Convergent Scripts facilitating the transfer from Spanish to English.

Rose

Rose is the only participant in this study who did not receive services through ARIN Center for Education. At the onset of the study, I had surveyed 15 agencies, located in rural settings of Pennsylvania, in order to locate a viable number of participants for the study. However, significant funding cuts to the field of adult education caused many programs to cease operation after my initial contacts with programs. After these funding cuts, one program from the original 15 contacted me indicating that they had what they thought would be a viable participant. Additionally this colleague was anxious to include his student as he felt that she would benefit from the experience of telling her story. I immediately contacted the program and proceeded to set up an interview as described in Chapter 3.

Rose and I met in her classroom along with her instructor after ESL class one day. Although her instructor did not speak Chinese, Rose's native language, during our initial conversation he and I both agreed that his presence would afford a greater level of comfort to and candor from Rose. He had approached her several weeks prior to our initial meeting with the proposition of becoming a part of my study, and she immediately agreed. I then called at her class site few days after her teacher had spoken with her and she, a fellow student acting as a translator, her teacher and myself discussed the

parameters and purpose of my study. She asked a few questions relating to location and time of the interviews and was assured that our meeting(s) would be convenient for her. Her teacher offered his classroom and we agreed on a class day for the initial interview. It was decided that we would conduct the interview shortly after Rose's class was over for the day. Additionally, like another participant, Rose asked to have a copy of the types of the interview questions e-mailed so that in her words "I can get ready with my true answers." We agreed on an initial meeting date of two week after our initial phone call and I e-mailed her the interview questions later that same day.

When I arrived on the day of the interview, Rose was very anxious to begin and had a notebook filled with the interview questions and her replies to each. Additionally, she brought a copy of a story she had written in ESL class. Rose was positioned at one of the classroom's workstations, which includes a computer; she had an electronic translator and a paperback translator with her. She had indicated in our phone interview that she did not want a person to translate for her. Although her teacher expressed some concern at this I felt it was best to follow her wishes. Her teacher began working on something at his desk, leaving us to commence. We employed Frengly.com, an online translator that allows the student to type complete sentences in one language and have them translated into another language. She seemed to relax greatly after seeing the effectiveness of the translator and we began "chatting" using the online translator. After approximately five minutes, we began the interview.

Rose's Life and Biliteracy in China

As with the other participants in my interviews, Rose quickly began sharing stories about her childhood and early experiences with English after just the first question

from the interview. When I asked her about initial experiences with English, she began to read from a story she had written for her ESL class titled “Rose History.”

I was born in village by Yi Chun city of China and live in China there 33 years.

When I am eight years old go to school and study Chinese words. All write, even when little, but Chinese only. Much writing in school some I bring home to my mother. I have education of fourteen years. Because my mother killed in car so I will work and make money for family and life. We live on farms, I sometime spin.

Rose said that she had a brother and a sister. Asked if her mother spoke any English and she said:

No, no, no, my mother no speak English. I brother older study English. Brother is busy now for school, at home, home no speak English. Sister no speak English to me. My child life sad, no mother to show school writing, we live from aunt to aunt house. Not need English on farms, pigs no English (laughing). No one in our village speak English at house, only Chinese. I learn spin, not talking Chinese much, never English. Learn to like cloth when I spin. Many aunt husband says we need be smart with no mother. They want my brother to be smart, learn Chinese. They never say about English.

We changes school much too. All school write, some teacher nice some mean. All want me to write Chinese every day. Sometimes sing Chinese song, sometime write Chinese song, mostly write. No children speak, no girls speak in school till writing done. One school sit outside and write when we little, only girl too.

When asked about English language offerings later in school, Rose offered this:

I 13, I beginning learn English in school. Everyday, I study English one week one classes. Yes, I learn ABCD is okay, 123 is okay. We sing when 13 like little, but sing English now not Chinese. I sing ABC, I write ABC. We write letters we say, many copy from teacher board. Copy English I never speak, only write words I see no understand.

I asked about the balance of speaking and writing that occurred in her classes, she shared, “Writing and more writing. Teacher never speak. Same, same as Chinese, we read from book at our desk and write answer, teacher check words but don’t talk to class.” Asked if either had any practice speaking inside the classroom or outside the classroom Rose said:

In class sometime. Only class, no friend English outside. We girl hard to understand English sound, hard to listen and writing. We no see English on radio and TV like America so we no like to speak. Boys speak English so girl not understand, they get English more they get older in school. My brother good now at English, my sister still no speak English in China.

When I asked what mode of language she felt most comfortable with. She said, “Only read, read and write.” When asked about listening as there seemed little practice in speaking, she said, “No not listen, listen is more harder for me child. None in market in China, none in our village at all I hear.”

Rose continued telling me about her life in China. She again reads from the story she wrote in class.

When I is 23 years I am married Shushen husband we have one son called Jin.

But we are divorced in two years. First husband is not like wife and care for her

family and her sister and brother. They often war and are an unlucky family. So I decides to start new life.

I move to south China and find work. I is hard work and open clothes store. I know clothes from spin when I little. I need make lots of money for family. Brother and sister need me, I send money. Life will be nice and happy. I have live in apartment building where lots of businessmen from Singapore and France and America live and I start to English talk. We have big garden and we sit in garden an talk English. One neighbor English teacher at University and he help me start to talk more. Every night we talk and I write what they say, English teacher teach me to do this. I go back to my room and say it again, again out in air

But, I think life is alone when she back in her room. She want to meet and find a loved man for a nice life Rose was lucky to meet Mike on Internet in 2007. I meet Mike on chineselovelinks.com.

Relating to her communication with her new English speaking beau she says, “I talk to Mike and he teach me English writing on net. We talk a long time, maybe one year, over one year. Sometime we talk on microphone and Mike understand, okay more for me to write.”

I asked if her neighbors continued to help and she said,” Yeah, we still talk in garden sometime. Talking Mike is taking up hours after I work so I see my neighbors not so much. He don’t learn so much Chinese as me English. He talk, I write and say back.”

When asked if her everyday life changed because of her practice with the English language in writing to Mike. “I only write and speak Chinese all days at store so I have

no time to speak English. Everyone's just use Chinese with me at work and my food store shopping. Everyone lives here (China) need Chinese not English everyday."

After a little over a year, Mike decided to come meet Rose in Beijing for 15 days to see if they were compatible. Posed with the question of the ease of talking to Mike once they were together and Rose answers," No understand like on I'm computer, Mike write and I understand." Mike had purchased an electronic translator and the couple used that when they were together. The couple was cautious, especially Mike as he was a widower and "His children no never like the idea of him finding Chinese wife, but he chooses me." Several weeks after their first meeting Mike returns to China, this time with an engagement ring and asks Rose to marry him. "I, we make very happy life and I say Yes, I do." They were married in China and returned to the United States as soon as Rose's visa process was approved.

Rose's literacies in the United States

Shortly after returning to the United States, Mike finds an ESL class for Rose to attend. "He wants me to go some days to the grocery store alones and wants to talks to me everyday." Now that Rose has been in the United States for thirteen months we address questions relating to her current English skills. When asked what mode is easiest and what is most difficult, listening, speaking, reading or writing, she shares the following; Listen, is very hard, tell you if you write speak in English. I listen it is no easy, speak is no easy still." If listening and speaking are still difficult, I ask Rose what mode she is most comfortable using. "Write, I write to Mike every day note for food store and things I need. Some days I go to food store with Mike but I just finds stuff and he pays

and talks.” We discussed the topic of how much practice Rose has in speaking with her husband Mike.

Mike very very busy, no talk husband. No talk me, maybe I play on computer, talk friend some days on computer. I make all friends in America in Florida and California online. We talk and I practice writing more everyday.

Asked if she has friends other than those she meets online and Rose says, Only American friends online, we talk about business, if I starting clothes store things like that. I speak Chinese to my sister everyday but my brother is no. He so busy working on being a doctor he have no time to talk. I talk my son Chinese too, he study computer in university in China.

I ask Rose to reflect on what is most difficult about the English language. She says:

Listen is most difficult. At first here, I hate American TV, too fast I have no understand but now I can sit with Mike and I understand some word. I write them in my notebook to study later. I use translator at night to help with words I hear. My teacher too is very good for me. I come to class everyday, he talk slow and we read about things in life everyday.

I ask if Mike is also Rose’s teacher to which she replies:

Mike has work too much and need no talk when he at home. He see his granddaughter on weekend and I listen they all talk together. We don’t have time for to make any American friend yet. My friend here in class.

Lastly, I ask Rose how she feels about her choice to live in American.

I am now proud. All girl I talk to when I child they say, “Rose speak English and live in America, good.” Now I speak two languages, I see Chinese, I speak Chinese. I see American I speak American. Just like all girls say when I child.

Placement of Rose’s Biliteracies on the Continua of Biliteracy

As with the Majority of the other participants in the study, Rose saw the power shift from Chinese language to English language upon arrival in the United States. Rose, as one of the two most recent IMOBs emigrants to the United States, utilizes her L2 almost exclusively in her new environment, placing her L1 at the Micro level, used only for translation purposes and to speak occasionally with family in China. Currently she has limited oral practice in English outside her classroom environment and focuses on literacy L2 skills when writing notes in English to her husband regarding household needs and English discourse supporting the online friendships she has developed.

Her Chinese language Development focused solely at the Productive-Written level as a young child, with no exposure to English. However, at 13, she began to learn English in a Productive-Written format as with her L1. Her exposure to English took a Decontextualized Written format. She received no formal oral L2 practice until coming to the United States. What little L2 oral exposure she had was from informal conversations with neighbors as an adult in China.

Rose’s daily life places English in the Majority offering no capital for her Chinese language. She relies almost exclusively on Literate Written demonstrations of the English. Her Bilingual language Development took the form of Written Productive communication and relies most often on this method of communication. Rose often writes a “script” of her conversation prior to attempting oral communication. Her

language activities are mainly Monolingual in English as are highly Contextualized within their settings.

Chinese and English possess Dissimilar Structures and completely Divergent Scripts demonstrating a significant hurdle she overcomes in through focused writing practice in each language. Rose's Bilingualism has little agency for her with the Context of her currently environment.

Gabriela

Gabriela, a 41-year-old woman from Colombia, came to the ARIN Center for Education in the late fall of 2009. She attended sporadically throughout the winter when weather conditions permitted as she lived over a half an hour drive from the Center, and she relied on her husband to bring her. She began to attend regularly, at least twice weekly, in March of 2010 when I was introduced to her through my ESL teacher. My teacher knew of my dissertation topic and indicated that her student had shared her status as an international mail order bride and felt that she would be a good candidate for my study. I joined our ESL class periodically to observe for other purposes, so I was not a stranger to her as a student. Her teacher asked her to stay after class one day and asked her if she would be interested in speaking with me to potentially become a part of my study. When Gabriela agreed, they set a meeting date for Gabriela, the teacher and myself for the following class period, two days later.

Gabriela was presented the purpose and parameters of my study. She quickly agreed that she was in fact an international mail order bride. She seemed eager to tell me about her life and gave a short synopsis of the circumstances that brought her to the United States. After presenting the type of questions and the time frame for meetings

associated with the study, I invited her to become a participant. It was decided that she give it some thought and stop in my office, located down the hall from her ESL classroom, in the next week to give me an answer. It was emphasized that if she chose not to be involved it would not affect her status as a student in our ESL program. She was also told that there would be a translator for the interview. This seemed to be the best course of action as her teacher indicated that Gabriela's English skills presented themselves at a low fluency level on the standardized test we used in class and that she would need assistance with certain concepts during the interview.

