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Identity and Second Language Acquisition: Adult Puerto Rican Migrants Living in the United States

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IDENTITY AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION:
A STUDY ON ADULT PUERTO RICAN MIGRANTS LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on the poststructuralist construct of identity and on Norton's (1995) concept of investment, as well as on Bourdieu's (1977) notion of capital, this qualitative research study relies on data gathered through interviews conducted with two adult female participants from Puerto Rico, who migrated to Central Florida approximately ten years ago. It aims at answering the following questions: (i) what identity-related factors facilitate or hinder the acquisition of the target language by Puerto Rican migrants? (ii) what social forces or barriers impact learning ESL in the context of Puerto Rican migration to the United States? The findings indicate that investment in social and academic practices can benefit students who want to learn the target language, but power inequities in interactions between native speakers and migrants can prevent the latter from interacting in the English-speaking community, making it difficult to acquire the language. The findings may serve to encourage further studies in second language and identity.

Key words: Second-language acquisition, identity, investment, migrants

This thesis is dedicated to my loving wife and my two sons, without whose love and support I could never have come this far.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS OR ABBREVIATIONS

ESL = English as a Second Language

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

L1 = First Language

L2 = Second Language

MA = Master of Arts

NS = Native Speaker

NNS = Non-Native Speaker

SLA = Second Language Acquisition

TL = Target Language

TESOL = Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Over the last 50 years, research in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) has led teachers to better understand what their profession entails. It may be difficult to speculate where we would be today without the underpinning theories put forward in this five-decade span. Arguably, we would not have come this far without Canale and Swain's (1980) contribution towards creating a theoretical model for communicative competence or without Krashen's (2009) Comprehension Hypothesis, to name but two. These contributions have been influential in how we view the factors that shape second language acquisition. They have also influenced the design of materials used to teach English as a second or as a foreign language, (L2), which typically prescribe the steps teachers should take for effective learning. The marketing efforts behind these materials have led many professionals to believe that if a given method's guidelines are followed, and if students are instilled with a modicum of motivation, the class will serve its purpose, and students will consequently progress. In the countries where English is not spoken, this assumption fuels teachers' appetite for materials, techniques, and activities to provide students with much-needed input to maximize learners' limited exposure to the target language.

Because fluency in English is regarded as a passport to the individual's insertion in several social practices, including job opportunities, immersion programs in English-speaking countries are believed to ensure speedy language acquisition. This belief could be attributed to newspaper articles, for example, such as one published in *The New York Times* in 2007 that ends with a quote, by Fred Genesee, a well-known bilingual scholar, who advises that “[a]dults struggling to learn additional languages . . . immerse themselves in an environment where the new language is needed so that they are compelled to use the new language for real communication” (as cited in Galiott, 2007). Underlying this piece of advice is the persuasive

message that if one is immersed in the language, one will inevitably acquire it – and naturally so. The popularity of this view is acknowledged by Block (2007a, p. 77), who reports on the assumption that prevails in “many contexts around the world that the best way to learn a language is to ‘be there’, that is, to be physically located in a country or place where the TL is the predominant linguistic mediator of day-to-day activity.”

My experience as an English language teacher informs me that although immersion in the language may prove fruitful to some students, it is certainly no panacea for language learning issues. If one could acquire the L2 by merely being surrounded by it, how would we account for the thousands of immigrants who cannot speak the language well despite having lived in, say, the United States for years and years?

It is tempting to dichotomize individuals according to traditional binary paradigms such as motivated or unmotivated, anxious or relaxed, and others. Norton Peirce (1995) rejects these personality-centered constructs, stating that they are not enough to explain a language learner’s failure and merely serve to draw artificial distinctions between the learner and the learning context. Instead, she contemplates under a poststructural paradigm a close relationship between identity and second language acquisition (SLA), contending that an individual’s personality is not an ‘either/or’ proposition – either introverted or extroverted, either inhibited or uninhibited, and so forth. Nor is the learner’s identity immutable. Rather, identity is constantly constructed and reconstructed vis-à-vis our social interactions. In elaborating on the construction and reconstruction of identities, Mitchell, Myles, and Marsden (2013) explain that Norton (2000) did not draw on traditional definitions of social identities of ‘belonging’ to a particular social group. Instead, Norton uses the notion of identity to refer 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 understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2000, p. 5).

In addition to viewing a person’s identity as constantly in (re)construction, Norton Peirce (1995) states that SLA theories have failed to consider that language learners’ interactions with members of the target language community are often fraught with “inequitable relations of power” (p. 12). Without integrating both the language learner and the language learning context and without questioning how relations of power affect these interactions, no theory of SLA will effectively account for students’ failure to communicate.

Although some traditional SLA theorists posit that native speakers (NSs) will often attempt to negotiate meaning with language learners (LLs) using, for example, a strategy like modified interaction (Long, 1983), data from Norton’s research indicate that no naturalistic language learning can take place if NSs are “unwilling to engage in a negotiation of meaning” (2013, p. 147). It is therefore imperative that the language learner “invest” in the construction of his/her identity as a speaker of the target language and take up positions that will afford him/her the “right to speak” (Norton, 1995, p. 14). In the next chapter, I will explain the construct of *investment*, along with that of *capital*, and how both directly affect someone trying to acquire the target language.

The main issue investigated and discussed in this study is primarily that of identity in SLA. This study seeks to identify social forces or barriers that can potentially deter migrants¹ from gaining access to the speech community in which the target language is spoken. It also seeks to understand how SLA and identity (social identity, cultural identity, ethnic identity, linguistic identity) are intertwined. To that end, I am inspired by the studies of Buchotz and

¹ In this study, I use the term migrant as defined by Block (2007a, p. 75) to refer to adults (18 years old or older) who move across borders and find themselves immersed in a new cultural and linguistic setting.

Hall (2005), who rely on a variety of research to inform their own view of identity, for example, social identity theory, theories of language ideology, models of identity, to name but a few. Buchotz and Hall's general sociocultural linguistic perspective encompasses the disciplinary subfields of sociolinguistics such as linguistic anthropology as well as human and social sciences. Explicitly stated in their study is the claim that a researcher need not embrace one aspect of identity over others. Rather, the researcher is free to consider how the different aspects interact with or against one another in discourse.

Identity has maintained its significance in the field of SLA since Norton's publication of her 1995 seminal article "Social Identity, Investment, and Language Learning." Although many language instructors continue to draw on the psychological constructs of motivation, affective filters, and the like, research has shown that these language instructors would be well advised to understand that the constructs of investment, capital, and identity are inextricably related to language learning and can assist in accounting for a learner's failure or success.

Statement of the Problem

Perhaps more than any other country, the United States receives thousands of new immigrants every year. Many of them do not speak much English (if any) and often struggle with the language. Some may quickly adapt and learn the language to the extent needed to function in society within the English-speaking community. Others feel that the target language is an insurmountable barrier. Personal observation and anecdotal evidence have led me to believe that frustration can discourage adult migrants from using the target language and eventually lead them to give up trying to learn it. I have also observed that they start to

ignore the target language, reserving it mostly for interactions with gatekeepers, such as government officials.

Without linguistic competence in a foreign country, newly-arrived immigrants in any country often take jobs that not only do not require much socialization but also prevent socialization from ever taking place because of the low social status associated with ‘menial’ jobs. Many of these immigrants understand that speaking the language could be a stepping stone in their social and economic ascension. Nonetheless, access to the speech community of the target language is not easily gained, and it is not unusual to hear immigrants giving accounts of how they have tried to interact to no avail. Some of the research participants in Vitanova’s study (2004) echoed this sentiment when they described that they could not participate in the dominant discourse of the new milieu. One participant, Vera, for example, claimed that she felt like a fool because she could neither understand what people were talking about nor contribute to the conversation. Another participant, Sylvia, felt ashamed of what she perceived as her inability to interact with a grocery store clerk.

The struggle of learning English as a second language in the United States is not exclusive to immigrants from other nations. Although English is spoken in the continental United States as well as in Alaska and Hawaii, it is not the language spoken in Puerto Rico, a US territory in the Caribbean that was originally colonized by Spaniards. As American citizens, Puerto Ricans are free to migrate to other states of the United States as they wish, though not many of them are able to speak English. Therefore, when they move to the continental United States, they may not be fully engaged in the social practices of the English-speaking community networks.

This unique combination of United States citizenship and limited English proficiency (or none, at all) makes Puerto Rico a compelling case. According to the most recent data

available from the U.S. Census Bureau, as cited by the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, migration from Puerto Rico to Florida grew from less than half a million at the turn of the century to slightly more than one million by 2016. According to Wang and Rayer (2018), a Demographic Estimating Conference that took place on December 5, 2017, in Tallahassee, FL, estimated that approximately 53,000 Puerto Ricans and U.S. Virgin Islanders established residency in Florida on account of Hurricane Maria. This figure is based on the number of Puerto Ricans visiting Multi-Agency Resource Centers at Orlando International Airport, Miami International Airport, and the Port of Miami, after Hurricane Maria, through November 2017. This number is not as high as that speculated by the media. Irrespective of the number of people who left the island because of Hurricane Maria, a demographic impact has been felt in most of Florida, especially Central Florida.

In the last few years, I have met a few migrants from Puerto Rico who have made Florida their home, and I have often wondered why their level of proficiency did not quite match the level of fluency that I expected an individual to have after having lived for a few years in the United States. Their anecdotes seem to point to a similar reason: they do not speak much English and so they tend to stay closer to others who share their native language. This can also be observed in other Spanish-speaking migrants. Lack of language proficiency may prevent migrants from gaining access to an English-speaking community and may make it very difficult for them to participate in the social practices of the English-speaking community network, such as interacting for professional purposes, enrolling their children in school, and other significant communicative events. It is my intention that this study I have conducted will contribute to understanding what identity-related factors may prevent Puerto Rican migrants in Florida from acquiring the target language.

