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LEARNING, LANGUAGE, AND LITERACY AS ENTITIES FOR EMPOWERMENT AND EQUALITY: A CASE STUDY OF THREE ADOLESCENT INDIGENOUS IXIL ELS

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study is to understand the language and literacy experiences of adolescent immigrant Ixil students in the United States. For this, two questions focusing on language transference and literacy skills of participants were researched. Findings reflect the divergent language and literacy learning realities of Ixil participants and their non-Indigenous Latinx EL counterparts. These findings offer new insights of how Ixil students understand formal schooling and sets a foundation for future research addressing the literacy and language experiences and realities of Indigenous Latinx ELs in U.S. classrooms.

Keywords: Ixil, Indigenous education, ESOL, Spanish, Literacy, Latinx students, SLA

Introduction

Latinxs account for 17.6% of the total U.S. population—56.6 million people—and their community is projected to more than double by the year 2060 (United States Census Bureau, 2016). Moreover, latest reports show that states such as North and South Dakota, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana are experiencing a drastic Latinx population growth rate that is quickly changing their heterogeneous English-speaking communities (Krogstad, 2016). These statistics reflect current classroom demographics, where many Latinx immigrant students are becoming a majority within the English learner population. In fact, Latinx students currently represent 77% of the entire population of English learners (ELs) in U.S. classrooms (NCES, 2018) and Spanish is the second most spoken and taught language in the United States after English.

Many of the Latinx ELs arriving in the United States from Latin America, specifically from Central American countries, have interrupted or no formal education (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017; Pentón Herrera & Duany, 2016). Furthermore, some of them speak Spanish as their second language because they were born and raised in Indigenous populations that speak Indigenous languages as their native language (L1). When they arrive to the United States, many are still emergent learners in their L1 (Indigenous languages), and in Spanish, which negatively impacts their abilities to learn and comprehend English (Pentón Herrera, 2018). Thus, the existent literacy gap becomes an additional barrier that these immigrant students need to overcome in the U.S. society and that may lead to heritage language loss in children and future family members. For this reason, the purpose of this case study is to explore the language and literacy learning realities of three adolescent Ixil students from their perspectives. Furthermore, this research is interested in exploring how the process of transferring language occurs for these participants who have emergent literacy skills in their L1, in Spanish—their second language (L2), and are now learning English as a third language (L3) in the United States.

Background of the Study

The history of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in the United States dates back to the XVIII century where German, Dutch, French, Swedish, and Polish were all commonly taught and spoken languages (Olsen, 2015). Due to political and social circumstances in the 1930s, ESOL education became a service only offered to foreign diplomats and university students who did not speak English. In the 1960s and 1970s, ESOL education gained momentum after the Supreme Court's ruling in *Lau v. Nichols* where ELs were considered

an important part of the education system and schools were required to offer ESOL services to all ELs in public schools. During this crucial time for ESOL education, researchers began to identify pockets of populations within ELs and Latinxs became a relevant population of study. Throughout the years, research of Latinx ELs has evolved and its focus has shifted from Mexican American ELs (Nieto, 2009) to a broader term that acknowledges other ethnic groups, known as Spanish-speaking population or Hispanics (Adkins, 1969; Nieto, 2009). However, throughout this time, research on the Hispanic/Latinx EL population has yet to place a spotlight on a minority group within its population: the Indigenous Latinx EL population. There is currently little to no research about the academic language and literacy realities of Indigenous Latinx ELs in U.S. K-12 classrooms.

One of the Indigenous Latinx populations of ELs present in U.S. schools is the Ixil (also spelled *Ixbil*). The Ixil are an Indigenous Mayan population that was nearly exterminated in Guatemala after dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt targeted them for 36 years—1960 to 1996—for being Indigenous. During this period, commonly referred to as *La Violencia* (The Violence), the Ixil region suffered 114 documented massacres. Data from the 1989 Census indicates that there was a total of 2,642 widows and 4,186 orphans (one in six children lost a parent), and that more were located in hiding or refugee camps and unaccounted for (Place, 2013). During these 36 years of turmoil and bloodshed, some refugees moved to Mexico and the United States. The National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples reported that there were 224 Ixil-speakers in Mexico in 2006 (CDI, 2006). This represents the smallest ethnolinguistic group in that country. Currently, data and statistics on the Ixil people in the United States is not collected or provided. It is known, however, that Ixil people are part of student bodies in different schools across the United States (see Barillas-Chón, 2010; Casanova, 2019; Pentón Herrera, 2018).