Five days later Gabriela stopped in my office after her class and indicated that she had spoken with her husband, and they were both very excited for her to participate in the study. Additionally, she indicated that her husband would like to be interviewed. Her enthusiasm was very encouraging. We agreed on the interview date as occurring after her regularly scheduled class the following week for the interview. I walked out to meet her husband when we were finished talking to see if he had any questions relating to the interview. He also seemed genuinely enthusiastic as well and agreed that the following week would be suitable with his schedule.

I did not want to interview Gabriela with her husband in the interview as that was a variant from my other interviews. I scheduled her to meet me in an hour before her husband joined us. I was concerned that her responses would be affected by his presence and that changing the format could invalidate the comparisons of participant experiences.

Gabriela, the translator, and I met the following week at the arranged time in a conference room at ARIN Center for Education. The translator possessed an undergraduate degree in Spanish and came highly recommended. Although we utilized

the translator during the first five minutes of the interview, it became obvious that he would be needed only occasionally during the interview. Gabriela's English speaking skills were adequate to answer 90 % of the questions without any assistance; she utilized the translator only to describe specific cultural concepts and for an occasional descriptor.

Gabriela's Life in Colombia

Gabriela describes her family life by saying:

I live with my mother. My father leave my house when I was five year old. My mother lived in a house with five children and me. Hard life. My life was not easy but it was good because all I work and study.

When asked about her siblings and their English abilities. She replied, "My brothers, no. My old sister speak English right now because the company pay people more who can speak English. No much at home, not my mother speak ever."

Gabriela indicated that she was not exposed to English in what would be the equivalent of elementary school in the United States. "When we was little, we never learn any English, we play and sing in Spanish, and read, lots of stories by my teachers. My daughter learn English when she little, maybe 8 and she never hate it when she was older like me."

I asked her about her exposure to the English language in school and she offered:

I come high school for English pretty hard, my class was very hard for me because my teacher was hard man. A very hard all class. I learn in class very good but when I come in front of class I don't know nothing. He put us in front of the blackboard to do an exercise and it made me nervous. I am still not liking writing I can remember feel so dumb in front of my class and I still feel dumb.

Asked if learning English was difficult because of the manner in which she learned it she replied, “Yeah, yeah, my hand its sweat. Every time I think I no like English, I no want learn English. I no like English.”

She laughs at the memory but obviously, it was a difficult issue. When asked which was easiest for her in high school: speaking, listening, reading, or writing, she indicated that speaking and writing were the areas where she felt her skills were the strongest. “We had funs speaking English in high school, we talk in class to each other from a book about funny teenager things. I say Hello, my name is Lucy, how are you and my friend says, I am Bob, I am good.” We practice in school class maybe three time a week.” Asked if she practiced outside the parameters of school she replied, “I need school I need my practice outside too. By myself out loud at home. But not with friends, we were discouraged together.”

She took her school very seriously as she intended to move on to a university after high school. She completed an undergraduate psychology program and specialized in child psychology. Of her college English requirements she shares, “Three first semesters, one week teach one or two hours in English.” English was required for these first three semesters with an emphasis on grammar and writing, very little oral practice was offered or required. Gabriela started college during a turbulent time in her life. She was the mother of an infant, working full time and working on an undergraduate degree. Although she was able to move back home with her mother and younger siblings for help, she shares:

When I start my college, after I started my divorce when Kari father, Kari my daughter, I started my divorce and I say “ . . . right now you are alone, little girl is

very small you need not only work you need student.” Because my daughter she always told me “When I grow up people I want be doctor!” I say “Oh my God.” Very small girl. Every morning go work at 6:00 go for my college, my university and studied nine and a half and come back for my house and look at my baby, worried about my baby. Yeah. Same time, mother, worker, student. It was very crazy for me, but now I am very happy because I am study Psychology I have my diploma after continue more study specialist in company. More student always looking for better student make more money for my daughter. Okay done my study 2005, done my study. My daughter done the high school next year. In Colombia, it is very hard you can work for good money, they pay good money, its very hard. Because there is a lot of professional, in good company.

Finishing college, Gabriela felt that she had many possibilities with a psychology degree. A worker from the child care center at her university approached her upon graduation. She said, “The director, woman, told me Gabriela I not have not much more money for to pay you every month but I need you but for all the children need you in poor poor family.” With this, Gabriela began her career in child psychology.

Things are different now for Gabriela’s 22 year old daughter who attends college in Colombia. “Now every student have to learn English to speak and write we only practice in class some, not real speaking for real reason.”

Her college degree helped Gabriela realize that there was great value in education and she became a fierce advocate for her daughter’s further education. She offers, “In my situation, my daughter started school by five years old her school, they teach my daughter two or three hours in one week, English. Also, there is American school, only for teach

English on Saturdays. My daughter start American school is seven year old. Every Saturday, I begged for all that is school until I get her in. She has learn English not like me and has no accent because she learned a children. For me, it was very very hard because it was different education.”

As Gabriela’s daughter grew, the importance of a university education became of great concern. Gabriela shares:

When I’m done my high school I have no good job for make a lot of money It’s (college) too expensive, my city, maybe 350,000 pesos for every six months too many money for me. I remember I think it’s important I no can make nothing for my daughter. I felt bad because my daughter was very smart. My daughter is valedictorian in high school. I think very very nice and I felt bad, but after I tried her go university through a money\scholarship but it was too expensive. It was very hard, I remember I cried, I say “Oh my God”. All the time pray “Oh my God you are my husband, I said you are my husband please help me. Then one day my brother told me please go with Kari to Covenas, is other city, one hour and a half to Baranquia, in this universities were government and is cheap. Its very very nice university This university come a lot of people so. Its good for student it’s good for money. Everybody in the country tries to go. Before pass a present test, if you pass a test you can go, if not you can’t-no. I remember a thousand, a thousand people at the test.

And Kari did pass her test with Gabriela sharing her excitement, “Oh my God, it’s a good, I know that you help me, I know that you help me! Oh thank you

my God.” Every six months my daughter only pay \$150 only! She’s in Cartagena right now, she has three years an internship.

Gabriela’s daughter is studying to become a pediatric surgeon.

Gabriela’s Journey to the United States

Once Gabriela had gotten her daughter into the university, she began to look back to her own life and felt a loneliness for a companion. She signed up with an Internet service that connected Colombian women with international men, both with the intent of marriage. She shares the memories of her experience with the dating service.

I am very nervous, a few men come everyday to looking for wife. You can come to the dating office and sit in their big, big room with all of the other girls, maybe 40 or more each days. They were beautiful pretty girls, some very young and I feel very old some days. So I want to meet nice man for my life so I think I will look at the mens too, many girls talk to all mens but I try to pick older man who has job and education to be serious. One days when I meet Bill we talk and I likes him because he smiles in his eyes and talks from his heart. He has his own company job so I feel excited and I bring him little gift when he picks me in date. We go on one dates and we can talk some English and I feels happy. But we can understand our heart and we feel easy and happy together, talking little bits. Bill tries some Spanish, we teach each other. All speaking, talking, talking, talking when we are together. Bill seems happy with me and he stop going to meet other girls soon and see me alone.

Bill also give me English lessons he pay for from the dating office. When he decides on me he pays for lesson, I go everyday for three weeks and then 2 or

3 day after that a week, maybe for two months together. My mother is happy for me she like Bill when she meets him the first times and he comes to my house and sit with my mother many days. Then he make government marrying arrangements and we have big wedding here in my country. I have lots of family at my wedding and some of girls from the dating office come too. We have dancers and flowers and wedding like little girls playing.

At this point Gabriella pulls a large photo album out of her tote and shares her wedding pictures with the translator and me. Neither she nor Bill execrated when they spoke of the grandeur of their wedding. With the castle as a backdrop their wedding was truly, the stuff fairytales are made of.

Gabriela asked that Bill's version of the service and their early relationship be used in addition to hers and the following portion is taken from Bill's interview.

Well, we met through an agency in Colombia. It was kinda odd but worked out well, I flew to Colombia, I was brought into a room filled with beautiful women. You meet so many and they are all beautiful, you don't speak their language they don't speak yours, how do you find one you're compatible with? Some of them speak English, but very few. We're in a room, they do this three times a day. The first group, you pick three, second group three, third group three. One you like the least you take to breakfast, next to lunch, most to dinner. Gabriela couldn't speak one word of English, I couldn't speak one word of Spanish. You have to put a lot of trust in the interpreter. The person we had as interpreter was born in Miami, she could speak English as good as I can, I had to trust she would convey what I mean. I could tell right off the bat that Gabriela was special, different from others.

I asked questions about religion, family. “Would you move away from your family?” Some of them were very willing, too willing. Everyone who met my wife told me the same thing, she’s a very special person, good hearted. There were two other men from America there. There are constantly three or four men doing this every day. It is an amazing thing. It was hard for me cuz I’m not used to meeting women that way. I’m a pretty shy person, not used to meeting women at all. A friend of mine told me about this I though, let’s give it a try. Out of all the girls I took out to dinner, she gave me this little present. This was very very nice. It was trivial, but it’s the thought. It really cut out 90 percent of other people right off the bat. Everybody who met her, different translators and staff all said the same thing about her. “You really have a good one here” and I do.

For her to get her visa you have to apply six months before, it costs a lot of money. It’s a K-1 visa. We had to sign papers saying that within 90 days of her coming to country, we would get married. We had a ceremony in Colombia and considered it our anniversary. We rented a castle in Colombia and had native dancers come in and dance. I said I want a traditional Spanish wedding. It was amazing. We went to the justice of the peace to make it legal. But our real wedding was in Colombia. Things were so cheap, we rented this place, beautiful flowers, everything 1,700 dollars.

Beautiful place to retire, once I learn Spanish. When we first met, the language was a problem. The first thing we learned was Te Amo. I have it tattooed on my leg. We got on computers at first and we can see each other

through a web cam. Her niece speaks very good English, so she would help her. That was nice. Sit there every night for an hour and say TE AMO, te amo.

This company I went through to meet her, they were giving her English lessons. I was paying them twenty-five dollars an hour. She got better and better and better when I brought her over to this country, we could communicate fairly well, but she couldn't communicate with anyone else. In our community, no one speaks Spanish. It was a problem for a while, then it got to where communication wasn't a major problem. But culturally our lives were so different. Saying jokes, she had no idea. Tremendous difference. When I first trip back to see her, after we got engaged I took her an I-pod of American music to help her learn. One of the songs was "Lets Get It On" by Marvin Gay and she learned it. She learning it . . . she's walking all over. "Let's Get It On" . . . she had no idea what she was saying, she was so embarrassed.

Things like that happen every day. For example, New Year's Eve, Colombians put dirty clothes in a suitcase and run around the block. All of their things have meaning, and I'm sure ours do to, but we take them for granted. The cultural differences are just tremendous. She is very intelligent. They aren't as worldly as we are. She saw pictures of the pyramids, and thought they were here.

Even though she can speak English pretty well, there's not a day goes by when she doesn't ask me what a word means. She has to learn every word in the English language. Is she ever gonna learn English where I can talk to her and she will understand me just like I'm talking to you. That's more important than the language, I wanna learn her language

What we wanna do is open up an International introduction deal in Colombia. Now that we've been on both ends, we wanna help people out and it's a good thing and profitable.

Gabriela's Life in the United States

After living in the United States for 10 months Gabriela is adamant about improving her language and acquiring a job. "I need school. I need my practice outside too. Right now it not perfect, I no have people to learn by. I must speak English." Her desire for a job is not shared with her husband.