Out of the many subfields in applied linguistics, I have always been drawn to issues surrounding second language acquisition. Before I came to the University of Central Florida for my MA in TESOL, however, I had not thought of the issues connecting SLA and identity. As I began my graduate studies, I realized that the language-identity nexus could provide the answers to some of the issues I outlined above. As I seek to understand this relationship, I also seek to understand how to help language learners who have struggled with this limitation for years. And in the process of learning more about it, I believe that we, as teachers, can create teaching practices and discourses in our classrooms that can ensure that social barriers are overcome

Statement of Purpose

This study primarily addresses the intersection of second language acquisition and identity-related issues. It also analyzes how second language speakers can be affected by sociocultural and economical processes as well as by the power inequities created by these very processes. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to discussions of studies on adult migrants and second language learning and understand the factors that can influence the identity construction of immigrants in the L2. It also seeks to identify and understand what social forces or barriers impact learning ESL in the context of speech communities. The review of the literature on identity and second-language acquisition shows how social barriers can potentially be detrimental to learners of the target language in addition to discussing empirical research. It is my contention that ESL/EFL teachers can benefit greatly from understanding how identity-related issues and language learning are intertwined. It is my hope that the findings can add, albeit modestly, to the discussion.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following overarching questions:

1. What identity-related factors facilitate or hinder the acquisition of the target language by Puerto Rican migrants?
2. What social forces or barriers impact learning ESL in the context of Puerto Rican migration to the United States?

In the next chapter, I provide an overview of the most relevant literature on identity and second language acquisition.

Limitations of the Study

The number of participants can be considered one of the limitations of this study. Another limitation has to do with the number of data collection instruments because the data were collected through interviews only. A longitudinal study, along with a field study, among other data-collection instruments, could have yielded more data.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I present a preliminary literature review of some of the discussions regarding identity research in second-language learning. Additionally, I discuss the concept of Investment and Capital and the concept of Migrant Identity. Recent trends in identity will also be presented.

The Concept of Identity in the Context of Second-Language Acquisition

According to Pavlenko (2002, p. 282), it was Pennycook who first defended a framework for the field of SLA that would factor in social, cultural, and political contexts. Pavlenko asserts that it was not until the mid-1990s that authors such as Norton Peirce (1995) began to question constructs that had thus far traditionally served to answer why students failed or succeeded in acquiring their L2, such as motivation or affective filters. Still in the mid-1990s, Lantolf (1996, p. 716), too, hinted at the need for a shift in SLA theory stating that "... SLA theory as currently construed must be questioned. It presents a lopsided and uncritical view both of itself and of the scientific tradition from which it arises, and it precipitously dismisses those who would challenge it."

Attuned to this need for a transformation, Firth and Wagner (1997) affirmed the field of SLA was indeed far too cognitively oriented. They argued that most research had focused on more the mechanical areas of language that learners had to grapple with, for example, syntax and phonology, and that social aspects were being left out of the language learning equation. They posited that other identities, besides native speakers or non-native speakers, should be considered in SLA and wrote about the artificial dichotomies that had dominated the field. In other words, individuals are not endowed with one single identity that determines their entire existence. Rather, they develop different identities or positions as they go about

life. Considering that language is not a cognitive phenomenon only, but rather a social phenomenon, these authors argue for a “reconceptualization of SLA,” which in their words would call for a “holistic approach ... that is more emically and interactionally attuned” (p. 768). Block (2007b) claims that this newfound awareness of the implications of identity reflected “a general uneasiness about a certain conceptual and epistemological narrowness in the field” (p. 1). This uneasiness, according to Block, pushed SLA beyond the realm of linguistics and cognitive psychology, leading researchers to theorize on possible connections between language learning and social theory, and, consequently, between language learning and identity.

Central to the relationship between identity and language learning in this study is the poststructuralist notion that there is more to an individual’s identity than the binary concepts of introvert/extrovert or motivated/unmotivated and so forth. In other words, the individual is seen as “diverse, contradictory, and dynamic, and changing over historical time and social space” (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 417). According to Block (2007b), the poststructuralist approach to identity has been considered the approach of choice for researchers wishing to examine the link to identity. In her research, Norton (2013, p. 3) states that she “drew extensively on poststructuralist theories of identity associated with the work of feminist scholars such as Christine Weedon” (1987/1997). Block (2007a) explains that Weedon does not use the term “identity” per se in her work, but rather the term “subjectivities” to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation in the world” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32, as cited in Block, 2007a, p. 14).

Norton defined identity “as the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, and how that relationship is constructed across time and space” (2013, p. 4). Norton

Peirce (1995, p. 21) discussed how an individual's relationship to the world can be constructed and reconstructed as she describes how Martina, one of her research participants, had "multiple sites [...] of identity formation: She was an immigrant, a mother, a language learner, a worker, a wife." In her identity as an immigrant, Martina felt uncomfortable, yet she sounded as if she believed that it was her lack of knowledge of the language that made Canadians impatient. Despite her discomfort, her identity as a mother and primary caregiver afforded her the courage to refuse to be treated as unworthy or undeserving when she had to stand her ground vis-à-vis her unscrupulous landlord.

On the concept of subjectivity, Norton explained that "one is often subject *of* a set of relationships (i.e., in a position of power) or subject *to* a set of relationships (i.e., in a position of reduced power)" (Norton, 2013, p. 4, emphasis in the original). Although the term *position* is being used here to describe how an individual is related to another in terms of power, it is fair to say that, under the lens of Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990), we can also examine identity-related issues by looking at how one discursively constructs and reconstructs one's identity in social interactions. As Kayi-Aydar has pointed out, "[positioning] theory suggests that individuals, through occupying interactionally constructed positions, may implicitly limit or allow certain social actions" (2015, p. 134). Positions, much like identities, or subjectivities, are therefore recognized and negotiated, and they depend on whom an individual is interacting with. It is also plausible to envision how some positions could very well conflict with others. Situated in poststructuralism, positioning theory can therefore complement Norton's construct of identity and serve as a useful tool in this research to analyze how the research participants position themselves and are likewise positioned in their interactions with the speaker of the majority language. For Norton and Toohey (2011),

some identity positions may restrict access to an anglophone community, whereas others may very well facilitate access and enable social interaction.

Some of the studies presented in this literature review discuss the construct of identity as influenced by the concepts of *investment* and *capital*. A definition of these two terms is therefore important if one is to understand how relevant these concepts are to the study of identity and second-language acquisition.

Investment, Capital and Power

According to Norton (2013, p. 50), from a poststructuralist perspective, motivation theories in SLA, typified by the constructs of *instrumental* and *integrative* motivation discussed by Gardner and Lambert (1972) do not explain why some learners acquire the target language while others do not. Power inequities, she claims, deprive learners of a voice. They may have a chance to interact with speakers of the target language, but that interaction may be tainted by a power imbalance. In other words, the discourse is normally controlled by the stronger party. For example, in an interaction between an employer and an employee, each party positions him/herself in the interaction in such a way as to reflect the power imbalance or struggle inherent to this type of relationship.

Norton Peirce (1995) posits that social identity can be a site of struggle. The struggle or constraint is perhaps best understood as an attempt to overcome the social dominance that individuals have to grapple with as they position themselves and discursively construct their identities in society. Positioned as immigrants, as opposed to citizens, these five women were not viewed as legitimate participants of Canada's English-speaking community and consequently failed to tip the balance of power in their favor. According to Norton, the women's failure to find their voice in the community could easily have been chalked up to

lack of motivation had the study been conducted by another researcher a decade earlier. Back then, as already mentioned, the field of SLA was grappling with those binary issues already outlined here to justify learners' success or failure, without taking account of inequitable social and power relations. In fact, she contends, the women in her research seemed motivated enough. Motivation, however, is not enough if one has to overcome racialized and power-charged discourses. In this case, according to Norton, learners need to be invested in practices that will ultimately lead to the acquisition of symbolic and material resources, in other words, the capital, that will allow the learner to thrive in that setting. Norton Peirce (1995) further points out that like identity, investment is complex and permeable.

In Norton's view, the construct of investment, in juxtaposition with the concept of capital, can explain how some students may be considered motivated in a classroom, by some standards, but not necessarily invested in the language practices of that classroom owing to racial or social discourses. Norton contends that these women were devoid of the "capital" that could have otherwise secured them a favorable status in Canadian society. To understand what *capital* means, one must refer to French philosopher Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as "the knowledge, credentials, and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups... [c]ultural capital has differential exchange value (or 'currency') in different social fields" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 420).

The metaphors of capital and investment are very fitting. In the world of finance, if one is to accrue capital, one must invest in tangible assets. And considering that capital is tantamount to power in our society, the more assets or money one accrues, the more economic, financial, and social power one wields. Likewise, cultural capital allows an individual to move across a variety of social circles and networks by accumulating credentials, such as a university degree or a high-paying job, that warrant that individual's

access to and permanence in a given community. It is therefore not hard to understand how one's inability to communicate in the target language, or a lack of linguistic capital can preclude participation in some social circles and in turn prevent access to better jobs or more prestigious networks.

In Bourdieu's (1977) view, capital and power are therefore inextricably intertwined. In some circles – the world of business comes to mind – economic capital may trump social capital, whereas in academic environs, intellectual capital may play a more prominent role. At any rate, capital is a resource that need not be tangible. Certain values can be assigned to a resource because of the way societies have been hierarchically structured. Such is the case with the symbols that convey our place or “status” in society, which Bourdieu refers to as symbolic capital. Darwin and Norton (2015) corroborate the importance of possessing symbolic capital for individuals moving across borders, explaining that nobody is devoid of capital (be it material or linguistic), and that in occupying new spaces these individuals will often be required to convert their own symbolic resources into resources that are valued in the new context. This conversion implies a struggle, as ideologies clash and values are re-signified acquire new symbolic resources. In other words, what is perceived as valuable in one setting may not mean anything in another setting.