Immigrant Ixil ELs are an unvoiced population of students with specific literacy and language needs. For the average Spanish-speaking Latinx student, language transferability is a seemingly smoother process because students use the literacy knowledge acquired in their native language to learn English (Krashen, 1984). The process of learning a language is generally easier when learners have background knowledge to draw from and compare the newly acquired information with prior content. However, for Ixil ELs—and other Indigenous learners in a similar situation—language transferability may be a rather challenging process because, many times, their literacy skill is emergent in their native language and have emergent or no proficiency in Spanish (their second language). The broken language and literacy links between Ixil, Spanish, and English present a dilemma

that must be attended to and solved for the benefit of these students and the school systems where they belong.

Problem Statement and Significance of the Study

In the United States, the Ixil population is not acknowledged and there are currently no statistics regarding this population in the United States Census. Studies tell us that the Ixil population has been migrating to the United States since the Guatemalan Civil War in the hopes of a better future (Jonas & Rodríguez, 2014; Jenner & Konkel, 2018) but, for many, the Ixil people remain unknown. The challenge with remaining an unknown population within the Latinx diaspora is that teachers cannot provide adequate academic support to the arriving student population. The Ixil ELs, often identified as Spanish speakers because they are from Guatemala, are usually clustered with non-Indigenous Spanish-speaking Latinx students and are taught English using Spanish as linguistic support. However, the reality is that Ixil ELs do not speak Spanish as a first language and many of them may not know how to speak, read, or write Spanish at all.

The current literature agrees that Indigenous students who become literate in their L1 experience a positive emotional, mental, cultural, social, and academic development (Ball & McIvor, 2013; Georgiyeva, 2015; Scull, 2016). In addition, Scull (2016) asserts that for effective literacy teaching of Indigenous children, there must be a clear understanding of the social and communication function of those Indigenous languages, and their lexical and grammatical structures. However, there are currently no programs in the United States that acknowledge, talk about, or teach educators about the Ixil culture, language, or traditions. The Ixil, and other Indigenous populations from Latin America, need to be addressed and acknowledged in the Teaching English for speakers of other languages (TESOL) field because they are a growing population in the United States who deserve quality education tailored to their needs. New statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice show that three Mayan languages—Mam, Quiche, and Kanjobal—are currently among the top languages used for translation in immigration courts (United States Department of Justice, 2017). These statistics are an indication that not all Latinx students arriving to the United States are native Spanish speakers and that, perhaps, it is time for ESOL educators to become aware of best practices for teaching Indigenous populations of students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study inquiry is to understand the literacy and language experiences of three adolescent Ixil ELs who are literacy-emergent

in their L1 and L2 and are now learning an L3 in the United States. More specifically, this research looks at how language transferability behaves in Ixil ELs who are literacy-emergent in their native language (Ixil), have emergent proficiency in their second language (Spanish), and are learning a third language (English). Furthermore, this study poses a hypothesis for the process of how Ixil students learn and acquire English, which is different from the non-Indigenous Latinx student population who speaks Spanish as L1. Through the process of exploring the linguistic characteristics of this population, this study provides knowledge about Ixil students, and perhaps other Indigenous populations, with the vision of making a positive distinction between Latinx Indigenous ELs and their Spanish-speaking Latinx EL counterparts.

Research Questions

The focus of this inquiry is how language transferability behaves for adolescent students who are literacy-emergent in their L1 and have emergent language literacy skills in their L2 and are learning an L3. In addition, this study also focuses on the learning experiences of Ixil students in a U.S. high school. As such, the research questions of this study are:

- RQ1:** What are the language and learning experiences of the adolescent Ixil ELs who have emergent literacy skills in their L1 and L2 and are now learning an L3 in the United States?
- SQ1:** How do Ixil students describe their own language learning experience in their new school in the United States?
- RQ2:** How does the process of transferring language occur in adolescent Ixil ELs who have emergent literacy skills in their L1 and L2 and are now learning an L3 in the United States?