Now every Sunday I clean Bill's office and Bill pays me. I am here I come here in the United States only for love of my husband, not for money, cars, nothing. The children think Gabriela come here to have daddy's money. Now that I came here in the U.S. I don't speak very nice English, but I need my English for work. Bill no let me have cell phone and he nevers allows me to drive. So I need a jobs for so manys reason.

When asked who is her teacher outside the ESL classroom. Gabriella replies,

Well, ah. Bill all the time teach me because he helps me with homework. It's not easy. When I asked Bill, how is the pronunciation? I need to look at the mouth when I learn pronunciation. You speak with me, I look at your mouth, it's easier. And I also have too my friend Jackie. Jackie helps me for my pronunciation. If my pronunciation is bad, you please, you teach me. Jackie teach me we go every morning. "No feel bad, I feel good that you're teaching me." I make exercise one hour every day and Jackie help me.

Every morning I walk one hour. If its rainy or she no come in my house I have walking machine, treadmill. I talk her problems with Bills children. When I ask about daily tasks such a writing grocery lists Gabriela offer this,

But I look right now. Sometime before, maybe 2 or 3 months before I was thinking Spanish but right now is so great for me I am thinking in English! Speak its hard for me, it's very. With Bill, and other peoples from different family. Sometimes in class, I feel uptight, sometimes but not always. Right now, people have been for 2 years or more, sometimes they have better pronunciation than me. If your pronunciation is not correct, communication with other, no. You need to speak, everyday, with everybody. The first is communication. I want to try to get better, Bill still not wants me to drive because my English is not perfect and I can not go to store to shop and take care of my family. I am good in my heart to be his wife, I am not good in the world to be his wife.

I nevers write in Spanish or try to speak it. I call my mother in Colombia every day and sometimes talks with my daughter too but never speak Spanish with anyones else but them. I only write in English, it is getting easy I write notes for Bill and list of foods for us to get at the stores.

Gabriela's response to which of her two languages she is happiest using is, "English right now, Yeah. Bill, he remembers on wedding day, I never told you "I accept!" for marriage and now I's think in English and trys every every day to talks to people by myself in English!"

When I hesitate, checking to make sure that I have asked all of the questions that I had in this main interview Gabriela quickly inserts, “I am happy now!” It seems that this is the most accurate and telling statement that she could offer in summation.

Placement of Gabriella’s Biliteracies on the Continua of Biliteracy

Gabriella demonstrated bilingualism within her native country. However, her emigration to the United States moved Gabriella into a Monolingual English environment. Spanish exists at the Micro level in use only when contacted some family in Colombia. English presents itself at the Macro level as although her daughter is still in Colombia, mother and daughter converse in English. Gabriella embraces her Monolingualism, stating that she “never write in Spanish or tries to speak it” in her current life circumstance. Gabriella creates opportunities that provide oral English usage through in context of a friendship she has fostered with a native English speaker.

Gabriella’s Spanish skills developed mostly through Oral-Receptive practice as a young child in school. She was exposed to English in school, both Receptive and Productive, but not in an intensive format. She experienced her most significant L2 Development through required courses in college in Colombia, mostly in a Written Literate Decontextualized format.

English continues to be the Majority language in Gabriella’s life. Today her L2 exists mostly in the Vernacular, as contextually she has no need for more Literate forms of the English language. The current Content of her languages exists as contextually limited by the role she plays as a homemaker. Circumstances, such as having a bank account and handling family finances, which would utilize more Literate forms of English are currently addressed by her husband. Gabriella expresses strong hope that the

content and scope of her Literate skills will change if she is permitted to begin working in the United States.

Gabriella's exposure to her two languages was Successive with both languages possessing Similar Structures. And her acquisition of English as her second language was facilitated by the fact that Spanish and English possess Convergent Scripts.

Now That We Have Heard the Stories

What we see through these stories are not only details of individual lives but also a collection of information that researchers, such as Clandinin and Connelly, title the "grand narrative." The challenge of this concept of grand narrative is to both reduce the stories to a set of understandings while preserving the unique value and worth of each individual story. I will continue to use the undergirding of Hornberger's "Continua of Biliteracy and its four distinct areas of analysis (Context, Development, Content and Media) to begin base comparisons among the participant's biliteracies.

When looking at the area of Content, two of the IMOBs displayed a daily need for fluency in both her L1 and L2. The remaining four IMOBs had little opportunity and need for their L1, were very limited in their ability to use English, but existed in an English-only daily environment. All but one of the participants shared that they operated mostly in the Oral realm, with four of the IMOBs being forced to utilize Literate skills temporarily while their American spouses were incapacitated.

Developmentally, three participants learned their first language through Receptive methods, one almost exclusively through Productive methods and one received language instruction through a balance of Receptive and Productive methods. None of the

participants received English language instruction in their native countries during their school experiences.

Affected by the circumstances of her work environment, one participant expressed that she utilizes her first language daily at work. However, all other IMOBs in the study find no shared cultural experiences that allow them to utilize their first languages on a consistent daily basis. Of these remaining five participants, three demonstrate a Macro level of English language fluency while two function at the Minority level of ability in English. One IMOB, whose L1 and L2 language learning occurred mostly through a Productive\Written format utilizes this same Written format for most of her English language communication. All others admit to English language skills that focus primarily on the Vernacular.

All participants in the study acquired their biliteracies successively, learning English only as an adult. Four IMOBs first languages possess Similar Structures and Scripts to English, with two, Korean and Chinese, possessing both Dissimilar Structures and Scripts.

This is a brief look at the collective information presented through the IMOBs' stories. Within the context of this next and final chapter of the study, I continue with a more in depth analysis of the IMOBs' biliteracies. Chapter 5 deconstructs the individual stories to illuminate the similarities and differences among these six participants. I have used the Continua's framework to provide a framework on which to place participant's skills to view individually and as a whole. This will be the final lens through which we can most fully understand what these valued stories tell us about these exceptional women individually and as a group.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The Individual IMOB Stories Through the Lens of the Continua

Analysis, as it relates to this study, is simply the act of reviewing and presenting the stories, in essence through thoughtful scholarly listening. The study does not propose to have the participants themselves nor the researcher evaluate the value of their language practices. Rather the purpose of the study is to allow these women to tell the story of their languages and their use of their languages, their biliteracy, within their life.

In the Deweyian philosophy of reducing a narrative by taking the individual stories then separating them into definable portions, I have then taken the IMOB's stories and placed them on a literacy framework that offers the stories as useful data for the field of Second Language Acquisition. My process of analysis, following this influence, utilizes Hornberger's Continua of Biliteracy as a lens (see Appendix A) to view each International Mail Order Bride's individual story.

The Continua delineates the four categories in which to place biliterate events; Content, Development, Context and Media and offers points along the Continua on which to locate each biliterate concept. Key to the placement of the IMOBs biliterate events is the understanding that the points left to right on the Continua are as Hornberger states; “. . . not finite, static, nor discrete” (p. 36). Simply put, the Continua offered a canvas on which to place each participant's biliteracy so that we may appreciate the richness of its depth, the beauty of the biliteracy story as a whole. This ability to dissect the biliterate stories of the IMOBs additionally provides a basis on which to compare the stories and formulate a cohesive representation of the biliteracies of an international mail order bride.

We must see each participant's biliteracies clearly for the place it offers the speaker within the larger culture of life in the United States, life within her rural Pennsylvania community, her life within the family unit and perhaps most importantly the structure of her own identity. As Hornberger (2000) states, ". . . language is one aspect of a complex set of identity- and value-related intercultural issues . . ." (p. 97). Each IMOB's perception of herself is created and supported by the language she uses to access the new culture in which she is now imbedded.

Hornberger (1989) views the interaction of an individual and their literacy through the ethnography of communication framework, where the term *communicative competence* designates the knowledge and ability of individuals for appropriate language use in the communicative events in which they find themselves in any particular speech community. This competence is, by definition, variable within individuals (from event to event), across individuals and across speech communities. Individuals draw on their communicative repertoire's to participate appropriately in any given Context. It is the impact of this linguistic participation within the Context of their lives that was both the impetus for this study and forms the interpretative conclusions.

The Continua (Appendix A) offers the structure that allows us to interpret the literacies of a biliterate individual and define the particular characteristics of their skills and the interrelationship of these skills offering a clear understanding of their biliteracies. To offer the appropriate analysis, it is necessary to first view each participant's biliteracies through the framework of the Continua's four dimensions. Each bride's biliteracies will be situated across the spectrum of the Continua in order to present a comprehensive view of their individual biliteracies. Then the IMOBs biliteracies as a

whole will be placed across the linear scale that makes up the Continua in order to get a comprehensive picture of the biliteracies of an IMOB.

Sol

Sol presents a balance of the Micro and Macro as it relates to the dimension of Context on the Continua. She is considered a bilingual, as agency is given to her L1 through her occasional duties as a translator at her workplace. However, she continues to utilize the Macro more powerful language, English, almost exclusively in her personal life. Socially there exist Micro utility of her L1; Spanish within telephone interactions with family and visits home to Nicaragua, but her interactions with her two sons and all social contacts here in the United States is conducted strictly in the Macro-English. Sol manages her own household since the death of her husband necessitating some Literate skill function in English, however her preference and aptitude places her closer to the left-Oral side of the Continua.

Developmentally, Sol heavily favors the less powerful Oral-Receptive side of the Continua in both her L1 and her L2. Her L1 education was almost exclusively rooted in the Oral-Receptive with little focus on formalized writing practice, although she feels that she has adequate writing skills in Spanish to serve her translation duties at work. Sol did complete what would be the equivalent of an American high school education in Nicaragua. The Development of Sol's English skills occurred only as an adult and in an abbreviated formal format. Health issue precluded her from continuing her English again extremely limiting any productive linguistic learning. Her biliterate development in both of the literacies favors the less powerful side of the Continua.

Relating to the Content functions of the Continua, Sol's skills demonstrate a balance of L1 and L2 usage within her daily life. She possesses adequate L2 English skills to function at her workplace offering the skill level of her L1, Spanish, as equally viable. During her husband's illness she was able to utilize highly Contextualized Literate skills, however executed most interactions in critical situations such as those with medical personnel and financial institutions occurred in an Oral-Vernacular format. Although, some of her work duties require Literate written skills; she admittedly demonstrates greater comfort and ability in the L2 Vernacular. Her biliteracies fall on the Contextualized side of the Continua as she indicates that she is aware that she should continue her education, however she has chosen not to pursue further education finding little practical use for advanced skills. Sol's acquisition of her biliteracies was Successive, with little English literacy learning until coming to the United States. The Similar Structure of Spanish and English, both presenting a strong Oral-Productive focus and the Convergent Scripts of her biliteracies aided in facilitating skill transfer from Spanish to English.

Ester

When looking at the Content dimension of the Continua, Ester is considered a Monolingual with her L1 skills marginalized to the Micro level. Her life offers no agency to her L1, with the exception of communication with family still residing in Korea. Her home life is an Anglo-only speaking environment with her husband knowing little or no Korean. Her children are Monolingual-English speakers and her current job of cleaning houses requires her L2, English only. Her L2 skills exist at the less powerful Oral side of the Continua, with little current demand for Literate skills in her current life. She has

considerable difficulty with written notes her employers leave her relating to work and offers her cell phone number and Oral discourse as an alternative to all written communication. She does not use the family's computer and her husband takes care of all written communication relating to the family's daily life.