Research on Identity and Second Language Learning

Norton's (2013) in-depth study on identity and language learning was groundbreaking in showing how inequitable power relations deter immigrants from having the power to speak. Hers was not the first study to address issues affecting migrants' second-language acquisition, however. In the early 1980s, an extensive research undertaking, reported by Bremer, Roberts, Vasseur, Simonot and Broeder (1996), investigated the linguistic

development of thirty participants from different nationalities who had migrated to the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Sweden, fleeing their respective countries' political or economic turmoil. In revisiting this study conducted by Bremer et al., Block (2007) underscores both its sociolinguistic focus and its importance to the field of second language acquisition as it looks at the dynamics of conversations and the misunderstandings that arise in the communications between immigrants and native speakers. To Block (2007), however, the most noteworthy aspect of the study is that it challenges long-established assumptions about naturalistic second language learning contexts.

One of the assumptions, as Block (2007a) explained, is that naturalistic contexts provide more target-language learning opportunities. The participants in the study demonstrated, nonetheless, that the target-language was reserved for gatekeeping contexts only, for example, during an interaction with a doctor or a government official. Another assumption challenged by the study, according to Block, was that individuals engaged in a conversational exchange work to ensure mutual intelligibility. Bremer et al. (1996) showed, however, that the gatekeeper's power position makes the exchange unequal, leading the minority worker to lose face, and ultimately preventing access to better opportunities. Equally challenged by the study is the assumption that learners learn the second language by interacting with native speakers. Interaction, however, can be fraught with peril, as Berta's case so aptly illustrates. Berta, a Spaniard who migrated to France, struggles to communicate her needs to a carpenter who makes no effort to understand her and leaves her unattended and helpless inside the shop (Block, 2007a).

Though not originally designed under a poststructuralist framework, the data collected in the study could very well be analyzed today in light of identity-related constructs. For example, the migrant who needs to interact with a gatekeeper is saddled with inequitable of

power relations and does not have “power to impose reception” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 75, as cited in Norton, 2013, p. 48). Berta’s predicament, for instance could be framed in the same light as Martina’s: both women were socially constructed as inferior immigrants by the target language speakers.

Block (2007) affirms that identity can also be examined from perspectives such as race, ethnicity, gender, national identity, social class, migrant identity, and language identity. For the cases that I intend to examine, migrant identity is especially noteworthy. Block also states that “identities are not entities into which one is raised” (2007, p. 864). Individuals assume an identity and develop it. Identity theory, therefore, especially viewed through the lens of poststructuralism, demonstrates that this construct is not fixed for life. Rather, it is viewed as “fragmented and contested in nature” (p. 864). This fragmented and contested nature of identity can manifest when immigrants arrive in their new land and “find that their sense of identity is destabilized.” It is not difficult to see why. There seems to be an inevitable sense of belonging that comes from being born in a certain country. Part of one’s identity is tied to one’s birthplace (if one has lived there long enough to experience the culture and navigate some social circles). The opposite has also been reported. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) identified a loss of linguistic identity, as they examined the personal narratives of immigrant writers of Eastern European origin. This loss preceded the emergence of a new voice as the learners constructed and reconstructed their identities, or sense of self, in the target language and in a new milieu. This (re)construction, according to these authors, is not without a struggle for power.

Power and identity are the central issues discussed by Wodak (2011), who draws on Ricoeur (1992), to illustrate that just as identity is predicated on similarities and differences, language, along with other symbolic systems, is used to sort out ‘similar’ from ‘different’ and

consequently draw distinct ‘us’ versus ‘them’ boundaries. These boundaries, she affirms, are the product of norms set forth by individuals occupying positions of power, who use discourse to advance their ideology and maintain a metaphorical wall (or build one, if none existed before) that segregate rather than aggregate. The perspective of separation versus integration through language is also advanced by Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001), who draw on Lippi-Green (1994), to assert that “standard language ideology extends as far as discrimination against those whose accent differs from the norm, particularly those accents associated with racial, ethnic, or cultural minorities” (p. 246).

Norton (2013) offers convincing evidence of how power struggles underlie the identity and language issues that affect the participants of her research as she demonstrates how individuals exist within social structures and environments, such as families, societies, government. These structures and environments may foster social and economic just as much as they can constrain them. Embedded in these social structures are power relations, mediated by Bourdieu’s notion of social capital, as corroborated by Block (2007a). Arguably, most immigrants have little or next to no “capital” when they arrive in another country. Some are fleeing war or famine or natural disasters (or sometimes, a perverse combination of all these). Not all immigrants are as down and out as so often portrayed in the media, however. Some hail from middle-class backgrounds in their native countries. Their economic status in countries such as the United States or Canada, however, can be much lower, if they are perceived as less than proficient. An example of that was Felicia, one of the five women in Norton’s study (2013).

Norton’s findings shed light on how inequality in power relations can prevent immigrants from gaining access to Anglophone social networks because of their immigrant status. Despite being surrounded by native speakers of the target language, they cannot

develop without the practice. And without practicing, they will never accrue enough of the symbolic capital of language. It is not difficult to see or hear examples of this even among native speakers: in a confrontation between two unequal sides, no true negotiation takes place, and therefore the powerful side will always prevail. Though resistance is possible, it may not always be practical or feasible.

When people offer some resistance, however, a counter discourse can be created leading to the construction of an empowering identity to oppose the marginalization, as found by McKay and Wong (1996). Their study showed how this marginalization takes place and how some learners develop strategies to resist it, creating a counter-discourse instead. Their two-year ethnographic project investigated the writing development of Chinese speaking and Spanish speaking junior high school students, and it generated substantial data on intolerant, racialized discourses, attitudes, and behaviors. The findings corroborated Norton's with respect to the asymmetrical power relations and the notion that immigrant students in ESL classes are placed in a position of powerlessness and viewed as deficient or ignorant immigrants.

Other studies, such as the one carried out by Li and Simpson (2013), relied on the poststructuralist tenets of *capital* and *investment* to investigate the identity construction process of five migrant English language learners in Ireland. While each of the participants had their own agenda in migrating to that country, the study showed how these students were invested in their social and educational practices to gain capital. For example, cultural capital, typified by the credentials that individuals must have in order to gravitate around certain social groups, or financial capital, that is, material resources. The study concluded that migrant learners might find it difficult to reap immediate benefits rewards from their investment as they feel somewhat marginalized by the target-language speakers. In this sense,

the authors claimed that the study reflects what Norton Peirce (1995) and McKay and Wong (1996) have suggested: that teaching and learning English entails much more than merely using effective techniques and instruction.

If English language professionals are to effect some positive change in their classrooms and instill some confidence in their students, their teaching practices must take account of the constructs of identity, capital, and investment. By understanding the relevance of identity in the acquisition of L2, they may be better equipped to help learners reconstruct their identity as language learners by choosing to incorporate a pedagogy that takes account of a discourse that is directly relevant to a given student or speech community, such as ESL students from a Spanish-speaking Latin American country).

A case can be made that without considering both the learner and the learner's language learning context, teachers will continue to fall back on traditional pedagogical tenets such as that of the good language learner (Rubin, 1975) and affective filter (Krashen, 1982) that fail to consider that we practice speaking in the target language by interacting with other speakers of that same language. If social barriers or power inequities hinder such interaction, learners will not be afforded the right to a voice. Consequently, no meaningful interaction beyond that which is controlled or permitted by the native speaker will take place.

There is still much research to be conducted examining the role that affect and beliefs can have when juxtaposed with identity. Ciriza-Lope, Shappeck, and Arxer (2016) conducted a study to understand the issues that arise in the language socialization of Latino immigrants resulting from "the mismatch between a learner's expectation to acquire the language and the behavior of other individuals who may not be aware of the significant struggles confronting any adult learner" (p. 291). The study contended that adult second-language learners have limited opportunities to interact with speakers of the target language. Without the interaction,

no practice takes place, which in turn prevents these speakers from functioning satisfactorily in the target language and from partaking in the cultural practices of that community. As a result, these adult learners end up having interactions in English with younger family members only, who, in many cases, make fun of them when they attempt to speak. This ends up causing a strain among the members of the immigrant family and causing these adults to feel inadequate or inferior in terms of language. The analysis draws on audiotaped focus group interviews with a sample of 40 adult Latino ESL students. Through these interviews, the authors sought to uncover how ESL classroom socialization shapes the narratives and experiences of the adult Latino immigrant L2 learners. The dialogues transcribed from the interviews draw attention to the insecurities of these learners/immigrants as they regarded themselves as inferior on account of their poor command of English yet felt the classroom to be a haven for interaction and socialization.

Ullman's (2010) ethnographic study looks at such inequalities and finds that "questions of identity and learning are tied inexorably to notions of citizenship, or national belonging" (p. 163). Ullman conducted a 300-person survey seeking to identify the ideologies of language learning and citizenship from Latin American migrants through the students' purchase and use of a language learning material titled "*Inglés sin Barreras*" (English Without Barriers). Ullman's findings indicate that the material in question has a heavy ideological stance that contrasts Latinos and Americans, stating that the former are "not Americans" (p. 169). Ullman asserts that the discourse depicting Latinos as unmotivated or deficient is a reality and goes on to state that "*Inglés sin Barreras* is a site of struggle that reveals the tension around cultural, linguistic, and political incorporation experienced by Latin American immigrants in the United States" (p. 169). Ullman sees "*Inglés sin Barreras*" as more than a language learning product, the consumption of which symbolizes learners'

commitment to becoming the ‘right’ kind of immigrant. It is striking to see how many of the immigrants themselves buy into the ideology of *Inglés sin Barreras* and fail to see how the stereotypes presented in the lessons only seem to marginalize them more and more.