Theoretical Foundations

This study draws on Stephen Krashen's second language acquisition (SLA) theory for understanding the language, learning gaps, and experiences of Ixil ELs in the United States. The SLA theory presents five hypotheses, namely: (1) the acquisition-learning hypothesis; (2) the natural order hypothesis; (3) the monitor hypothesis; (4) the input hypothesis; and (5) the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1984), shown in *Figure 1*. The acquisition-learning hypothesis holds that language acquisition is a subconscious process where, sometimes, the learner may only use that knowledge to communicate, but may not explain the

grammatical rules behind that knowledge (Krashen, 1984). Similarly, language learning is thought as a process in which the learner profits from explicit presentation of rules and error correction. On the other hand, the natural order hypothesis proposes that language is acquired—not learned—through a predictable order. This means that for any given language certain grammatical rules are acquired early while others are acquired later in the process. The third hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, explains that as students learn grammatical rules, their brain automatically corrects the output to produce grammatically-coherent speech. This is consistent with the input hypothesis which describes that language is acquired through understanding input communication, and speech emerges based on those assumptions made by prior inputs. Lastly, the affective filter hypothesis states that the more students feel anxious, stressed, and nervous, the less they will learn and acquire a language (Krashen, 1984).

Although this study identifies Ixil students as students learning English as a third language, Krashen's theory is applicable because SLA can also incorporate the learning of third, fourth, or subsequent languages (Gass & Selinker, 2008). The third language acquisition approach was not selected as the doctrine for the theoretical framework because it is a nascent area of study and it has yet many opportunities for expansion and development (Molnár, 2008). The SLA theory best aligns with this work because it explains the need for creating a welcoming and culturally-conscious environment in schools for language-minority students.

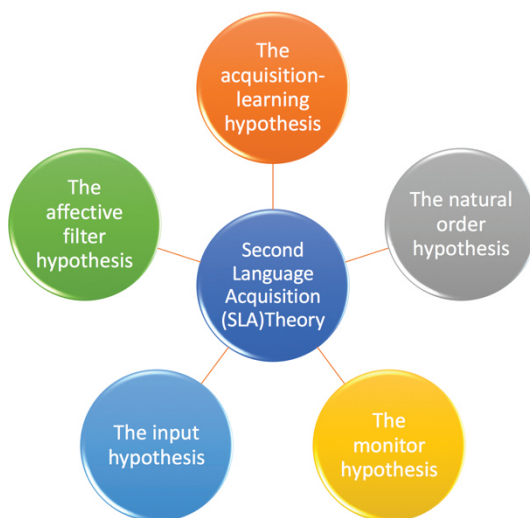


Figure 1. Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory

Methods

Setting

This inquiry was conducted in a public school, Newberry High School (pseudonym), in a northeastern state of the United States of America. Data collection was conducted primarily in the ESOL classrooms where two of the participants were taking an ESOL Newcomer course, and the other participant was taking an ESOL Beginner course in a separate ESOL classroom. These classrooms are considered learning cottages, or temporary classrooms, and were located outside of the school's two main buildings.

Participants

A total of three adolescent Ixil ELs participated in this inquiry. The primary reason only three student-participants were asked to participate is that only three Ixil students attended the school, which was considered a convenience sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These students were also chosen based on the assumption that I wanted to discover, understand, and gain insight about these participants specifically, which is considered purposive sampling (Merriam

TABLE 1
Information about participants

Name	Age	Formal Education in Guatemala	Proficiency in Ixil	Proficiency in Spanish	Proficiency in English
Aparicio	17	3 years (Interrupted Ed.)	Can speak & listen proficiently. <i>Cannot</i> read and write	Challenges reading, writing, listening, and speaking	Newcomer proficiency
Benito	18	6 years (Interrupted Ed.)	Emergent proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking	Challenges reading, writing, listening, and speaking	Newcomer proficiency
Donancio	18	9 years (No significant interrupted Ed.)	Can speak & listen proficiently. <i>Cannot</i> read and write	Proficient in reading, writing, listening, and speaking	Beginner proficiency

& Tisdell, 2016). Hence, the sampling used for this study was a combination between convenience and purposive sampling.

All three participants were Ixil ELs who recently arrived to the United States. Their ages ranged between 17 to 18 years old. All three participants were male students who spoke Ixil as a first language and who came from Guatemala's *El Quiché* region. *Table 1* shares additional information for each participant. All names are pseudonyms.