Ester's L1 Development was a balance of Receptive and Productive Oral skills with no Literate Development. Minimal English was addressed within the format of her education in Korea. The lack of books and paper in school forced her L1 Development to locate on the far left Oral side of the Continua scale. English, L2 skills had no function in her geographic area growing up, offering no agency for L2 Development. This offered both English language Development and schooling in general with little agency in Ester's young life. Upon moving to Germany as an adult Ester was immersed in an English rich Oral environment, pushing her L1 to the Minority and focusing on the more powerful L2 English side of the Continua scale. This new environment again focusing solely on the Oral function of the dimension relating to her L2. Ester did attend formalized ESL classes; however caring for her family precluded her consistent attendance in classes.

Ester's daily life presents a Majority-English format in the Content dimension of the Continua. Her L1 was at one time offered agency, as she attended a Korean speaking church. However, the church was located far from the family's current home and travel to her L1 speech community became burdensome. Her L1 exists at the Minority side of the Continua as she utilizes it only for calling her family in Korea and when teaching Korean language fundamentals to her daughter. Neither of these activities occurs with significant frequency in comparison to her required daily use of her L2. Her home is an Anglo-only speaking environment as she is the only Korean speaker in the household. And with the

elimination of her Korean church as a speech community she admits having very infrequent contact with other Korean speakers. Her L2 expresses itself almost exclusively in the less powerful Vernacular side of the Continua. She lacks the Literate skills necessary to execute Literate skills such as utilizing a computer and decoding notes from her children or employers. Her placement as caretaker and head of the household for a brief time during her husband's illness was executed with the assistance of her husband's English speaking family and in a highly Contextualized Literary format. She indicated that she prefers not to access Literate forms of the L2 such as bills and bank statements indicating a solid Vernacular placement within Content dimension of the Continua.

When viewing Ester through the Media dimension of the Continua we see that the acquisition of her biliteracies was Successive with no L2 present in her schooling as a child. Additionally, when assessing Ester's two languages, Korean and English, we see that they have Dissimilar Structures and Divergent Scripts. These factors coupled with the fact that Ester was not afforded the ability to continue school and literacy Development in her L1, presented significant barriers when acquiring and utilizing her biliteracies.

Agnes

Although Agnes's L1 presents itself at the Micro, less powerful level of the Continua it is closer to the middle of the Micro-Macro scale than the far left. Agnes has the significant Context of her home environment where she utilizes and great agency is given to her L1. She speaks Polish, her L1, almost exclusively to her adult children and engages in a mix of English and Polish to her husband. Polish television stations and print Media also afford agency to her L1 within the Context of her daily life. However, she

does reside in an English-only Macro environment outside the confines of her home. Her small community, which at one time included a large number of Polish speakers, has become an almost exclusive Anglo-speaking environment. The churches that once offered mass and social activities in Polish no longer exist and she must defer to the more powerful English environment. With her husband's health issues and increasing age she is required to execute more Literate L2 activities such as caring for the family's finances and solving matters relating to medical concerns, however overall her skill strengths continue to favor the Oral side of the Continua. As her family affords continued use and agency to her L1 Agnes would then be considered a Bilingual.

Agnes's Development of her L1, first grade through high school, although including several other languages; Latin and Russian, did not include her English. Her L1 literacy education was offered through a balance of Reception and Production and this fact coupled with her study of two other languages provided a balanced undergirding for additional language acquisition. She resisted formalized English language classes until she came to the United States studying then sporadically over a period of eight years.

When looking at the Content dimension of the Continua we see that Agnes's biliteracies present a balance of use within her life. Her home\family environment, given primary importance by Agnes utilizes her L1, Polish while the outside world, with which she must interface requires the dominant, powerful L2 English. Agnes, through her own assessment, is a very people oriented person. This personality trait drives many of her literacy functions encouraging discourse even in her less skilled L2. Her L2 skills are placed on the Vernacular side of the Continua, however the agency she affords appropriate social behavior such a sending thank-you note, motivates her skills toward

the Literate for highly Contextualized activities. The agency Agnes places on human interaction places her on the left, Contextualized side of the Continua, with no desire toward Decontextualized linguistic endeavors.

With no English spoken in her home or school as a child Agnes's Media dimension shows her to have Successive Development of her biliteracies. Polish presents a very Similar Structure to English, with Oral language skills receiving high importance socially and additionally possesses a Convergent Script facilitating the ease of language transfer between Agnes's L1 and her L2.

Maria

When Maria moved to the United States, the Context of her biliteracies changed to the Macro side of the Continua. Her husband's accident and subsequent recovery gave no agency to her L1, Spanish, within the Context of the medical community and required that her L1 move to the far left, less powerful side of the Continua. Upon arriving in the United States Maria's daughter's English skills, the only Context in which Maria could use her L1, improved rapidly diminishing the agency of Maria's L1. With assistance, Maria navigated the English dominant, Literate medical environment. The Context of her life additionally encouraged her to acquire a driver's license further forcing her to acquire a balance of Oral and Literate skills. She became a Monolingual speaker operating almost exclusively in the Macro environment of her L2, English.

The Development dimension of the Continua demonstrates a Receptive-Productive balance in Maria's childhood literacies skills within her L1. She graduated with the American equivalent of a high school diploma from a Catholic that although offering a balance in Production and Reception in Spanish language skills, offered no

English language classes. Maria's husband paid for short-term intensive English classes in Argentina. Additionally, Maria attended formalized ESL classes upon arriving in the United States as an adult but had to cut her formalized studies short due to the timing of her husband's accident. She resumed classes after his accident but only for a short time before the family moved to another state. Maria has not continued her English language classes in her new location. Both ESL experiences in the United States focused on the Oral, with very little L2 Literate practice.

When looking at the Content dimension of the Continua we see that Maria's environment offers the powerful L2 in the Majority for use in her daily life. Her husband and daughter speak English-only at home, a rule her husband instituted early in their marriage. She has few social contacts other than her classmates who seldom held conversations in Spanish. Phone calls to her family in Argentina hold the only agency for her L1. She watches television voraciously, mimicking the Oral Vernacular presented. Additionally, she uses a tape of her voice to practice but again only Oral-Vernacular practice. Her husband controls the family finances presenting little Literate opportunity for Maria.

When looking at the Media dimension of the Continua we see that Maria's literacy acquisition was Successive, with no L2 present in her childhood schooling. The Similar Structures presented among Spanish and English facilitated transfer of skills and formatting discourse from Spanish to English. Additionally, the Convergent Scripts between Spanish and English supported a straightforward transition between the two languages.

Rose

Within the dimension of Context for Rose's life her L1, Chinese, holds little current agency and therefore places it at the Micro level. Her phone calls home to her brother and sister and her use of her translation devices are the only use for her L1 in her life. Her home life is an English-only speaking environment as is the town in which she lives. Rose is enrolled in ESL classes and for a time there was another Chinese speaker in the class but her teacher indicated that they spent little time conversing in Chinese, demonstrating that Rose herself gives little agency to her L1. Her only friendships are those conducted online, placing her on the Literate right of the Continua scale. This online speech community uses the Macro L2 English exclusively for their discourse. Rose and her husband communicate mainly through written notes minimizing her Oral discourse even further. Because of her extremely limited use of her L1, Rose is considered a Monolingual in her current environment.

Rose's Development of her L1 occurred in a Productive-written format during her schooling as a child in China. She indicated that students were seldom engaged in Oral discourse and that learning occurred as Oral directions from the teacher and written-only responses from the students. Her L2, English learning occurred in the same format, beginning with rudimentary written practice at the age of 13. Her L2 although offered consistently in school, once weekly, was not conducted as a core curriculum subject. The fact that students were not expected by school officials to need English language skills coupled with the fact that Rose only attended school until she turned 14 gave her little in-depth practice in her L2.

The Content dimension of Rose's biliteracy shows that she exists in an L2 Majority environment with little daily agency or value placed on her L1. Her role as a wife requires English only discourse and exists mainly in a Literate format. Her communication with her husband occurs mostly in Literate form as does discourse within her friendships. She has developed online friendships that occur again in a Literate-only form and all within her L2, English. Although in most of Rose's life, her interactions with her husband and friends hold highly Contextualized discourse (and this is the side of the Continua scale her skills favor), Rose is determined to continue English classes which do contain Decontextualized Content. She hopes to develop her language skills to the level needed to open a business for herself in the United States one day.

Although Rose experienced one year of English literacy skills as a child it is not enough to consider her literacies Simultaneous, thus making her exposures to her biliteracies Successive. The Dissimilar Structure of Chinese and English coupled with the Divergent Scripts used by the two languages present a more difficult transfer of skills from her L1 to her L2.

Gabriella

Within the Context dimension of Gabriela's life, English holds the powerful Macro place within her biliteracies. There is Micro level utility for her L1 only when speaking to her mother in Colombia over the phone, as even her daughter, also residing in Colombia, prefers to conduct their phone conversations in the Macro-L2, English. Gabriella's husband speaks a marginal amount of Spanish and chooses to use English-only discourse with his wife. As Gabriella does not hold a job outside her home her social environment, also existing solely in the Macro-English only, is her only other opportunity

for discourse. Her social contacts are few, none of which is Bilingual in Spanish and English. Gabriella's biliteracy skills focus heavily on the right side of the Continua scale focusing on the Oral. Her gregarious personality focuses on interpersonal interaction, giving greater utility and agency to her on Oral skills. She utilizes phonetics in practicing her L2 with her friend and focuses on visual cues from watching a speaker's lip movements.

Gabriella's literacy Development in her L1 occurred mainly through a Receptive format. She was not exposed to her L2 until what would be the equivalent to her high school years in the United States and that exposure was Decontextualized. Although Gabriela was a serious student, English was very difficult for her; fortunately, the emphasis on English language skills in her high school was marginal. She encountered English in a formalized Receptive-Productive format as a requirement in during her undergraduate studies. Although the L2 practice was Decontextualized she was successful within the Context of the class but retained little that is of use to her today. She took ESL classes as a part of the international mail order bride service that brought her and her husband together and took formalized ESL class for several months upon coming to the United States; however, she has not continued her study after her initial few months.

The Content dimension of Gabriela's biliteracies places her in the L2 Majority with no utility for her Micro L1 on a daily basis. Her social interactions are in English only format, both with her husband and her close friend. She has a goal of improving her L2 to a point where she could obtain a job, even if not in her certified field of Child Psychology, but very few positions in her rural area will give agency to her L1 as a part

of a positions requirements. She has expressed significant interest in obtaining a driver's license, with its Literate component but has met with objection at home. The Content of her daily discourse, L2 Majority, rests almost exclusively in the Vernacular, on the left less powerful side of the Continua. Her daily discourse is highly Contextualized, focusing on Content associated with her role as wife and homemaker. She places greatest personal agency on this role and it's associated literacy factors.

Gabriella experienced the acquisition of her biliteracies through Successive Exposure, with purposeful study of English occurring only as an adult. Spanish and English possess similar Structures and Convergent Scripts, both factors aiding in the successful transfer of skills from the L1 to the L2.

A Collective Comparison of the IMOB's Biliteracies on the Continua

Although the Continua offers a framework that includes a linear scale in delineating the biliterate dimensions of: Context, Development, Content and Media, we must recognize that one point on this scale is at once distinct and also inextricably linked to all other points on the scale. Hornberger (2000) builds on Kelly's (1969) idea that biliteracy exists not as distinct opposites with an individual being either Monolingual or Bilingual, or Oral versus Literate but "... that those opposites represent only theoretical endpoints on what is in reality a continuum of features" (p. 5). The Continua dimensions are part of a larger interrelated whole. "The notion of continuum intends to convey that although one can identify (and name) points on the continuum, those points are not finite, static or discreet" (p. 36). Any one particular instance of biliteracy is defined at one point along the Continua.