As Cervatiuc (2009) emphasized, “[a] learner’s identity cannot be separated from power, which is socially constructed and negotiated among individuals and institution” (p. 257). Her study also revealed counter-discourse as she conducted interviews with 20 professionally successful adult proficient non-native speakers, who arrived in Canada after the age of 18. In their efforts toward competence, participants reported feeling marginalized by native speakers for their attempts to speak the language. However, they resisted that marginalization by “negotiating a powerful identity for themselves and generating an inner *counter-discourse*” (p. 259), which resonates with some of the discussion in McKay and Wong (1996). These learners chose to value their own progress as opposed to comparing themselves with native speakers, and embraced the belief that “identities are constructed, negotiated, and shaped by choice and human agency” (p. 264).

The relationship between language acquisition and identity was central in an educational ethnography conducted by Lvovich (2003), who wrote a case study on Serdar, a Turkish student of hers, who left a network of friends, girlfriend, and family in Turkey to come to the United States and follow the path that his parents had dreamed for him. Serdar’s own accounts of his attempted acculturation showed that he felt more empowered once he began to progress with the language. This empowerment allowed him to make his first social contacts, which in turn allowed for better language acquisition. In Lvovich’s opinion, teachers need to be cognizant of how identity issues can affect learning, in addition to understanding that this awareness can lead to a “reexamination of teaching approaches, methods, curricula, and interactions with... students” (p. 188).

I share Ullman's (2010) sentiment that the "language learning context outside the classroom can be fraught with hostility, character defamation, and identity constructions that set learners up for failure" (p. 169). However, I also share Cervatiuc's understanding that despite having limited capital and access to social networks, immigrants can choose to exercise agency to persevere and continue to gain access to these networks and speak the target language, as did the subjects in her study. This does not mean that the speakers of the target language should not be equally held responsible for the process. Rather, like Cervatiuc, I believe society and learners must join hands in sensitizing native speakers to the immigrants' hardships and tough realities, creating a paradigm of inclusion (2009, pp. 267-268). Both sides can only profit from this change of mindset.

In more recent years, studies that have looked at identity and second-language acquisition have done so in the light of the construct of agency. Martin and Daiute (2013), for example, wrote about the narrative formation of agency and the lack of agency in the lives of Latina women ESL speakers. The study focuses on the lives of these Latina women in the context of gender and ethnicity. It is worthwhile mentioning that if the concept of lack of agency is defined as vulnerability, one can only infer that agency is to mean the opposite: drive, strength, a position of power vis-à-vis someone or some circumstance, as the women are described as articulating agency. The participants described how their Hispanic identity could cause them to feel vulnerable or agentic, depending on how they were positioned or how they positioned themselves in relation to others, especially those in positions of authority. Oppositional agency was verified when the women encountered discrimination and articulated opposition to it. Agency in the context of gender was verified when the women expressed were able to associate their goals with the struggles they had to endure to continue to blaze their trail of independence. In particular, the women were found to have

different instances of agency: one, when speaking of their rights as women (gender based), and the other, when speaking about the social and political implications of being Hispanic. The authors concluded that positions or identities are not fixed. Rather, they are relational and contextual, yielding different discourses and different levels of agency.

Agency also underpins many other recent studies on SLA, including some that build on sociocultural approaches or even Bakhtin's ideas. Though “Bakhtin writes primarily about authoring novels, cultural psychologists Holland et al. draw on his work to describe an analogous process, which they call ‘authoring selves’ (cf. Greenleaf & Katz, 2004) through the appropriation of multiple discourses” (Menard-Warwick, 2005, p. 268). Vitanova’s study (2005), as cited in Menard-Warwick (2005, p. 269), shows how a subject in her study (a Russian immigrant learning English in the US) was able to re-establish her voice and construct her identity in the US by starting her own business and “taking on the discourse of entrepreneurship” (p. 269).

Lastly, it is essential to recognize that a study of identity and second-language acquisition cannot be complete without considering issues pertaining to the constructs of race and gender. Norton (2000) takes the position that gender, race, and social class are not mere variables, but rather complex and intertwined elements that cannot be dissociated from the construction of identity. Studies on the role of gender in the target language acquisition of migrants, like Vitanova’s (2005), inform us that that gender may be socially constructed, but it manifests differently across communities and cultures. The study conducted by Ciriza-Lope et al. (2016), already mentioned above, shows that some of the Latina women in their study had to fight cultural constraints in order to attend ESL classes because their husbands complained that the classes were interfering with the women’s household chores.

The studies outlined above show that identity research in SLA has largely drawn on postmodern theoretical and methodological approaches although they may differ in terms of the perspective used.

In the next chapter, I present the methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Researchers who embrace postmodern theoretical approaches have argued for the need of an emic type of methodology. Specifically, identity scholars reject the view that research could be completely objective and unbiased. Norton and McKinney (2011) summarize this understanding as follows:

Since an identity approach to SLA characterizes learner identity as multiple and changing, a quantitative research paradigm relying on static and measurable variables will generally not be appropriate. The focus on issues of power also necessitates that qualitative research designs are framed by critical research. For these reasons, methods that scholars use in identity approaches to SLA tend to be qualitative rather than quantitative, and often draw on critical ethnography, feminist poststructuralist theory, sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology. (p. 82)

This project adopts the paradigm of qualitative research in that it seeks to underscore and interpret the socially constructed nature of a language learner's identity. This line of research contemplates the participants' many realities, and it affords the potential to value their experiences and subjectivities. As Dornyei (2007) explains, qualitative research is context-dependent and allows us to study (and, consequently, understand) a phenomenon from the perspective of the participants in the activity. This emic perspective of qualitative studies is the most relevant characteristic for qualitative research study such as this one, which will rely heavily on interviews and a little on observation.

As I conducted the interviews, I gathered data and looked for patterns to be interpreted with a view to generating hypotheses on the second-language acquisition issues experienced by the research participants. Denzin and Lincoln (2006) affirm that qualitative research is in itself a field of investigation. These authors assert that qualitative research

entails a variety of empirical materials, such as case studies, texts, and cultural productions, historic texts, interviews, interactive and visual texts, amongst others, which describe moments ranging from ordinary to troublesome and significant in an individual's life.

Thus, researchers resort to a variety of interconnected interpretive practices, rather than merely relying on one single practice. To that end, Davis (1995) emphasizes that interpretive qualitative research can potentially contribute to SLA literature as it offers insight into the acquisition process not only as an individualistic mental process but also as an integral part of the social and cultural dimensions of this process.

Participants

This research study, approved by the International Review Board (IRB) at the University of Central Florida, relies upon interviews conducted with two migrants from Puerto Rico who migrated to the continental United States years ago for various reasons.

One of the participants is a woman in her late forties, who was born and raised in Puerto Rico and came to the continental United States a little more than ten years ago, with her two daughters, aged nine and fourteen at that time. This participant holds a B.A. in Social Studies. To preserve this participant's identity in this study, I will refer to her as Maria.

The other participant was also born and raised in Puerto Rico. She is in her mid-forties, and she, too, migrated some ten years ago with her daughter and son, aged twelve and three, respectively. To preserve this participant's identity in this study, I will refer to her as Yolanda. She migrated to Florida to give her children the opportunity to live here so that they could learn English.

As I have already mentioned in this text, my choice for Puerto Ricans, as opposed to any other migrant population, is not accidental. Although Puerto Rico is a United States

territory, Spanish is the predominant language on the island. Its inhabitants therefore have more in common with those of other Spanish-speaking Latin American countries than they do with their anglophile fellow citizens residing in the mainland despite their citizenship status.

This research study is based on the data generated by interviews with the two Puerto Rican women, aged between forty and fifty, and belonging to the same social and economic background, and is not representative of the entire population of Puerto Rico, but rather of how the unique experiences of these individuals can throw light on the discussions on identity and second-language acquisition. This study does not purport to generalize the findings, nor does it consider the inhabitants of Puerto Rico to form a monolithic community.

Data Collection

The data collection process consisted of two interviews conducted in English with each participant: an initial interview and a follow-up interview for clarification purposes. A structured open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix), as well as semi-structured questions, was used to explore the factors and the issues to accomplish the objectives of this research. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed for data analysis. As previously mentioned, pseudonyms have been assigned to each participant for confidentiality's sake, and both participants expressly gave their consent to the use of the data for research purposes.

As Dornyei (2007) explains, the semi-structured interview is the principal means to investigate the issue and collect data. Qualitative research can be underpinned by either structured, semi-structured, or free interviews. I have prioritized the semi-structured interview because it places a greater emphasis on the presence and the role of the investigator, while offering the participant the necessary freedom and spontaneity to enrich the discussion.

The semi-structured interview can be understood here as an interview that stems from basic queries, underpinned by theories and hypotheses, that are of interest to the research study and that in turn give rise to new queries when new hypotheses arise as the informant provides his or her answers. This way, the informant, relying on his or her experiences, becomes actively engaged in the process as he or she dialogs with the researcher (Dornyei, 2007).

By conducting semi-structured interviews, I looked at each participant's experiences of migrating to Florida as well as their respective journeys while navigating the terrain of learning English in different social contexts, and I was able to get a better glimpse of the research participants' experiences, such as why they migrated to the continental United States, why they quitted studying English, and how they felt when they interacted with native and non-native speakers of English.