Data Collection

The data collection process of this inquiry was guided primarily by three different methods: (1) interviews with a photo elicitation component; (2) observations; and (3) artifacts. All three of these methods of data collection are qualitative in nature and align with the inquiry's intent of learning more about the participants' real-life experiences. In addition, the selected qualitative data collection methods (interviews, observations, and artifacts) were useful for understanding the inquiry's setting, contextualizing findings, and diversifying the opportunities to gather relevant data about the participants' reality (Harper, 2002; Merriam, 2009).

Interviews

A total of five interviews per student were conducted throughout the study. All were conducted in Spanish and audio recorded. Two out of the five interviews (the initial and final interviews) lasted approximately 50 to 60 minutes; three interviews were post-observation interviews lasting approximately 30-40 minutes and are discussed below in the observations section. The initial interview focused on the participants' personal and educational background and the language and learning experiences they had in their native country. This first interview also included a visual elicitation component where participants explained their language and learning experiences in the United States (see the next section for visual elicitation information). Overall, the first interview focused on learning about the participants' background and learning experiences in their native country.

The final interview took place after the three post-observation interviews (see Observations section below); this interview was the final interview and concluded the data collection process. During this final interview, participants were asked about what they identified as their needs to succeed in their future as ELs and any question that emerged from the data analysis processes. In a sense, the final interview sought to uncover the participants' self-perceived needs for

language learning in their academic future. In addition, during the final interview, students were asked to have ready a drawing portraying their experiences as Ixil ELs in the United States. The purpose for asking questions about the participants' experiences as students in U.S. classrooms was to learn about their individual and unique perspectives as Ixil ELs, which was a topic that had yet to be realized.

Post-Observation Interviews

There were a total of three short post-observation interviews per participant each lasting no more than 30–40 minutes. All of the post-observation interviews took place in my classroom because it was a familiar, private, and comfortable place for the participants. The purpose of the post-observation interviews was to address specific behaviors, interactions, and learning experiences each participant had encountered during that particular observation session. As such, the post-observation interview questions were crafted after each observation was conducted and focused on a particular event or series of events that occurred during that observation. These post-observation interviews were used to better compartmentalize the participants' literacy and language learning experiences as they developed in each observation. The post-observation interviews also sought to open a dialogue with the participants about specific behaviors, interactions, and learning experiences that may not be addressed in observations without an interview component. These post-observation interviews also enabled me to address questions that emerged from this data in the final interview.

Visual Elicitation

Visual elicitation was used to create an opportunity to harness the participants' artistic nature while collecting data that reflects their own reality (Harper, 2002). Visual elicitation in this inquiry took the form of participant drawings. The participants were asked to draw a visual representation of their experiences learning English in the United States. Because a couple of the participants had difficulty speaking Spanish (the language that was used for the interview questions), participants were able to use the visuals as tools to complete their answers or show a representation of what they meant to say. In addition, the drawings provided a tangible description of how participants felt at the moment they made those drawings. Furthermore, the drawings served as an opportunity to ask additional questions using them as visual support for communication (Harper, 2002). In this way, the data collected added insight into the participants' reality and feelings towards their experiences as ELs in a more authentic manner.

Observations

For this study, the observations took place in the participants' ESOL classrooms as they interacted with their classmates and teachers. Each participant was observed a total of three times, each observation lasting 90 minutes. One observation took place in the ESOL classroom, one in the science classroom, and one in the mathematics classroom for each participant. The rationale for choosing these specific subjects is that English, mathematics, and science are considered relevant courses in high school and beyond (Green, Martin, & Marsh, 2007; Lim, 2008). The purpose of each observation was to observe the participants interact with their teacher and classmates in their natural setting as they would do in their daily teaching-learning environment. Furthermore, the observations sought to gather data on the development, interaction, type of language used, and behavior of the participants in their ESOL classroom.

Artifacts

For this inquiry, the artifacts used took the form of drawings, physical materials, researcher's journal, and physical objects. Anthropologists typically refer to physical materials as "tools, implements, utensils, and instruments of everyday living" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 171). In the context of this study, physical objects encompassed all instructional materials the participants used during the observations. These instructional materials were collected and used in the post-observation interviews as an elicitation tool to facilitate the question and answer process. The use of artifacts in post-observation interviews served as probes to go deeper into a particular topic. Similarly, participants had the opportunity to use artifacts to remember their experiences in class and to better answer the questions during the post-observation interviews.

Findings

The most relevant findings for each research question are addressed below in bullet points and explained below in the discussion section.