Specific instances of language such as the use of an online translator to decode a utility bill and larger instances that place the speaker in the language Majority population receive concrete definition within the framework of the Continua. The Continua offers the Structure that allows us to interpret the literacies of a biliterate individual and define the particular characteristics of their skills and the interrelationship of these skills offering a clear understanding of their biliteracies.

The Continua framework also deconstructs literacy into those elements that a particular society views as possessing capital or power within the Context of its society. Within any society, there exists variant functions for the inherent literacy, including the literacy tasks that relate daily living both at home and in the workplace, literacy's value to personal growth and recreation and literacy's place within the immediate family Structure. However, not all of these literacies are equally powerful within a society. There exists a debate within the field of second language acquisition relating to the power Oral versus Literate hold within English speaking societies. Hornberger (2000) offers Street's argument that argues that "Literate practices are always embedded in Oral uses" (1988a), refuting the concept of a "great divide" between the Orality and literacy. And although researchers such as Street indicate that Orality and literacy co-exist embedded within one another, nonetheless there is a distinction within a culture as to the most powerful literacy skills. Within the framework of the Continua, the power of English within our society exists mainly on the right side of the Continua. Within the dimension of Context, the Micro-Literate-Monolingual areas present the skill levels most valued within our society. Within the dimension of Development, the skills closest to the designations of Production-Literate in the L2 represent the most powerful literacies. And

within the dimension of Content the speaker whose skills fall closest to the Majority-Literate and Decontextualized side of the Continua possess the greater linguistic capital or power. The perceived power of these skills within the Context of our English speaking society can be seen to influence each of our participants through their stories.

It is now through the format of the Continua that we begin to look at the biliteracies of all participants collectively within the study, in comparison with one another. The illustration of the Continua and its dimensions and sub sections as they relate to the IMOBs of this study is offered as Table 1.

Table 1

IMOBs Biliteracies on the Continua

	L1	Context	Development	Content
Sol	Spanish	micro-macro oral bilingual	receptive oral L1	L1-L2 balance vernacular-literate contextualized
Ester	Korean	L2-macro oral monolingual	receptive oral L1	L2 vernacular contextualized
Agnes	Polish	micro-macro oral bilingual	receptive-productive oral-literate L1	L1-L2 balance vernacular-literate contextualized
Maria	Spanish	L2-macro oral monolingual	receptive-productive oral L1	L2 vernacular contextualized
Rose	Chinese	L2-macro literate monolingual	productive literary L1	L2 literate contextualized
Gabriella	Spanish	L2-macro oral monolingual	receptive oral L1	L2 vernacular contextualized

Context of Biliteracy

The heuristic ethnography of literacy defines language as a series of communicative events. The Context of biliteracy then studies these communicative events occurring within a language by factoring in components as, participants, settings, topics, goals, norms, forms and genres. It is these events such as the highly Contextualized language necessary for a communicative event regarding a husband's condition while in the hospital or the language skills necessary when taking driver's license exam. Key to the study of the IMOB biliteracies, Gee (1996) offers this definition of Context; "literacy has no meaning apart from particular cultural contexts in which it is used." (p. 59) Although the contexts of L2 language used by the participants in this study would seem initially to be homogenous as they all share the rural nature of their environment, their roles as mothers and their status as an IMOB, differences emerge. Hearing their stories has proven that the many factors Scribner and Cole outline, such as phonemes, morphemes and syntax, work in conjunction to create a number of factors affecting the Context of language used and subsequently offer variant Contexts for the IMOBs English language use.

The Micro and Macro level of Context on the Continua offer a clear example that, English, L2 at the Macro level is the most powerful language and that the speaker's L1 is marginalized. The Macro level that English holds, especially in such essential discourse as that related to health issues, for example, holds neither value nor power to the brides L1. This is especially clear for most of the IMOBs in this study, affected by their rural areas in which they reside which lack ethnic diversity hence denying them a community of practice. Although there are small pockets of non-native English speakers, migrant

farm workers and those non-native speakers associated with IUP, they are extremely limited and by nature, these pockets exist as closed societies. Thus, the rural portion of Pennsylvania where all of this study's participants reside places the IMOB's L1, regardless of country of origin, marginalized for all but one of these women. Sol utilizes her L1 often in her work environment providing agency and power to her native language of Spanish. For four of the remaining five participants there is only the Micro level of use for their L1, used when speaking to family members still residing in their native country. Ester, Maria, Rose and Gabriella all indicated that their L1 is of little use in their daily lives, limited to interpersonal functions, reinforcing its lack of power and Micro status. Agnes chooses to utilize her L1 daily, providing it a closer association with the Macro side of the continuum as she speaks Polish exclusively with her children, watches television in Polish even seeks out written texts such as magazines written in Polish. However Agnes is directly affected by the Macro status of her L2 outside her home as she must fulfill the family's shopping needs using English, and care for health related needs for her husband and herself again using the powerful L2, English. Both Agnes and Ester were able to conduct their religious activities through the less powerful Micro L1 when they first came to the United States, Ester having found a Korean speaking church an hour away from home and Agnes living in a small community that supported several Catholic churches that conducted services in Polish. However, Ester shared in her story that an hour drive to church several times a week became burdensome for her family and that she now attends an English speaking church closer to home. Agnes spoke of a vastly diminishing Polish population in her town thus slowly eroding the need for religious services delivered in Polish. So for all of the participants daily living needs associated

with an environment other than their home such as shopping and seeking medical attention the Macro level of English language use is necessary. Additionally, all interaction with friends and neighbors for the participants are held exclusively in the Macro L2. None of the participants expressed that they have found native speakers of their own languages, communities of practice, with which to develop friendships supporting the use of their L1 currently in the United States.

When considering the Context of biliteracy we must also look at the Oral-Literate aspect of language. Within the field of Second Language Acquisition there is significant debate relating to the concept of Oral versus Literate. Some within the field, Scribner and Cole (1981) for example, propose a distinction or “great divide” between the two concepts. Other researchers such as Street (1988a-1989) refuted this notion to say that the choice of the use of language in its Oral or Literate state is a function of Context. Rose is the only IMOB who in this study uses the Literate more than the Orality dimension of English. Her language Development in her L1, Chinese, was dominated by the Literate as she indicated that the students “never spoke in school.” Subsequently she favors the Literate in her L2, writing notes to her husband and using writing to develop friendships on the internet. However, each of the five remaining IMOB’s English biliteracy function places them on the Oral side of the continuum. The Context of their daily lives, both at work and personally, requires them to function orally much more frequently than in writing. This functioning within Context is of a survival nature, as they must use Oral language to interact with businesses, school personnel and those in the healthcare industry to cite common themes expressed by the IMOBs. The interpersonal and Media based daily culture that they encounter is supported and executed largely through Oral

communication. The only exception being the four IMOBs who have been forced by circumstance to gain some highly Contextualized Content specific Literate skills. Sol, Ester Agnes and Maria were forced into the role of the family's primary caretaker by circumstance of their husband's illnesses. For the period of time that they took on this role there was Literate information to decode relating to family finance and medical issues specific to their husbands individual needs.

To understand the third level of Context, Bilingualism versus Monolingualism Hornberger (1989) offers this explanation, "Bilinguals switch languages according to functions and uses, whereas Monolinguals switch styles in the same Contexts" (p. 281). Four of the six Bilingual participants- Ester, Maria, Rose and Gabriella- in this study rarely switch languages as they are seldom presented with Contexts that require their native language. In contrast, Sol is presented with a clear and defined Context for her Bilingual skills. She is asked to translate, usually in an Oral format, for customers at her workplace. The translation is associated with questions relating to medications, both prescription and over the counter, cashing checks, sending money orders and with general product assistance throughout the store. She however, does not use her L1 in her home with her children or with friends in the United States. Her only interpersonal use of her L1 exists when she is speaking with family in Nicaragua. Agnes is the only other IMOB who switches between her two languages based on Context. She uses her L1 when speaking with her adult children and to access textual and Oral information. The use of her L2 is reserved for her external environment and with her husband. Although, Agnes admitted that she and her husband speak a mixture of English and Polish. The other four participants switch to their L1 only in the Context of calling family in their native

countries. They have husbands, children and real world contacts that expect English only for interactions. It was of significant interest to hear both Ester and Gabriella say that they now “think” in English, demonstrating that even in the Context of their own thoughts they are Monolingual in the L2. Hence, the data from this study supports the Contexts continuum of Hornberger’s biliteracy model. It illustrates that in the U. S. the uses of literacy in two languages weighs toward the most powerful end of the continuum, the Macro and Monolingual poles, while restricting biliteracy to the Oral or least powerful pole. Thus, the L2 Context experienced by the IMOBs, with the exception of Sol, deprives them of the power of the written literacy in either language to achieve success in society.

The biliteracies of the IMOBs in this study are given no voice to Oral dimensions of biliterate interaction. The specific speech events that occur in the lives of the IMOBs are governed or dominated by the L2, English. There exist few if any Contexts where they may utilize their L1 for any speech event. An occasional brush with another more fluent Bilingual in their own language at a grocery store or social gathering would offer biliterate discourse, yet none of the women in this study mentioned having consistent encounters in any Context that gave agency to their L1. When Maria’s husband was injured in the automobile accident, the ARIN programs found someone who was fluent in Spanish that agreed to go to the hospital to initially assist with translation of the critical, highly Contextualized discourse associated with her husband’s immediate care. This individual was tremendously helpful several times during the first several weeks. However, after that, when my friend had to decrease her level of support the hospital did not offer any assistance in providing a translator. The power imbalance was supported by

those in a position of power, the hospital staff, granting no agency or value to Maria's L1. Exemplifying how even in the most critical events, those literally associated with life and death situations, the Context of discourse is placed with the language of power, English.

Hence, the data from this study supports Hornberger's claim regarding the role of Context in the analysis of biliteracy. My data illustrates that in the U.S., the uses of literacy in two languages among adult immigrant women weighs toward the most powerful Macro and Monolingual poles of the Context continuum while restricting biliteracy to the Oral or least powerful pole of the continuum. The L2 Contexts experienced by the rural IMOBs deprive them of the written literacy needed to be a vital part of U. S. society.

Development of Biliteracy

Essential to understanding each of the participant's literacy story, is the historical Development of their individual biliteracies. The Development of an individual's literacies provides them with the necessary communicative competence to function within the Context of a speech community. In this section, I will bring together the individual participants historical literacy Development to begin to formulate a collective body of information relating to their biliteracy. Comparisons will be made on the three levels of Development that Hornberger offers within this section of the Continua: Reception-Production, Oral-Literate and L1-L2.

All participants spent their entire childhood in their native countries, completing both elementary and secondary school there. As this is the case, it becomes necessary to break down their literacy acquisition into their L1 and L2 separately. Sol, and Gabriella, both Spanish speakers, indicated that they acquired their L1 mostly through Receptive

methods. Both indicated that instruction occurred as evident through comments like Sol's stating her L1 was acquired through the teacher "... reading in Spanish, singing and listening to stories." Both women stated that little if any writing occurred throughout her school experience. Ester, a Korean speaker, also indicated that her school experiences were mainly favoring Reception, with some Production when reciting rote-memorized material. Ester also mentions the lack of books in her Korean school which elucidates the cause of the focus on Receptive presentation of learning. Maria and Agnes, a Spanish speaker and Polish speaker respectively, told of school experiences that drew from both the Reception and Production ends of the continuum. Reading, writing, listening and speaking were all mentioned in their stories of their L1 acquisition. Rose, the Chinese speaker, also indicated a balance in the Development of her L1 literacy skills but only through reading and writing, indicating that "we never speak in school," which suggest Literate dominant schooling.