From the data generated by the interviews, I looked for recurrent patterns. At first, I looked for instances of the identity-related constructs already outlined in this proposal – investment and capital – as well as instances of positions. Then, I identified the factors that positively or negatively influence the identity construction of immigrants in the L2, as well as the social forces or barriers that impact learning ESL in the context of speech communities in light of the literature on identity and second-language acquisition.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, I analyze the data generated in the interviews in light of the literature on identity, the concepts of investment and capital, and positioning theory. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the findings and the discussion are concurrently presented. The findings and the discussion for each participant respect the chronological order in which the interviews were conducted.

Participant 1: Maria

Born and raised in San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico, Maria left the island to give her family better education opportunities. As a divorcé, that meant migrating alone with her two daughters, aged 9 and 14 at the time of arrival. She did not come without preparation. She had developed a long-distance relationship with a gentleman from Argentina, and after some time they married. As of the date of the interview, they had been living in Central Florida for a little more than a decade. This section discusses Maria's second language issues in light of the concepts of investment and capital. In the next section, issues involving power and social barriers will be presented.

Capital and Investment

As already explained in the Literature Review section of this study, Norton's (1995) concept of investment is related to the concept of symbolic capital introduced by Bourdieu (1977), who explains that capital goes beyond the traditional concept of accumulating assets. It also entails accumulating symbolic elements, such as skills and credentials, that allow an individual to position himself or herself as high-ranking and authoritative vis-à-vis others. This can be typified by possession of an academic degree from a prestigious school, which can make an individual seem more employable and desirable, enabling him or her to circulate

among more prestigious social groups. Symbolic capital, in the eyes of Bourdieu, is as much a source of social inequality as financial capital as the former can also facilitate or impede social mobility.

When Maria migrated to Florida, she had a college degree in social studies, a credential that afforded her some socioeconomic prestige in Puerto Rico. Despite this credential, Maria has never worked in her field. Instead, she had a job at a manufacturing facility, which left her with posture-related issues that eventually led her to qualify for social security benefits. Maria understood the value of education and knew that if her daughters were to succeed and have a better life than she did, they would need good education. She therefore understands that education is capital and wants her daughters to have access to it. Maria tells me that this is so important for her that when she learned that the high school that was zoned for her neighborhood was a D-rated school, she went to the Board of Education to petition for her daughter to be permitted to attend an A-rated school instead. In her identity as a mother seeking to secure a better education for her younger daughter, Maria exercised agency as she used English to negotiate the change to the better school. As there was no one with whom she could speak in Spanish and, she says, because she desperately needed the change, she was able to convey what she wanted.

As for her own education, she knew that speaking English properly would be important. She enrolled in an ESL class at a community college in Central Florida. For Maria, knowledge of English is also a type of symbolic capital as can be seen in this excerpt from her interview: “In this time that I’m ... en este tiempo en que estoy, me he dado cuenta que [I have realized], I feel that I need the English more and more. The English very necessary.”

Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of capital, Norton (1995) explains that learners invest in learning a foreign language because the investment will yield symbolic and material resources. The accumulation of resources in turn increases the value of these learners' cultural capital and social power. Maria believed that moving to Florida would afford her daughters better education opportunities, including the opportunity to learn English. Her enrolment in an ESL course at a local college is evidence that she understood that knowledge of the language would be a valuable resource for her, too. In other words, she perceived the knowledge of the target language as capital. She knew enough English to be placed in a level-four class, as this excerpt informs us: "I went to [the community] college and I take an exam. There are four levels in this time and I'm in the fourth level. My English... I take an exam and my English is very good."

The fact that she values her placement in an advanced class seems to indicate that she was content with her knowledge of English at the time. Upon concluding her course, however, she stopped studying. She explained that it was because there were no additional levels beyond level four and claimed that her English had improved with the course. This would appear to indicate that she believes her investment in a formal learning setting had paid off.

During the interview with Maria at her home, it was observed that her daughters interacted with each other in English but switched to Spanish whenever they addressed their mother. She explained that speaking English was natural for her daughters. Although the girls communicated with their mother and stepfather in Spanish, she said that she had encouraged the girls early on to speak to each other in English because, in her opinion, this would make the girls practice both languages at home. She clearly sees that bilingualism is cultural capital as she proudly announces, in the following excerpt, that her older daughter

now works for a governmental agency precisely because she is fully proficient in both languages:

Bilingualism is una ventaja muy grande [an enormous advantage]. ... I don't want them to lost [their] Spanish]. I tell, for example, Lia [her younger daughter] she... se olvidó palabras en Español [has forgotten the words in Spanish]. I don't want that because I think she needs the both languages, for the work. She is trying to do Spanish, too, in College. She is tutoring an American girl, no, I don't want to say [this], I'm American, too. A white girl [emphasis added]. When she go to work in a company, she needs both the languages. It's better for her. It's the reason why Alice [her older daughter] work. She's in department of Spanish and English, too.

Regardless of how she came to the conclusion that an individual can lose his or her native language, this loss is scientifically referred to as language attrition, and it has been documented in many studies, as Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) point out. She fully understands that language skills are perishable and must therefore be honed if they are to be preserved.

In the follow-up interview, Maria made it clear that she felt more comfortable investing in learning English in a formal classroom setting than investing in other social practices. The support she perceived from her classmates seemed to influence her desire to be more invested in her identity as a student in a formal educational setting, as this quote informs us: "In [the community] college, we are in the same boat, and they support each other but in the street the people is not comprehensive."

Her account is corroborated by Ciriza-Lope et al. (2016), who report that the solidarity and camaraderie in an ESL class provide a way for Spanish speakers to empathize with one another and that ESL classrooms are thought of as a haven where a judgement-free identity in English can be formed. Likewise, the same study also informs us that Hispanics

typically report that they find it hard to interact with native speakers long enough to be viewed as worthy of speaking.

Despite saying that some individuals do not understand her when she is participating in certain social practices outside of the school setting, she does try to communicate in English. For example, she interacted in English with the author of this study from the beginning to the end of the interviews despite being told that she could use Spanish at any time if she wanted to. She did resort to some code-switching for a few key words or phrases, but she answered all the questions in English. Some limitation in terms of fluency and vocabulary, notwithstanding, she is capable of conveying her message across with reasonable clarity. She does confess that she prefers to speak Spanish if she has a choice because she feels that her pronunciation is not good: “My pronunciation is bad, and I feel uncomfortable and I prefer to speak in Spanish.”

Except for stressing the wrong syllable in the words *comfortable* and *uncomfortable*, she does not present any pronunciation issues that impede communication. On the contrary, her pronunciation is clear. Her fluency and vocabulary will, nonetheless, be perceived as somewhat limited by native speakers. This may discourage some native speakers from engaging in more elaborate conversation with her because they might need to make a bit of an effort to understand what she is trying to convey.

In Norton’s (2013) longitudinal study, the participant Martina, and in Vitanova’s (2004), study, the participants Vera and Peter, also use the term *uncomfortable* to describe how they feel as they are positioned by those who have capital (be it social, cultural, or financial) that affords them the right or legitimacy to speak. Norton points out that although a learner may be motivated to speak, other issues may conflict with the desire to do so. Studies like Bremer et al. (1996) have reported that encounters between speakers of the target

language and language learners can be fraught with tension. Some learners walk away from the experience with frustration without being able to negotiate meaning and make themselves understood. In the following example, Maria could be said to be positioning herself as inferior vis-à-vis native speakers. Despite apologizing upfront for what she perceives as “bad” English, however, she displays agentic behavior by attempting to bring the other speaker to sympathize with her and speak in a way that is accessible to her:

The people... the person speak too fast I can't understand, for example, I'm going to one store and I ask person tell me something that I don't know I say, 'I'm sorry. Can you speak slowly? My English is bad,' and the person speak more slowly.

Though it could be said that she positions herself as linguistically weak in relation to the native speaker, she does not appear to give up easily when she encounters a linguistic barrier along the way. Instead, she displays some agentic behavior and finds a way to overcome it by negotiating meaning with her interlocutor or by using body language: “When I'm going to one place I try to speak English and try the person to understand me ... I do signs, I explain like this or something with my hands.” She also understands that she can resort to the translator application on her mobile device: “The words don't come so I put the *traductor* [translator].”

This is very different from the sense of inadequacy experienced by Berta, one of the participants in the study conducted by Bremer et al. (1996). Berta's interaction in the store leaves her frustrated as the salesperson stops making any effort to understand what she wants and turns his attention to other customers in the store, ignoring her completely. If Maria did experience any kind of frustration in the interaction she describes, it was most likely minimized by her perception of technology as a tool to help her communicate and her digital

skills to access the information on her phone. This appears to indicate that she takes active responsibility, to some extent, for the communicative event.

She did, however, experience deep frustration when she and her husband had an encounter with a police officer and could not make themselves understood. This experience, in addition to other similar interactions, such as going to a doctor's office, will be discussed next in the light of the concept of power and marginalization.

Power, Marginalization and Barriers

Although she states that she is not afraid to speak English to Americans when she says, "I think they are no better than me," she seems to recognize that engaging in more sophisticated speech acts with anglophone figures of authority, such as a policeman or a doctor, can make her feel unempowered and vulnerable. This can be illustrated in the following excerpt from the interview when she narrates an experience she and her husband had when trying to interact with a police officer after they were pulled over for speeding. Although speeding per se is an unjustifiable traffic violation, there was a plausible explanation for doing so, one which they very much wanted to convey to the police officer who stopped them. Maria explained that her husband's job entails driving all over Florida delivering time-sensitive goods. Maria often rides along with him to keep him company. On that occasion, he had been instructed to deliver something urgent hundreds of miles away by a certain time. It was a matter of life or death, as she puts it. At some point, they realized they would not make it in time unless they drove faster. Upon being pulled over, Maria tried to explain to the police officer why they had been speeding, to no avail. She recounts the incident as follows:

All this time I'm here yo percibo [I realize] I feel that I need the English more. The English very necessary, because the other day a policeman stop us, give me a 300

[dollar] ticket for velocity and we can't explain that he have a medicine for one patient in one home care. I have trouble to explain because Juan, the English of Juan is very bad and he do not help me with the English because he prefer to speak Argentinian...