RQ1: What are the language and learning experiences of the adolescent Ixil ELs who have emergent literacy skills in their L1 and L2 and are now learning an L3 in the United States?

- Participants understand language domains as separate identities.
- Participants were taught to use Ixil for speaking and listening in Guatemala.

- Participants were taught to use Spanish for writing and reading in Guatemala.
- As a result, participants use Spanish to learn English for three reasons:
 1. **Power:** Spanish is seen as “more powerful” than Ixil.
 2. **Skills:** Text literacy (writing and reading) was only taught in Spanish.
 3. **Resources:** In the form of academic and human (people who speak Ixil) resources.

SQ1: How do Ixil students describe their own language learning experience in their new school in the United States?

- Participants describe their own language learning experience in their new school as both an academic and a social experience.

Figure 2 represents a visual hierarchy of what participants identified to be their social perception and *Figure 3* represents the participants’ academic perception.

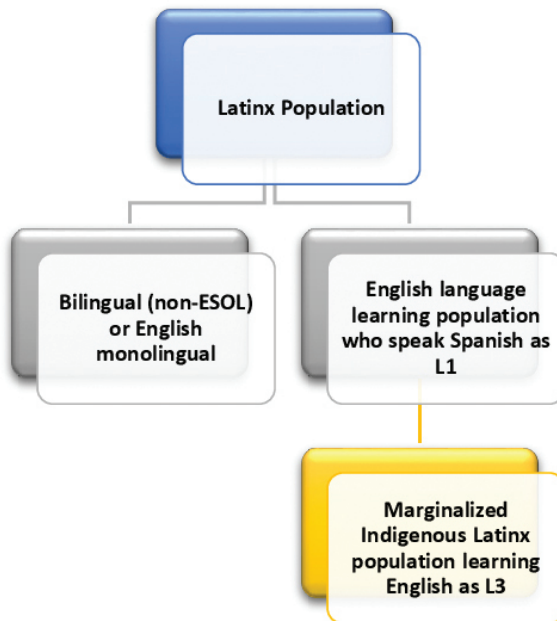


Figure 2. Social Perception of Participants

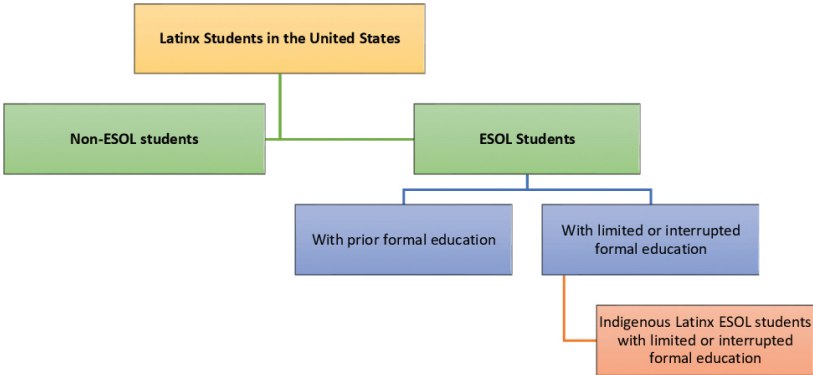


Figure 3. Academic Perception of Participants

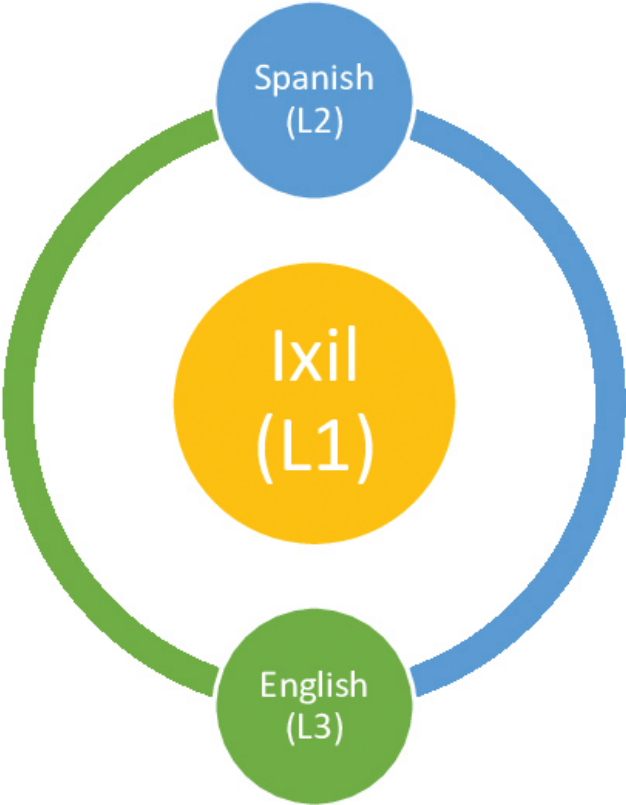


Figure 4. The process of transferring language for Ixil participants

RQ2: How does the process of transferring language occur in adolescent Ixil ELs who have emergent literacy skills in their L1 and L2 and are now learning an L3 in the United States?

- L1 and L2 literacy practices were never clearly defined in their native countries. Include instruction that develops 4 language domains, not that expects proficiency in them.
- Use Spanish as linguistic support to learn English, not Ixil. *Figure 4* represents the process of transferring language identified by all participants.
- Use a small-group approach to reach them.
- Use teacher-led instruction and gradually teach them to take ownership of their learning.
- Teach by doing : teach/learn skills that are applicable and relevant to their immediate lives.
- Using visual forms of meaning-making are important.

Discussion

The findings shared and explained in this study have major implications for the teaching field, especially when looking into the reality of education as an entity for change and advocacy. In this section, I identify six main implications that emerged from the findings.

Non-Indigenous vs. Indigenous Latinx EL education

The findings revealed that generalizing student populations based on their country of origin is dangerous and puts vulnerable learners at academic risk. Within the context of this study, it was found that the participants—Indigenous ELs—are, in fact, linguistically, culturally, and academically different from their non-Indigenous Latinx EL counterparts. This means that effective instructional practices and settings for the Indigenous Latinx population needs to be different than their