Sol, Ester, Maria, Rose and Gabriella had very limited and sporadic exposure to their L2 English in schooling experiences, many times indicating that English was learned as an informal and infrequent portion of their curriculum and offered solely in rudimentary discourse through listening and speaking. Agnes shared that although students in Poland were required to learn other languages such as German, Latin and Russian, English however was not a part of her schooling experiences.

L2 Development was exceptionally minimal for five of the participants once they left secondary school. Only Gabriella continued her education after what we would consider the completion of high school in the United States. She took courses in English as a part of her college degree, which consisted mostly of L2 Literate grammar practice

on the Production side of the Continua. Rose and Gabriella received L2 Production skill practice from their mail order bride's services with practice limited to the Oral. Upon arrival in the United States, all of the participants attended an ESL class for a period of time (one month to five years), five attending the ARIN Center for Education. This literacy Development was based on a balance of Receptive and Productive skills focusing mainly on Contextualized survival skill Development. Unfortunately, they did not have the advantage of a cultural practice approach. There exists no venue for the IMOB to further develop their L1 skills, giving no voice or agency to their L1. None of the participants remained in their ESL programs long enough to move from their entry level Non-English Speaker designation to an Intermediate Level Speaker designation on standardized testing.

When assessing the participants Oral versus written Development, Sol, Ester and Gabriella all indicated that, their schooling experiences focused mainly at the Oral end of the continuum with Rose indicating that her literacy education was delivered through a Productive-written approach. Agnes and Maria both spoke of a balance of Oral and written skill Development within their L1 literacy education. L2 experiences for all of the participants are on the left side of the continuum favoring Oral over Literate Development.

Developmentally, as children, all six of the participants gained literacy skills in their L1 with no use of their L2 as a reinforcement or supplement to assist in language development. Likewise all structured literacy-learning experiences within their L2 were conducted solely on a Monolingual basis with no Bilingual transfer or subsequent support from their L1 language.

All of the participants in this study demonstrated a lack of biliterate Development in their literacies. Hornberger notes the essential value of the growth and Development of both languages for successful biliterate a factor that facilitates success transfer and movement among an individual's literacies. As we see through their stories, none of the participants within this study had the advantage of developing their L2, English, in any more than a cursory manor while developing their L1. This lack of experience in the balance necessary of the L1 and the L2, relating to both Reception-Production and the Oral-Literate functions of language placed these women at a significant linguistic disadvantage when settling here in the United States.

Content of Biliteracy

The Content of biliteracy conveys how literacies are used to express meanings. Content concretely displays the perceived power of a language within a social Context. Societal value of the value of an L1 or L2 are most clearly displayed through the agency given to that language in interpersonal and formal discourse. In American society, the Majority (English), literacy is more powerful than the Minority literacies (L1); the Literate pole of (i.e. formal or standardized) literacy is more powerful than Vernacular (i.e. non-standard or local) literacies. These are clearly exhibited by the fact that English, the language of power is necessary within most discourse events in American society.

English, the IMOB's L2, has the greatest perceived power especially for the participants in this study as both their home environment and their external rural setting affords most of them an English-only speaking atmosphere. They encounter, with the exception of Agnes's Polish television stations and magazines, an environment that presents itself only in the L2 English. Of the six participants, only one bride, Sol, is

afforded validation and agency for her Bilingualism. Sol's role of interpreter/translator at her job places her L1 in the Majority, as it is not only useful where she works but imbues her with a unique position among her co-workers. She is afforded not only agency for her L1 but job security by the very nature of her Bilingualism in a rural area where the need for Bilingualism in the workplace is the rarity not the norm. Agnes's L1 affords her significant personal agency, as it is the vehicle of communication she uses with her children. For the remaining four IMOBs their L1 is given Minority status on the far left of the continuum as its usefulness in their current lives, exists only in the form of contact with their families currently living in their native countries. Even when communicating with family in their native countries both Rose and Gabriella, have adult children whose Bilingualism exists at higher levels than their mothers and with whom they use English as the vehicle of discourse.

In the case of the IMOBs in this study, power for this dimension of biliteracy lies in the ability to shift back and forth. Sol accomplishes this through business. Agnes achieves this by communicating with her family. Likewise, Rose and Gabriella use this dimension of biliteracy with family and personal interaction. Thus, in this study the first dimension of the Content continuum applies to specific domains but not to all domains for each IMOB.

Circumstances that altered the health of their spouses changed the uses of biliteracy for Sol, Ester, Agnes and Maria from the Vernacular to the Literate end of the Content continuum. Each of these four international mail order brides was faced with the circumstance of encountering and decoding Literate information. These IMOBs engaged in Content (healthcare) both Orally, when speaking with individuals in the healthcare

industry such as; doctors, pharmacists and physical therapists and through written-productive language acts when deciphering medical bills and patient care information. Each was additionally compelled to take the primary role of caretaker in their family for at least a period of time.

All four of these same women (Sol, Ester, Agnes and Maria) studied for and passed the Pennsylvania driver's licensing test again within a language format that is at the Literate end of the continuum. Although Agnes's husband is still living and is partially managing their life, she too is required to utilize Literate L2 materials to respond to the family's daily needs. Because of her husband's age and diminishing health, she found the need to acquire a driver's license late in life and fulfill that role within her household. Agnes's daily life as wife, mother and housekeeper places her skills mostly at the L1 Vernacular end of the continuum. She uses her L1 for most of her daily activities but is able to function in her L2 Vernacular for tasks outside the home such as shopping and doctors visits. Rose's Oral language functions occur mainly within the Vernacular. However, with her writing skills in both her L1 and L2 are the strongest of her language abilities and afford her greatest agency currently. Her communication with her husband and online friends is mostly in a Literate format. Gabriella's discourse exists mainly in the Vernacular, with little speaking or reading required of her in her L2, English. Gabriella functions completely in the Vernacular within the parameters of her current environment. Her L2 interactions are limited to speaking with her friend, her husband and occasionally with personnel in a store. She does not have a job other than occasionally cleaning her husband's office, for which she is paid, and is not permitted to

study for a driver's license. She does not access bills, legal documents or other forms of formal Contextualized text as her husband takes care of all aspects of their financial life.

The last aspect of Content is the use of literacies in Contextualized or Decontextualized forms of language. Hornberger (2000) again offers clear delineation between these two ends of the continuum. She states, "Although, an exclusive emphasis on decontextualized parts can keep language minority students from learning the language of power, being able to use parts of language correctly is one key element of being able to speak the language of power" (p. 111). In this statement, she is referring to school age children learning in a Bilingual environment. However, the concept is applicable to adult students as well. Gabriella indicated that she had consistent English language classes in college however, they occurred in a Decontextualized format. The L2 language associated with the healthcare field and the need for this highly Contextualized language became apparent through the stories of the IMOBs who were suddenly placed in the role of caregiver and head of the household upon their spouse's sudden illness. It was essential for each of the IMOBs placed in this circumstance to access the necessary English that quite literally was the capital in this a life and death circumstance. In communication with the doctors and nurses caring for their spouse, these women needed immediate access to this set of highly Contextualized language skills in order to support and continue caring for their husband. Additionally, when Ester, Agnes and Maria passed the Pennsylvania driver's examination, the connected language parts to the whole experience which resulted in their partial empowerment.

Although seemingly presented in a highly Contextualized format (at least in the perception of the ESL providers) the formal ESL classes that each of the IMOBs

experienced were not responsive enough to the specific needs presented by the L2 learners in this study. This will be discussed at length in the conclusions of the study. Yet none of the six IMOBs has perseverated in the learning environment. Studying language parts divorced from wholes leaves the learner powerless, a circumstance that characterizes most of the IMOBs formal instruction in L2.

The data from the IMOBs stories underscores the importance Hornberger places on society's weighing of power toward the Majority and Literary ends. Five of the six women are marginalized, by their lack of English fluency and focus on only the Vernacular end of the continuum. Although one woman found agency in her L1 as a translator at her workplace, the remaining five find no circumstance that utilizes their L1 placing them in situations that they can not navigate, limiting their access to parts of society such as most work settings and social gatherings. Only two of the women hold jobs and only one of those positions utilizes their L1. Moreover, few of the women mentioned a social life limiting her personal interactions to those within the parameters of her family. The constraints that underdeveloped biliteracies place on the everyday lives of the IMOB most certainly negatively affects their overall quality of life.

Media of Biliteracy

The Media of biliteracy concerns mainly the form that the Content of biliteracy takes. Media is a part of the Context in which every biliterate communicates. These items of Media, such as syntax and script on the Micro-level and the discernment of the appropriateness of orality on the Macro-level, create the successful biliterate individual. The three areas that make up this section of the Continua are, Simultaneous-Successive exposure, Dissimilar-Similar Structures and Divergent and Convergent Scripts.

If we use McLaughlin's (1985) distinction between Simultaneous (early) and Successive (late) exposure, we define a Simultaneous Bilingual as that individual who acquires both languages in early childhood and a Successive Bilingual who does so in adolescence or beyond. However, there are findings that emphasize the type and degree of Bilingualism over the age of acquisition. Five of the six of the brides in this study learned their second language during adulthood. Rose, the exception, learned some English in a Productive-Literate format during adolescence. Ester and Agnes had minimal exposure to English as children and all in the Oral-Vernacular. Items embedded in their daily lives such as labels on food and medicine containers, recreational information presented through print ads and newspapers and essential items such as bills, bank statements and school information associated with their children appears only in the L2, giving English the greatest agency and diminishing the use and value of their L1.

If we look at the type and degree of Bilingualism for all six IMOBs as adults, we see limited or sporadic attention to their L2 learning in formalized settings. Hence, all IMOB in this study are Successive late Bilinguals.

The next area to address in relation to the bride's biliteracy relates to Similar and Dissimilar Structures between their first and second languages. This relates not to the physical Structure of the languages, but to the cultural undergirding, that supports the language. The three Spanish speakers, Sol, Maria and Gabriella in addition to Agnes, the Polish speaker have Similar Structures of expression. Information is presented in a forthright manner and although both Spanish and Polish tend to offer longer discourse that includes greater description than English there is a close structural element.

As Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) point out when discussing Puerto Rican children in Bilingual programs in Philadelphia: “language use, ability, and exposure present in a community where ongoing circular migration . . . is a fact of life . . . crossing back and forth between both languages and the meanings and identities they convey (pp. 24-25) facilitates the negotiation of similarity of Structures. However, in the case of the IMOBs in this study isolated in rural contexts, little opportunity to recognize this similarity existed.

Rose and Ester, Chinese and Korean speakers however have Divergent Structures from English. Information is presented in a less forthright manner, “coming to the point” in a much more circuitous fashion, a concept that varies significantly from English.

The Media of biliteracy can be interpreted to include the forms; visual, audio, spatial, and behavioral, through which the IMOBs express their meanings. This dimension of biliteracy makes a clearer connection between language use and culture than perhaps any other. What affiliation and inheritance (Rampton 1995) do IMOBs express toward their biliteracies at the time of this study? Convergent Scripts, such as Sol, Maria and Gabriella’s Spanish and Agnes’s Polish have very similar writing systems. Roses’ Chinese language and Ester’s Korean language both present a Divergent Structure from their L2, English. Although two Convergent systems would seemingly present an easier of transfer of language between the L1 and the L2, researchers, such as Edelsky (1982), have indicated that other factors such as age of Simultaneous exposure, Contextualization and Literate constructs greatly affect the transfer between language systems. Providing further evidence that language learning and transfer to a second language is dependent on the presence of a significant number of conditions, such as

those presented through the Continua of Biliteracy, and that language Development can not be predicted based on a single factor.