In this respect, it could be said that this encounter left Maria with a frustration that is similar to that described by Berta as she walked away from the store without having accomplished any goal in terms of communication. However, in Maria's case, when she says, "I feel that I need the English more. The English very necessary," she recognizes that mastery of the language could have helped her minimize both the gaps in communication and the power marginalization she experienced in this encounter. Based on her account, it can be affirmed that the police officer did not appear to make any effort at all to negotiate meaning during the traffic stop and ended up issuing a speeding fine without giving Maria and her husband a chance to explain or justify the traffic violation.

In analyzing this event through objective lenses, one can say that a traffic violation that results in a similar law-enforcement encounter will usually reflect a power imbalance, as a weaker party (the wrongdoer) is subjected to the scrutiny of a stronger party (the police officer). However, this event also reflects a power and linguistic imbalance that may have been aggravated by the officer's apparent unwillingness to negotiate meaning with the two migrants. His reluctance may quite possibly be directly related to his position as a figure of authority and to his power as a law-enforcement agent. It is also conceivable that the officer's reluctance may have been motivated by a racial component to a certain extent or even by the linguistic superiority of a native speaker. That, however, is mere speculation because Maria does not offer any evidence to corroborate that the interaction was tainted by racism. One thing is clear: there was no effort on the officer's part to negotiate meaning. Negotiation of

meaning is an assumption challenged by Bremer et al. (1996) that all the interlocutors participating in a conversation will work to achieve mutual understanding. Norton (2013) corroborates that finding as she adds that target language speakers are not often willing to negotiate meaning with language learners, who in turn can be marginalized because of their inability to speak.

It is not that Maria wishes that there could have been a way to avoid the ticket. She understands the reason for the citation. What seems to stand out to her in this episode is that the police officer was too impatient to hear the explanation that she was attempting to provide. In doing so, he positioned her both as inferior and unworthy of the right to speak. In Maria's words, if she – and her husband – had a better command of English, she might not have found it difficult to explain why they were speeding. Arguably, she might still have been cited, but she might have agentically created a counter-discourse that would have enabled her to minimize the power inequity that she experienced both during and after the incident.

It is worth pointing out that she feels capable of negotiating meaning in other types of interactions, such as when she needs to see a doctor. In this respect, she affirms that she does not have any issues interacting with native speakers. She does, however, mention that she feels she can communicate more comfortably with non-native speakers. This excerpt of the interview illustrates this point:

When I speak with you I feel more comfortable because I know you, but when I speak with an American, I do not feel comfortable because I know, for example, I have trouble with the present and the past tense.

It is fair to say that she feels “comfortable” when talking with a non-native speaker because she does not feel marginalized and therefore positions herself as an equal vis-à-vis

any interlocutor whose mother tongue is not English. This feeling that she describes is corroborated by the next excerpt in which she explains why she feels comfortable speaking to her psychiatrist:

Maria: My psychiatrist do not speak Spanish but I sit in the office and I try and he understand me all that I say I don't know how but he understand me.

Marcio: And you speak to him in English.

Maria: Because he is by India.

Marcio: And you're not afraid to speak to him in English. Does it make a difference to you that the doctor is from India, that he's not American?

Maria: I feel that he speak like me [laughs]. The pronunciation of the Indian people is very different. And when I sit in front of him, I think he speak like me.

Marcio: So, if he were not from India, if he were from the United States, it would not be the same relationship.

Maria: The Indian doctor transmits to me that he understands me. The American doctor... [stops talking.]

She clearly displays signs of agentic behavior by asking the doctor to speak more slowly to understand him or her better. As she describes her interaction with law enforcement and her attempt to communicate with American doctors, it is possible to interpret that she manifests a desire to be a part of the English-speaking community and participate in different social practices with native speakers on an equal footing. However, as Bourdieu (1977) argues, interactions reflect the interlocutors' positions in society. Maria perceives the

existence of an imbalance of power between native speakers and non-native speakers and, whether intuitively or knowingly, realizes that the balance of power may tip in her favor when she is interacting with someone who is not Caucasian.

To investigate whether this is the case, in the follow-up interview the researcher revisited Maria's most relevant interactions without giving away what was being investigated. As she explained once again how she was able to convince the Board of Education that her daughter deserved a better school, she offered an interesting nugget of information. She said she had to interact in English because the person with whom she spoke was an African American woman (emphasis added) who did not speak Spanish. This would appear to show that Maria's interactions with minorities do not seem to make her feel as intimidated as do her interactions with Caucasian native speakers, to whom she refers as "white."

This episode with the Board of Education seems to point to the fact that she sees herself as an active participant of the English-speaking community if she is not confronted with a power inequity that makes her feel threatened or inferior. It would appear that if a power inequity is present, as was the case with the police officer, Maria may feel too intimidated to engage in major interactions. However, in some situations, she attempts to overcome the challenge by positioning herself as a speaker with limited language skills, as her statement shows. "When I go into the hospital, and the doctor is American and I [say] 'Sorry, can you explain me more slowly?'" In doing so, she agentically draws attention to her limitation perhaps to ensure that the doctor will sympathize with her and speak at a pace that is comprehensible to her.

Barriers can also be observed in her other social practices as is the case with family. When asked if she felt at any time in all these years that she had made some improvement

with her English, Maria replied that she did, but her daughters would often correct her, or worse, make fun of her, whenever she attempted to converse with them in English. Ciriza-Lope et al. (2016) show in their study how in some Hispanic families, the young ones can disrupt family dynamics as traditional caretaker roles become reversed and parents are the ones being corrected. In some extreme cases, the adult language learners end up receiving no linguistic input in English because their children avoid interacting with them in that language.

Another barrier she would need to overcome if she were to work towards improving her English would be the lack of opportunities to practice English when she is at home with her husband. His attitude towards English speakers (“they need to understand me”) and the fact that he discourages the use of English at home seem to indicate that he makes a point of maintaining a monolingual speech community in his household. This is also corroborated by the Argentinian barbecue, along with other typical Argentinian foods, frequently cooked in the household. Both the language and the cuisine seem to be the vehicles he has found to maintain this speech community alive and active. This local node (the family speaking in Spanish) is also kept active by all their Spanish-speaking friends, mechanics, doctors, relatives in and out of town, radio stations, TV stations, etc.).

As Maria points out in the following excerpt, she is surrounded by Spanish at home and that she yearns to be more exposed to the English language:

It don't matter [switches to Spanish and says, “no le importa”]. He say they need to understand me. And he listen to the radio in Spanish all days, Argentina radio. For me I need to hear the television in English but when I go to buy a package for my television the Spanish package is necessary and I usually use Spanish package all the time and I need more English because I feel this is very necessary.

Maria appears evidently torn between two worlds, i.e. that of her daughters, who have acculturated, and that of her husband, who does not embrace the culture or the language. Their interactions at home are conducted in Spanish, but it is interesting to see how she has a desire to be surrounded by English at home.

Her aspirations and goals seem very much aligned with those of her husband and her daughters, that is, ensuring that her husband maintains a steady job and that her daughters continue their education. It is also possible to see from observing the family members' interactions in the house that Maria positions herself as a devoted Hispanic mother and wife, as she describes herself. These subject positions or identities do not stray from those traditionally associated with women in Latin American or in Hispanic societies, as Ciriza-Lope et al. (2016) pointed out with respect to the gender and culture-related issues affecting migrant Latina women with respect to second-language acquisition.

Participant 2: Yolanda

Yolanda was born and raised in Santurce, one of the biggest neighborhoods in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Like Maria, she studied at a public school in Puerto Rico. She later attended a local college and earned an associate's degree in Secretarial Skills. She had a three-year-old son and a twelve-year-old daughter when she moved to Central Florida. As she points out, she lived a comfortable life in Puerto Rico, with a steady job, a car, and a place to live. She emphatically adds that she did not have to move to Florida out of necessity. Rather, she was motivated to migrate to Florida to give better educational opportunities to her children, especially to her daughter, who attended a good private school in Puerto Rico that offered bilingual education but believed that "real English would be learned only in Florida." A few years after she moved to Central Florida, she married again and had twin babies, who

as of the date of this interview, were three years old. Her husband was born in Florida but moved to Puerto Rico when he was about seven years old. There, he attended public school like Yolanda. According to her, he is fluent in both languages. Yolanda says that she speaks to him in both English and Spanish. Curiously, she says she only speaks to her children in English. Her husband even admonishes her that their twin daughters will never learn Spanish if she does not talk to them in that language.

Yolanda is noticeably more fluent than Maria although they both make similar mistakes in terms of syntax and morphology. She starts to answer the interview questions in English, but, surprisingly, as soon as she starts to elaborate on her answers, she switches to Spanish. At first, the code-switching is limited to a couple of words, but as the questions compel her to dig more deeply for answers, she switches to Spanish.

Capital and Investment

Yolanda did not start ESL classes immediately after her arrival in Central Florida. Instead, she relied on her previous knowledge of the language and on her resourcefulness to ensure that she could succeed in her interactions in English. She was obviously invested in learning English in an informal setting, and she recognized that knowledge of the language would enable her to acquire more symbolic capital, which in turn would give her access to other social networks. Many years later, however, she chose to enroll in a local community college and invest in formal ESL education, as she describes in the following excerpt:

Marcio: What made you decide to study English again, to go back to college?

Yolanda: Because I want to improve my English. I'm interested in having a better English and because I work with marketing I want access to the American market. I don't want to be restricted to the Hispanic market.