non-Indigenous counterparts and resources need to be tailored to their academic reality, not the academic expectations of schools in the United States. For teachers, it is important to seek knowledge of Indigenous education models in Latin America and the realities Indigenous students face in their native countries and in the United States. For researchers, it is necessary to continue expanding on the topic of Indigenous education within the Latinx EL population in U.S. classrooms.

Social, Emotional, and Academic Realities of Indigenous Latinx ELs

The emerging findings of this study revealed that the participants experience different social, emotional, and academic realities than their non-Indigenous Latinx EL counterparts. Indigenous Latinx ELs may arrive to U.S. classrooms with lived experiences that differ from Spanish-speaking Latinxs because of how society in their native countries perceive and treat Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are often discriminated against, have fewer opportunities for advancement, and have—as a consequence—lower literacy skills. As a result, when Indigenous Latinx ELs arrive to U.S. classrooms, they bring an emotional baggage that reflects their unique prior lived experiences in their native countries. It is important for educators to learn more about their Indigenous students' unique social, emotional, and academic realities before generalizing their identities based on their country of origin. Furthermore, it is germane for researchers to further inquiry on the social, emotional, and academic realities of Indigenous Latinx ELs in U.S. classrooms as an opportunity to better understand their perspectives and provide appropriate resources.

Language Learning and Transference

Data uncovered that participants understand language domains as separate identities. Because they come from a culture that values oral traditions, the Ixil language has been used throughout their lives for speaking and listening. On the other hand, because Spanish was seen as the language of opportunities and academics, they were taught to write and read in Spanish in schools back in Guatemala but speaking and listening to Spanish was not a common practice in their daily lives. As a result, all participants developed listening and speaking proficiencies in Ixil (their L1) and writing and reading proficiencies (at different levels for each participant) in Spanish (their L2). However, participants did not develop fluent proficiency in all four language domains in neither their L1 nor L2. In the United States, participants are expected to perform at grade level in all four language domains and, for the first time in their lives, they are navigating through the process of discovering how to become literate and fluent in all four domains of one language (English). This finding, in particular, sheds light on the many dimensions of language and literacy learning and adds an additional consideration to the expectations ELs are subjected to once they arrived to the United States.