Hornberger's advocacy for the value of Simultaneous exposure to and use of an individual's biliteracies bears itself out within the Context of this study. None of the women in the study had substantial, long-term exposure to their biliterate languages. Although one woman studied written English in her adolescent years in school, this study took a Decontextualized approach that did not afford the necessary undergirding for successful transfer to written skills in English. As the IMOBs exposure to English came mainly upon their relocation to the United States, they were not afforded the significant advantage that Simultaneous language acquisition affords the learner. This lapse of language acquisition between their L1 and L2 hindered their language transfer abilities so significantly that factors such as Convergent Scripts did not positively affect their L2 acquisition.

After comparing the individual stories to one another we are now able to formulate a comprehensive picture of the biliteracy of this community of international mail order brides.

The Final Analysis

This is a study of adult women, born in another country who have emigrated to the United States as adults with the express purpose of becoming an international mail order bride. I have defined international mail order brides, IMOBs, for the purpose of this study as "a woman who commercially publishes or advertises her intent to marry a man from another country, in most cases a more economically developed country, such as the United States." The three cohesive factors that remained constant during the period of

the study are one, that she is an international mail order bride, two, that she has attended a formalized ESL program in the United States and three, that she at the time of the study lived in a rural setting. All three factors remained unchanged during the study.

At first glance, each of the participants presented in this study demonstrates very diverse factors. For example, their current age varies from 35 to 63, presenting an age range among the women of 28 years. Their age upon arrival in the United States varies by 14 years with the youngest arriving at age 25 and the oldest arriving at age 31. Her length of residency in the U. S. at the time of the study posed the largest variance ranging from ten months at the time of the study to 33 years residency at the time of the study. The age difference between the women and their husbands ranged from two to 25 years.

Linguistically, the women spoke four different languages as their L1 and represented six different countries. The variance in the range in age, length of residency and language\culture presents itself as a significant factor offering validation to comparisons among the IMOB's, and eliminating age, length of residency and L1 as contributing factors for their literacy differences.

However, the IMOBs share many more similarities than they do differences in their life circumstance. If we assemble the overriding homogenous factors linking these women we see that at the time of the study they were all international mail order brides living in a rural area. All were mothers, some with at least one shared child with their American husband. All came to the United States to become IMOBs in their late twenties or early thirties. Most of the women had grown up in some level of poverty, all to be classified as middle class once they became wives in the United States. Only one woman held an advanced degree, providing her with a profession. However, upon coming to the

United States, all of the IMOBs entered the middle class economically and although three have jobs, none of these jobs would be considered a profession with commensurate salary that would contribute to their middle class economic status. They experienced no consistent L2 instruction in English in their native countries and although experiencing some formalized English language education once in the United States, did not pursue instruction to raise their level of fluency.

The IMOB's Define Themselves Through Their Biliteracies

The final task of this study is to then use the Continua and the collective information that has been drawn from the IMOB's stories to scrutinize how these women seem themselves, their literacies and how their biliteracy factors into their life here in the United States. We now can discuss their biliteracy uses and the patterns that emerge.

Context

Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) proposes that: "Implicit in consideration of the Contexts for biliteracy is society's tendency to weight power toward the macro, Literate and Monolingual ends of the Continua" (p. 101). This holds especially true for the culturally and linguistically homogenous rural area in which each of the participants in this study reside. There exists no agency for any of their L1's with their exception of one participant for whom her L1, Spanish, offers her capital at her workplace. This case is an anomaly among the other participants with all others first languages existing at the Micro level. The women exist in complete isolation from their first language and related culture. The IMOB's all find that their current social Context requires expertise in their L2 Oral format only, with the children of only one participant continuing to converse with their mother in her L1, all other home lives functioned in a Macro-English format.

In their lives, four of the six International Mail Order Brides encountered Contexts that required Literate use of English, specifically, Context as it relates to healthcare issues. These women, as a circumstance of their husbands sudden health issues, were required complete such literacy tasks as decoding medical bills, instructions on medication and written directions offered to patients when they exit a medical facility. The Literate skills necessary to execute these tasks required highly Contextualized L2 skills that none of these four women had access to through any of their ESL venues. These highly Contextualized Contexts or life circumstances, although seldom anticipated became of primary importance to these four participants, a circumstance which is possible for any IMOB.

Four of the IMOBs fulfilled, to various degrees, the head of the household role during their husband's illnesses. Again, these circumstances placed the participant in a literacy Context with highly Contextualized literacy needs that have significance consequence in their lives. The value or agency associated with continually maintaining a checking or savings account requires skills more advanced than using an online translator to decode the appropriate payment of an electric bill as one participant discussed. In addition, although these four IMOBs were required to fulfill this role, these circumstances were temporary, with all women choosing to return to their previous roles as wife and homemaker, having no responsibility for the more literate tasks of head of the household. This return to their less dominant sociological role placed the IMOB's L2 as functioning mainly as Oral-Productive in her chosen role. In addition, with the exception of one IMOB, the Contexts of all participants' lives in this study were Monolingual English.

Development

America demonstrates a societal tendency to weigh power toward the L2 Production end of the Continuum but we can see that the IMOB's L1 language Development did not follow that paradigm. This category illuminated the greatest amount of diversity among the participants in the study. The women were split in language acquisition formats with three expressing almost exclusive Receptive pedagogical methods when learning their L1, two indicating a balance of Receptive-Productive teaching methodology and one experiencing a Productive-only approach. All women expressed no exposure to their L2, English; during what would be the equivalent to our kindergarten through 12 grade school experience other than occasional base level communication skills. English was acquired as adults, with one IMOB receiving L2 training as a part of college requirements, two studying English as a component of the mail order brides service that they were associated with and all participants studying English for various amounts of time after their arrival in the United States as international mail order brides.

Content

The obvious locus of power or value related to the Content of biliteracy historically favors the Majority-Literate ends of the Continuum. All of the IMOBs in this study, except the participant who translates in her work environment, possess an L1 that is moved to the Minority for all but a few instances in their daily lives. The women all shared that English constitutes the Majority of their language use in their daily life. Only one other participant demonstrated value for the L1 through the use of some L1 Media and discourse with her adult children. For all the IMOBs, their Majority-English takes the

form of Vernacular usage within their daily routine. Conversations with sales people in the grocery, neighbors, and travel agents when trying to book a family vacation are examples the IMOBs gave as occupying the Majority of their use of their L2. The Content of their English Majority day is populated with these Vernacular based tasks. Specific circumstances require highly Contextualized-Literate English, such as studying for the driver's exam and decoding family financial information but those instances occur with less frequency than the need for Oral-Vernacular discourse. Their daily lives here in the United States are inhabited almost exclusively with circumstances requiring highly Contextualized L2 language skills. Whether it be the highly Contextualized discourse associated with the Oral based discussion to determine the difference between cuts of meat in a grocery store or the more Literate based Content of the language used when studying for the drivers license exam, highly Contextualized language is the essential element of the powerful L2 for the IMOB. One unanswerable question presents itself in regards to language Development; Do the IMOB's possess adequate L1 skills to provide the undergirding for the successful acquisition of an L2?

Media

For purposes of developing complete fluency, all of the IMOBs learned English Successively, as adults living in the United States. Although one participant did study written English, it was not to an extent to offer an appropriately solid Contextualized base to currently support Receptive and Oral Production. An although the debate continues regarding the value of Successive L1\L2 acquisition my findings move toward supporting the theory that Successive acquisition would have assisted in greater English language fluency for the IMOB once transplanted to the United States. Four of the participants

displayed similar Structures in their L1 and Convergent Scripts in their biliteracies two did not. Once again, the most powerful end of the Continuum, Successive acquisition and similar Convergent Scripts lies in direct opposition to the circumstance of the participants within this study.

The Women, Their Choices and Their Future

Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) collectively offer the following tenet “Indeed, we are suggesting that the very nature and definition of what is powerful biliteracy is open to transformation through what actors-educators, researchers, community members and policy makers-so in their everyday practices” (p. 99). This philosophy recognizes that again in the author’s words, “. . . this view assumes that *power lies in each of us* and our immediate personal and social relations, as well as in institutional formations.” Viewing biliteracy in this way allows us to validate the choices that these International Mail Order Brides have made in regard to their English language acquisition and see their biliteracies not as unacceptable but as useful and valuable in the Context in which literacy supports each IMOB’s specific life circumstance. I do not see these women with a problem that needs to be fixed, as was my original tenet when beginning the study, I see them as having made well thought out decisions relating to their biliteracies that can be expanded upon educationally in ways that will support the undergirding of their identity choice as defined through literacy. This study proves, through the collective retelling of the IMOB’s stories that they are unified in the purpose and agency of their L2, that its value lies in defining and supporting them as successful wives and family members in the United States.

There exist variant functions for inherent literacy, with literacy tasks relating to daily living, the workplace, recreation, family life and those supporting the definition of self. However, not all of these literacies are equally powerful within a society. The IMOBs in this study have redefined the powerful components of biliteracy for themselves by choosing a particular lifestyle and the literacy necessary to support that lifestyle. Scribner and Cole (1981) offer this definition “Literacy is not simply learning how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific Contexts of use” (p. 236). These women came to the United States for the purpose of fulfilling the role of wife and this singular focus needs to be addressed through content-specific biliteracy training.

Although seemingly presented in a highly contextualized format, the formal ESL classes that each of the IMOBs experienced was not completely responsive to the specific needs presented by the L2 learners in this study. Hornberger (2003) supports the concept of language and power when she offers that we need “to ‘pay attention and grant agency’ to actors . . . presumed to be those in control of curricula and policy” (p. 343). She goes on to offer an example of a rural adult education program that makes its classroom decisions “. . . based entirely on her (the programs curriculum director) perceptions of what learners need for a good life here in the US.” Herein lies the critical nature to understanding our student’s biliterate needs so that these needs may drive a programs relevancy in relation to the student.

It then becomes the responsibility of the field of Second Language Acquisition, as it relates to adult education, to craft curricula that is responsive to the highly contextualized needs of ESL learners such as this group of IMOBs. This study

demonstrates a concise and valid need for a course with specific focus on the Context and Content language essential to a specific role in society, the role of an international mail order bride.

Course content should be centered on relevant topics many of which were demonstrated through the IMOBs stories, or as one of the IMOBs stated “I need the English that gets me to the bus to go talk to the mans at the bank.” Content should include vocabulary associated with purchasing food, healthcare products and home furnishings; grammar used in familiar greetings among family members and the more formal greetings used with new acquaintances and professionals. Classes should focus on the teaching of Literate based skills for a range of activities from writing a thank you note to filling out the forms necessary to create an account with a utility company. In addition to the Content of the curricula is the key factor of delivery mode. Shorter, more intensive classes would appeal to the IMOB population as their first and primary responsibility lies in their home environment. Classes could be offered in a distance-learning format, offering one meeting with the instructor followed up with several online sessions to practice. Classes should be presented at a time convenient time for the student. Specific intensive classes offered at passing the drivers license exam or speaking to healthcare providers; both needs demonstrated through the IMOBs stories. These are but a few suggestions based on the information related through the IMOB’s stories that could prove to provide a highly Contextualized educational experience that is specific tailored to the needs of a specific population.

Hornberger (2003) states, “...provocative questions remain to be answered, primarily about the degree to which literacy knowledge and skills in one language aid or

impede the learning of literacy knowledge and skills in the other” (p. 4). When seeking to understand the IMOB we must remember that there are a significant number of factors unknown associated with each of these biliterate individuals. Realistically, we can not fully know what literacy background each of our students presents when they walk through the door of an ESL classroom. The cultural value of education varies among cultures and as this study has demonstrated so does the value from individual to individual. However, these IMOBs present themselves to the field with a definable goal, the goal of being a successful wife to an American man. As educators in the field SLA, we recognize that most times our students arrive at our door with indefinable goals and aspirations. We can now begin to recognize and appreciate these learners for who they are and present an appropriate curriculum to support their biliteracies.