Marcio: How would English expand your job?

Yolanda: It would expand a great deal because I would be able to tap into the English-speaking American market. These days I'm only focused on the Hispanic market.

Marcio: Yes, but the Hispanic market is huge too, right?

Yolanda: Yes, but it's very saturated. I mean, not very saturated ... it's good to diversify. I don't want to be concentrated in the same culture.

Yolanda positions herself as a telemarketing worker who understands that more knowledge of English would provide her with some cultural capital and would go a long way toward helping her cater to a much bigger clientele, made up of English speakers as she recognizes that with her current level of English she may not be able to perform her telemarketing job from home as effectively as she does in Spanish.

As can be inferred in the excerpts above, she considers that being invested in studying English in a formal academic environment can afford her the opportunity to improve her speaking skills and her knowledge of grammar. She also recognizes that interaction in the target language is important if one is to learn effectively and acquire fluency. In response to one of the questions about learning English in Puerto Rico when she was younger, she explains that she has always been interested in the language, especially because she was constantly exposed to British and American pop songs when she was growing up. Those songs piqued her curiosity about the lyrics and inspired her to look up the meaning of many words in the dictionary in an attempt to understand what the songs were about:

I like the song but I don't understand and take a dictionary ... [speaks Spanish: I want to know what the song says ... and that's how I would learn because I was interested.]

It was like going to school memorizing, but because I didn't have any practice, I

didn't have a family member, a cousin, I lost it. ... The thing is, since you're not speaking, you're not practicing."

From the excerpt, we can surmise that she recognized early on as a teenager that she could also learn English autonomously and exercised agency in doing so. She even likened her practice of looking up the meanings of the words to the practice of going to school. This strategy, however, was not enough to guarantee language learning as she explains that because she had no one with whom to practice the language, she "lost it."

When asked how much English she had learned in public school before she came to Florida, she describes her English classes as mere memorization of words; no speaking or listening practice at all. According to her, this focus on vocabulary at the expense of conversational practice would be the reason why she, as well as other Puerto Ricans, do not learn to speak English fluently:

They are only teaching for an exam and this is a big problem in Puerto Rico. ...

[T]he English that I learned was just verbs and whatever and I forgot it since there's no practice. This is a problem for me and for everybody else that come here.

And they have this barrier that is the English language. It's not like English is not spoken at all, but most of the population, they're not fluent. The public schools don't emphasize fluency.

The importance of interacting with other individuals in the target language if one is to learn it effectively is a recurrent theme throughout the interview. And even though she does not have any formal training in language teaching, Yolanda senses that interaction, or "practice," as she puts it, is key to language development. She insists that this is the main difference between her husband's and her fluency in English. Although he moved to Puerto Rico as a young child, his mother and his sisters continued to interact with him in English all

the time. That is why, in her opinion, he did not lose the language despite having lived in a Spanish-speaking territory for twenty years.

Despite her initial interest in learning the lyrics to the songs she loved, Yolanda did not want to pursue any formal English-language studies outside of her public-school environment. Rather, she had her mind set on learning Portuguese at a local foreign languages institute. Her father, however, tried to steer her in a different direction:

I once told my dad I wanted to learn Portuguese and you know what he brought me?

The entire collection of *Inglés sin Barreras*. ... I was thirteen years old and I told him 'I don't want this'. I never opened any books and he pestered me 'you have to learn English.' I don't know why but I always wanted to learn Portuguese.... It's kind of ironic because I understand my dad's point. It is important to learn English.

Yolanda's father certainly did not perceive knowledge of Portuguese as cultural capital the way Yolanda did. Perhaps, in his mind, the language had no value in Puerto Rico, much less in the continental United States. He most likely purchased the collection as a result of intensive marketing campaigns targeted at Latin Americans. Ullman's (2010) study shows that these advertising campaigns preyed on the fears of these individuals that they would not be successful or committed citizens if they could not speak proper English. Purchase of *Inglés sin Barreras* was therefore viewed as a pathway to integration in American society.

Yolanda, however, rejected *Inglés sin Barreras* outright because she wanted to learn Portuguese instead. Regardless of her reason, she is not the only person who never opened any of the twelve volumes or DVDs of *Inglés sin Barreras*. Ullman reported that very few of the 300 individuals she interviewed had gone past the first volume. Many years later, after her father had died, Yolanda's mother told her that she had found the entire collection and suggested Yolanda give it a try. Yolanda quickly dismissed her suggestion.

Power, Marginalization and Barriers

Despite not knowing much English at the time of her arrival, Yolanda never positioned herself as disadvantaged in terms of language and never considered English as a barrier for her though she understands why it could be a barrier for many. From what she reports, in her gatekeeping encounters, she would agentically call for someone who spoke Spanish to help her rather than positioning herself as linguistically challenged and inferior as this excerpt illustrates: “... but when I have any problem with the person, I say, ‘anybody speak Spanish here?’ ‘Oh yeah, give me one second.’”

When it came time to look for a job, she exercised agency by creatively anticipating the possible interactions that could take place in job interviews, rehearsing them with her cousin. In doing so, she was positioned as a competent English speaker in the eyes of her prospective employer:

Marcio: Tell me about the difficulties, the communication barriers.

Yolanda: Oh, you know what? I never feared about that. For example: when I tried to find a job and my cousin, you know, I practiced with her when I go to the office or whatever place I tried I needed in that moment.

Yolanda was employed shortly after her arrival at a manufacturing facility in Central Florida, where she met her second husband. She had that job for many years but stopped working after the birth of her twin children. At work, she interacted with her boss and with the engineers in English, but, unsurprisingly, in Spanish with Hispanic or Latino coworkers. Once in the presence of any English speakers, she would switch to English. She claimed that she never had any difficulty doing so, and that if there were any misunderstanding, she would ask for clarification:

They understood me, and I understood them because I worked well there was always a word here and there that I could not understand. Wasn't all perfect. I would say, "couldn't you please repeat?" and so they would understand me, and they would speak slowly, and they always give me an opportunity to speak.

There is no doubt at this point that Yolanda is a very resourceful and agentic learner, responding with creativity when she needs to. Although she has not reached the level of mastery that, in her mind, would allow her to start doing her telemarketing work in English rather than in Spanish, she seems capable of jumping over any language hurdles. She agrees with that, but quickly points out to me that she has been on the receiving end of some racially-charged comment about Puerto Rico and about people not "wanting to speak" English in this country. The following excerpt gives us a glimpse of the type of power inequity expressed in the native speaker's racialized discourse:

Yo he notado cuando hablo con personas que son puro americano. Como ávido tanta situación con los hispanos y con el racismo y con la cuestión del inglés y no Spanish y whatever. Yo he notado que de cierta manera ellos intimidan. Déjame ver, me paso no hace mucho que yo estaba hablando, obviamente en inglés y la persona me miro como que, como que te estas expresando mal o, ¿entiendes? Entonces de cierta manera como que ellos quieren intimidarnos, pero a mí no me da problema. [I have noticed that when I speak to people who are pure American (emphasis added), there have been issues with Hispanics, issues of racism and the issue of English no Spanish, and whatever, I have noticed that people look at me like I'm not expressing myself well. In a way, it seems they want to intimidate you, but for me it's not a problem.]

Yolanda goes on to provide an example of this type of discriminatory practice or discourse as the next excerpt illustrates:

Pero, you know what, I have una situación en una fabrica ... yo tenia una compañera pura americana y en una situación yo estaba hablando con una compañera en español. Ese día esa señora vino bien molesta porque ese día la lotto cuando empezaron a jugar Florida, la lotto allá, el Powerball en Puerto Rico. Del saque se llevaron el premio allá en Puerto Rico. And you know what, she is angry. Ella estaba bien molesta. Porque ‘empezó allá y ya se lo llevaron’ y yo me le quedo mirando y yo, ‘¿cual es el problema?’ Pero entonces ella me dijo, ‘ustedes tienen que hablar aquí ingles porque tu estas en territorio americano’ y yo le dije, ‘¿y porque tu no aprendes hablar en español? ¿Si yo aprendo hablar inglés porque tú no puedes hablar español?’ You know what, ella se quedó callada... No debemos dejar intimidar. [But, you know what, I had a situation in the factory I used to work at ... I had a coworker, a pure American (emphasis added), who noticed I was talking to another coworker in Spanish. And on this day, this lady came and harassed me, and she started talking about Powerball [the lottery] and And you know what? She’s angry, and she harassed me because ‘they barely started Powerball in Puerto Rico and some Puerto Rican already won the big prize.’ And I was like, ‘what’s the problem?’ And she was all upset because we were speaking Spanish and saying, ‘You are on American soil. You have to speak English.’ And I told her, ‘and why don’t you learn to speak Spanish? If I have to learn English, why can’t you learn to speak Spanish?’ You know what? She shut up. ... We must not let ourselves be intimidated.

This dramatic account resonates with the discussion in Wodak that “foreigners are the scapegoats of the present era” (2012, p. 223). Even if they speak the target language well and have integrated successfully in the new country, they may still be regarded by some as outsiders, unworthy of a treatment that should be bestowed upon legitimate members only.

Jones and Krzyzanowski (2008, p. 41, as cited in Wodak, 2012, p. 225) state that membership is only recognized after certain thresholds are passed, at which point a foreigner will be considered as a legitimate member. Considering that Puerto Ricans are not foreigners by any standard, Yolanda's experience provides compelling evidence that even the status of citizenship is not enough to guarantee membership in the society.

Yolanda, nevertheless, does not allow herself to be positioned as inferior. Instead, she agentially resorts to a counter discourse, as did some of high-school student participants in McKay and Wong's (1996) study. In her counter-discourse, she positions herself as equal to the interlocutor, informing the woman that just as the Spanish-speaking American is required to speak English, the English-speaking American, too, should learn some Spanish.