Learning, Language, and Literacy as Entities for Empowerment and Equality

One of the most distinct findings throughout this study is how learning (formal education), language, and literacy serve as entities for the empowerment and equality of the participants. Aparicio, Benito, and Donancio came to the United States from a country where formal education, language, and literacy were seen as barriers for personal, social, economic, and professional improvement. Because they spoke Ixil as a first language, they were seen as inferior in their native country and they had to learn Spanish to be considered equal. Thus, they migrated to the United States in the search of better opportunities and equality. However, upon their arrival, formal education, language, and literacy continued to be barriers for their personal, social, economic, and professional improvement. Not only do they have to learn and survive in the Spanish-speaking Latinx sub-community within their community, but they also have to perform at grade level, learn how to survive in a new educational system, and learn English in order to be successful and graduate high school. For teachers, it is important to seek continuous knowledge on how to best serve this underserved population. For researchers, it is necessary to continue inquiring on the best approaches to empower the Indigenous Latinx ESOL population through learning, language, and literacy in their native languages, Spanish, and English in the United States.

Advocacy for Indigenous Latinx ELs in the Classroom and Beyond

Indigenous Latinx ELs are a student population that is unique, ethnically diverse, and linguistically different from their non-Indigenous EL counterparts. This student population continues to be widely unaddressed in the literature surrounding Latinx ELs in U.S. schools. As a consequence, there are scant linguistic and didactic resources ESOL educators can use to advocate for this vulnerable population inside the classroom. However, the vision of this study was to contribute to the current literature by making Indigenous Latinx ELs a visible population, one that is different from their non-Indigenous counterparts. The majority of students within the Indigenous Latinx EL population need substantial literacy instruction due to their limited, interrupted, or atypical educational background (Ruiz & Barajas, 2012). As such, this study offers findings about the Ixil that educators can use to better understand their cultures, modify their instructional materials, and provide support in their L1. The topic of advocacy—inside and outside of the classroom—for Indigenous Latinx ELs is a completely fertile field

of study. Nonetheless, this study hopes to provide visibility and start conversations about future plans of actions to support this unacknowledged and vibrant student population. To read more about advocating for Indigenous Latinx populations in the United States, see Pentón Herrera (2019).

SLA to Third Language Acquisition

An important finding in this study is that participants used their L2 (Spanish), not their L1 (Ixil), as academic and literacy resource for learning their L3 (English). As explained in Krashen's (1984) SLA, the stronger the literacy skills of previous languages are, the better and faster students will learn a new language. According to Krashen's (1984) SLA, students use all of their prior knowledge to learn a new language. However, it was found in this study that students did not use their L1 skills to learn English. In fact, students only relied in Spanish to learn English. Thus, this study's findings align best with the Third Language Acquisition (TLA) theory than with the SLA. According to the TLA, the acquisition of an L3 can take as a source language the L1 or L2, "by source language or language supplier it is understood that a learner activates one of the previously acquired language systems he/she has access to and passes this knowledge to the language he/she is currently acquiring" (Duhalde Solís, 2015, pp. 10-11). This means that students learning an L3 do not necessarily use all previously-learned languages as support, but they focus on one of the previously-learned languages as supplier and support to learn the new language. Because the TLA is a nascent field of study, this theory does not explain or identify which language is used by the learner or why. As a result, it is important for future studies to delve deeper into the implications of language learning for Indigenous Latinx ESOL populations in U.S. classrooms from a TLA perspective.

Conclusions

In the U.S. educational context, Aparicio, Benito, and Donancio are exposed to a new social hierarchy where language represents power. They rarely speak Ixil, even among themselves to avoid drawing attention to their ethnicity. Instead, they prefer to "blend in" with the Spanish-speaking Latinx ESOL population in their classrooms to gain social status. However, their oral proficiency in Spanish quickly reveals that they are not native Spanish speakers, which prompts Latinx students to ask personal questions such as country of origin and native language. Once identified as Indigenous, it is not uncommon for some of their Spanish-speaking peers to reproduce cultural habits of discrimination and elitism from their native countries in the United States. For that reason, English becomes the

language that emancipates these Indigenous students' realities and empowers them to find equality in this new society.

Future research addressing similar student populations (Indigenous, minority, ELs) in the ESOL classrooms should focus on language learning as an entity for empowerment and social change. Research should expand its focus beyond the benefits of learning a new language and should delve into the personal metamorphosis minority and vulnerable Indigenous ELs go through as language learners. Furthermore, based on this study's findings regarding how the participants approach the use and learning of each of the three languages (Ixil, Spanish, and English), the author recommends that future studies address the layers of multilingualism in the Indigenous Latinx EL population and what their native language, Spanish, and English represent to them in their native countries and once they arrive to the United States.

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