Each of us tells our life story through many “voices” and although *language* is a common vehicle these women have chosen to make themselves known to the world through their *choices* in life, specifically in their case the choice to become a successful international mail order bride. They define success as being happily married, a concept that ran consistently through each of their stories. I have had the advantage of knowing five of the six participants in the study for a number of years and they have all indicated that they find happiness and fulfillment in their marriage and current life. Personal validation comes from the act of weaving our life story into the collective story of our environment; these women however have no native cultural group with which to align themselves. The very nature of their rural environment denies all but one of them the ability to find and utilize a shared culture, which would offer agency to their biliteracy.

Their cultural identity now lies with their American husband and family. Their biliterate identity is validated by their success as an IMOB.

Through this study, I have presented a significant body of data provided first hand through the stories of the participants. These participants, these six International Mail Order Brides, have thus offered a valuable insight into the field of Second Language Acquisition. They have offered not only their journey as second language learners they have presented a unique perspective to that second language learning process that can only be captured through the first hand narrative as presented in this study. Additionally, I feel that my perspective as a feminist researcher assisted the level of candor and subsequent findings critical to this study.

As a feminist researcher, I present the voice of my participants through their stories and this voice is in some ways my voice as a woman. On a large scale, although I have not been in their specific circumstance I have experienced many of the same life experiences that are exclusively and inherently female and these shared experiences and perspective afforded me the ability to utilize an open-ended question method as an effective methodology. I have been a mother and a wife. I have been a homemaker and I, like the women in my study, place great value in providing the best possible home life for my family. In essence, the study was a collaboration between the participants and me enhanced largely by the shared experience that comes with being female.

To reiterate a point stated earlier by Clandinin and Connelly “People are individuals that need to be understood as such, but they can not be understood as only individuals. They are always in relation, always in social context” (p. 2). The unique context of these second language learners is the chosen social context presenting itself as

an international mail order bride. As a field, I propose that we thoughtfully consider their stories and use their guidance to enhance the effectiveness of language teaching within the field of Second Language Acquisition.

A Final Note

As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) adeptly observe, “we fall in love with our participants” and I would be no exception to this practice. I am genuinely grateful to these six brave women who enthusiastically opened up their lives to me allowing me to offer their stories to the field of second language acquisition. However, more than that, I need to thank them for including me on their journey, they have provided an inspiration for my scholarly work within the field of TESOL and benchmark for what I consider a life well lived!

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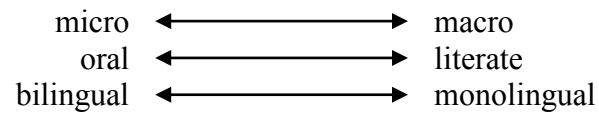
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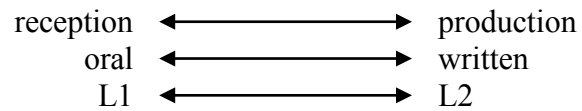
Appendix A

CONTINUA OF BILITERACY (Hornberger 2003)

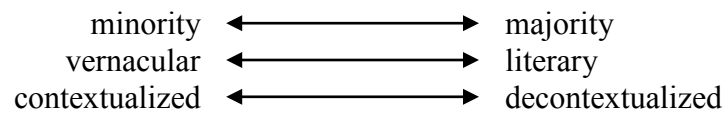
Context of Biliteracy



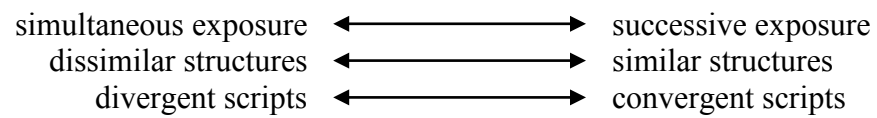
Development of Biliteracy



Content of Biliteracy



Media of Biliteracy



Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

As an English as a Second Language (ESL) student you are being invited to participate in this study. The following information is provided to help you decide if you would like to participate in this study. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. The study is being conducted as part of a dissertation process by Elizabeth Duncan, a doctoral student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Your decision to participate or not participate in this study in no way effects your involvement in your (local class site inserted here) ESL class. Your teacher and classmates do not know that you are participating in this study.

This study will look at the how you use English in you life, including the problems and successes. The data collected will be used to better understand a student who comes to America and marry an American man and hopefully help to structure learning environments that will benefit this kind of student.

If you participate you will be asked to have two face to face interviews lasting approximately one hour to one and a half hours and one or two follow up interviews over the phone. Each interview will have a list of questions you will be asked to help the researcher better understand your life as it relates to your English language skills. All interviews will be tape recorded. These tapes will only be used for the purpose of collecting exactly what the participant says in the interview and will be destroyed after the project is completed, no one but the interviewer and the transcriber will hear the taped interview. There will be a translator present throughout all of the interviews so that you may have any or all information translated for your understanding.

Women from other countries who now living in different parts of Pennsylvania will be also be a part of this study. If you choose to participate you will be given a fictional name and will not have yourself nor any family member identified in any way.

Each participant will be “given a copy of your own narrative” written from the interviews. Also, you will have an opportunity to modify anything in the narrative in a phone interview (with a translator present).

Your help with this study is greatly appreciated, so that the best possible ESL services are available to students in your same life situation. Knowing that you are a part of the process that helps improve English language learning for non-native speakers, like yourself, will offer you pride in contributing to a very positive and worthwhile project.

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone 724-357-7730).

Please remember that your initial decision to participate is voluntary. If you decide at any time during the course of the study that you wish to withdraw you can call me or send me

an e-mail stating that you no longer want to be involved with this study. My contact information is as follows: Elizabeth Duncan 724-388-3583 (cell phone) or e-mail Elizabeth@iu28.org

The researcher is always available for questions and concerns and again, thank you for your very valuable help!

Project Director:
Elizabeth Duncan
300 Indian Springs Road
Indiana, PA 15701
15705
724-388-3583

Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Dan Tannacito
212 Eicher, IUP
Indiana, PA
724-357-6944

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature

Date

Phone number or location where you can be reached

Best days and times to reach you

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date

Investigator's Signature

Appendix C
Translator Form

As a translator you have the following assurances from me: I will translate any and all information that is offered from the researcher to the participant and from the participant to the researcher to the best of my ability. After the interviews are completed I will not speak of any matters discussed within the format of the interviews.

Translator Date

Elizabeth R. Duncan-researcher Date

Appendix D

Script for Contact with Program Staff

- Students will be asked to participate in a study that focuses on women coming from other countries that have met and married to American spouses through internet based services.
- Women who are married to a native English speaker have a different set of difficulties associated with second language learning than do women who are married to speakers of their own native languages.
- All women participating would be chosen from a rural area as this environment places yet again different circumstances when acquiring a second language.
- No real names would be used, nor would any other identifying information that would give away the identity of the student.
- The participant would agree to meet with me in a face-to face setting at least once during the interview process. I will provide a translator for those students who feel that they need translation services.
- It is anticipated that there will be a series of three interviews, at least one face to face and the remaining interviews will occur over the phone.
- Interviews (both phone and face to face) can be conducted at the site where the student attends class or in her home which ever is more comfortable for the student.
- Face to face interviews will last for a minimum of half an hour. Phone interviews will be less lengthy in time and are anticipated to last less than fifteen minutes.
- There will be no inherent cost to the student at any time during the study.
- The student will receive, if she wishes, a copy of the final study to keep.

Appendix E

ABLE Staff Letter and Survey Questions

Dear Colleague,

November 19, 2009

I am currently completing my doctorate in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) & Composition at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. For my dissertation, I have chosen to study a population that I have often encountered throughout my professional work in Adult Basic and Literacy Education Programs, International Mail Order Brides. I have encountered these women as their instructor and program administrator and see a consistent pattern of stalled language development. I feel a study of this population's literacy, as told through their own voices will be a positive addition to our field!

I am writing to as if you would look at the survey I have attached and complete it to assist me in finding participants that would fit into my study. It will require only a few minutes to complete and your involvement is minimal after this point.

I am looking for seven participants from ESL program in Pennsylvania. Students will be asked to participate in a study that focuses on women coming from other countries that have met and married to American spouses through internet-based services.

No real names will be used, nor would any other identifying information that would give away the identity of the student.

I will provide a translator for those students who feel that they need translation services. I anticipate that there will be a series of three interviews, at least one face to face and the remaining interviews will occur over the phone. Interviews (both phone and face to face) can be conducted at the site where the student attends class or in her home which ever is more comfortable for the student.

The student will receive, if she wishes, a copy of the final study to keep.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns, Elizabeth@iu28.org or 724-463-5300

Again, my sincere thanks in helping me with this project!

Beth Duncan

1. Do you have any experience with students that alluded to the fact that they first met their American spouse through the internet (perhaps as “mail order brides”)?
_____ No
_____ Yes, if so how many are males _____ how many are females _____?
2. If you’ve had contact with these students, who has initiated the call to gain information relating to your classes?
_____ The student _____ The spouse _____ Other _____
3. What countries are these students originally from?

4. What is their native language?

5. What are the ages of this particular population that you have encountered?
Females _____ Males _____
6. What is the typically fluency level of these students?

7. Do these student typically stay in the program, longer than your average ESL student _____ shorter than your average student, _____ about the same amount of time as your average ESL student _____?
8. Do you feel that the students you have identified here would be willing to participate in a research study?

Yes _____ No _____
9. Comments:

Appendix F

Staff Comments

1. “This seems to be more of a rural issue than an urban issue.”
2. “Most of these women seem unusually timid. Very often, it is contrary to what I would expect from their cultural backgrounds.”
3. “The husband is unusually “present” during many of our classes. They ask to stay and observe class and often want to meet the friends of his spouse.
4. “These men (the American husbands) are bullies!”
5. “The more I try to reach out to the wife the greater the chance that she will stop coming to class.”
6. “It always seems that there is some agenda or underlying factor with these students.”
7. “The women never seem to have definable goals.”
8. “I can’t seem to get a handle on this population. I didn’t really know they existed.”
9. “These women always turn down the offering of additionally on-to-one tutoring from a volunteer tutor with our program.”
10. “I tried sending a tutor out to the home of several students and the tutor was instructed that the wife was “too busy” to be tutored.”

Appendix G

Face-to-Face Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me what it was like when you first began to learn English in your country? (Prompts; who were your teachers, what types of things helped you practice English, how much did you practice?)
2. Tell me who were the people you could speak English to in your country? What kinds of things did you talk about in English?
3. When you first learned English in your country, was it easier to write, speak, listen or read?
4. When did you first start to speak English after coming to the United States?
5. Can you tell me how you learned English once you got to the United States? (Prompts; who were your teachers, what types of things helped you practice English, how much did you practice?)
6. Is it easier for you to write, speak, listen or read English now that you live in the United States?
7. Do you use a different language for different tasks (prompts; talking to yourself, writing notes on your calendar, singing when you are alone, reading bedtime stories)?
8. What kinds of places do you feel most comfortable speaking English?
9. Who do you feel most comfortable speaking English to?
10. In what ways is it useful to speak two languages?
11. How much of each of your two languages do you use now?
12. Which language are you happiest using now? Can you tell me a story that shows why?
13. Is there anything else you want to include in your story?