Her agency and resourcefulness enable her to interact in the English-speaking community. Nevertheless, Yolanda knew that she could profit from learning in the formal setting, as she pointed out in her interview. Despite the fact that she recognized that her investment in formal education would pay off, she eventually found herself torn between studying and taking care of her twin children, and she explained that she could not afford to have someone look after her children so that she could go to class.

It can be seen that Yolanda's identity as a mother and a Hispanic woman precedence over her identity as a formal learner. In addition, one cannot disregard that her socioeconomic status also plays a role in her decision. As already stated in this study, Norton (2000) views gender, race, and social class as intertwined elements that cannot be dissociated from the construction of identity.

In the concluding chapter, the recurrent identity and language learning patterns found in the interviews are presented, and the research questions are revisited.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Drawing on the interviews conducted with two women from Puerto Rico who have been living in Central Florida for the last decade, this qualitative study has examined second-language acquisition issues in the light of identity theory through the lens of poststructuralism. As discussed in the literature, an individual's identity is socially constructed and, as such, cannot be analyzed without looking at his or her social interactions and at the speech communities in which that individual is inserted. These interactions must be carefully looked at because practice in the target language is a necessary condition if that language is to be acquired. Interactions, however, do not always take place on a level playing field. This can be confirmed in Yolanda's words, as follows:

Yo he notado que de cierta manera ellos intimidan. Déjame ver, me paso no hace mucho que yo estaba hablando, obviamente en ingles y la persona me miro como que, como que te estas expresando mal o, ¿entiendes? [I have noticed that in a certain way they intimidate us. Let me see, a while back I was talking, obviously in English and this person looks at me like I'm expressing myself poorly, understand?]

As other examples in this study have shown, power relations affect interactions and create imbalances that often grant the right to speak to one party only. In an interaction between a migrant and a native speaker, that right to speak and impose reception (Bourdieu, 1977) may lie almost exclusively with the latter.

The interviews point to some similarities between both women. Both settled in Florida at approximately the same time and allegedly came with the sole purpose of giving their respective children better educational opportunities. Both remarried after their arrival. Maria married an Argentinian, and Yolanda married an American, originally born in Florida, who moved to Puerto Rico as a young child and lived there for two decades.

Arguably, Yolanda's husband may actually have more in common with the culture of Puerto Rico than with the culture of his native state of Florida.

These two Puerto Rican women proudly declare themselves Hispanic. When asked if they think Puerto Rico is portrayed in a favorable light by the media, Maria, in particular, mentioned that few channels display news about Puerto Rico. She adds that "they do not show the Puerto Ricans, in general, and that every time there is news about Puerto Rico it's only negative news they show to the world.". Yolanda in turn did not make any comments regarding the representation of Puerto Ricans in the media.

Both women value bilingualism. Maria emphatically asserts that "[b]ilingualism is una ventaja muy grande [an enormous advantage]." Maria explicitly recognizes that her daughter has been able to secure a good job with the Federal Government precisely because she speaks both Spanish and English very well. Yolanda came to the continent for the sole purpose of giving her daughter the opportunity to develop more fluency in English

The two women also seemed invested in their second language education as they recognize that knowledge of English is important, an assumption corroborated by the fact that they enrolled in ESL classes at a local community college. Maria's statement "[a]ll my life I studied English" emphasizes this investment. They both see the language as capable of affording them the means to improve their livelihood, in other words, capital. This investment seems to demonstrate that they harbor a desire to be a part of the English-speaking community. Mastery of the language would therefore help mediate their insertion in this community.

This desire, however, is not devoid of conflict. From my observations, they give off clear signals that they find it difficult to embrace American culture and make it their own. Based on the manner in which they refer to other individuals as "pure American," in Yolanda's words, or "white," in Maria's words, it can be seen that they clearly elect to

identify themselves as Puerto Ricans or Hispanic. Instead of merging the two cultures and the two languages, they may well be attempting to keep the American culture at bay albeit at different levels.

Despite these commonalities, the identity construction of these two women is predicated on certain specificities, evidenced by the way in which these women position themselves as speakers of English or as participants in the English-speaking community.

Whereas Maria apologizes upfront for not knowing enough English and sometimes positions herself peripherally vis-à-vis the community, Yolanda agentically rehearses lines and dialogs in preparation for a job interview and faces up to a bullying “pure American” lady the next day without backing down.

It is possible to affirm that their investment in the language seemed to play an important role in facilitating language acquisition. Although both invested in learning the language, Maria chose to do it exclusively in a formal educational context. She states that the social practices that she enjoyed in her community-college ESL classes were vital for her acquisition because she found support to develop the language among her peers. Yolanda, on the other hand, invested in formal education for a much shorter period of time. However, she used other strategies to learn the language informally, such as listening to music, rehearsing dialogs and lines to prepare for a job interview, and fearlessly interacting in English in many different social practices.

Irrespective of their manner in which these individuals chose to learn the language, both women understood that knowledge of the target language would lead to the acquisition of symbolic capital, such as a university degree, which in turn would eventually lead to the acquisition of financial capital. They also understood how their investment in formal education or in informal interactions would help them achieve their language objectives. Investment in these practices was therefore the main driving force behind these women’s

success in learning the languages. These findings seem to demonstrate that investment, as an identity-related construct, can facilitate in the acquisition of the target language, providing an answer to the first research question.

As for the second research question, that is, the impact of social forces on the acquisition of the second language in the context of Puerto Rican migration, the analysis of the interview indicates that a native speaker's lack of empathy or understanding toward a migrant's efforts to produce language can be seen as a barrier that restricts the migrant's access to the speech community and, consequently, his or her development of the target language. This barrier, often associated with instances of power inequity, triggered feelings of inferiority and reinforced the prejudice these two Puerto Ricans have experienced since they moved to Central Florida.

This study has also concluded that a combination of gender-related issues and socioeconomic status may effectively constrain a migrant's investment in learning English, as can be seen in the case of Yolanda, who had to quit studying English because she could not afford to place her young children in daycare, and in the case of Maria, whose domestic duties include maintaining an environment in the home that is comfortable not only for her daughters but also for her husband. In both cases, this combination of factors may have limited their interactions in the English-speaking community, thus affecting the development of their second language.

It is important to underscore that the findings and the discussions presented in this study refer to the experiences of two Puerto Rican migrant women and cannot be generalized. The main purpose of this qualitative study is to further the discussions on Identity-related issues in the field of second language acquisition from the narratives of two language learners through an emic perspective.

This study may serve to present suggestions for future investigations. One suggestion would be to develop further studies regarding the relationship between gender and sociocultural issues on migrant identities in the context of language learning. It is hoped that this study will motivate similar studies on how adult migrant women's identities can influence, whether positively or negatively, second language acquisition.

It is also hoped that this study will heighten language teachers' awareness of how power inequities can make it difficult for language learners to gain entry into the target-language speech community. Therefore, when teaching second-language courses, teachers may want to develop materials, as suggested by Norton (1995), that will help students build the necessary confidence to interact with target-language speakers and provide these students with a safe space to develop their second-language identities.

To effect positive change in their classrooms and instill confidence in their students, teachers would be well advised to incorporate the constructs of identity, capital, and investment in their teaching practices. Understanding the relevance of identity in the acquisition of L2 may provide teachers with an important tool to help learners reconstruct their identity as language learners to reinforce a pedagogy underpinned by a discourse that is relevant to a given student population. The use of language-learning diaries or language-learning narratives could be used as starting points to foster a discussion on how investment, in Norton's terms, can facilitate language learning and lead to the acquisition of the desired linguistic capital. These methodological resources can be adapted and used from K-12 and beyond.

The pedagogy must help language learners claim their right to be heard. To do this, teachers have to show how opportunities to speak with native speakers may not always be devoid of conflict. Therefore, learners, especially adult migrants, need to be expressly taught about the cultural practices of the English-speaking communities. The materials to be

developed must provide for opportunities to practice meaningful interactions that contain language-learning strategies such as rephrasing, paraphrasing, asking for clarification, and so on. Many materials these days already contemplate these strategies. They do so, however, without touching on the power imbalances that take place in many interactions, as is the case with gatekeeping encounters, to name but one case. It behooves the teacher, therefore, to point out how these encounters can be intimidating even for a native speaker and ensure that learners can respond from a position of strength.

Norton Peirce (1995) suggests that language learners be encouraged to become ethnographers in their own way by conducting what she terms classroom-based social research. In their research, learners could be told to take note of any differences they notice between interactions in the target language and those in their own language. The learners could later compare notes with one another, and these notes could then be used as opportunities for role-play or dramatization exercises to expose learners to a whiff of authenticity.

Norton Peirce (1995) also recommends encouraging learners to reflect critically on their engagement with speakers of the target language. Learners could be told to investigate the circumstances under which they interact with such speakers. In doing this, they may understand how power permeates many interactions and in time they may learn how to respond agentically from a position of strength as opposed to feeling frustrated or uncomfortable.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What part of Puerto Rico are you from?
2. What brought you to the continental US?
3. Did you have English classes at school or did you have any contact with English back in Puerto Rico?
4. If so, what did you like best about English: speaking, reading, writing, or listening?
5. If not, tell me why you didn't like English.
6. Did you have any opportunity to speak English in Puerto Rico? With whom?
7. How long have you lived in the US?
8. Did you use the English that you learned Puerto Rico to communicate in the United States?
9. How difficult was it in the beginning, when you first arrived here? Tell me about the difficulties.
10. Tell me about your process of learning English back home in Puerto Rico and here in the US.
11. Did you ever take any ESL classes in the US? Why? Why not?
12. How do you feel when you speak English to Americans? How do you feel when you speak English to people whose native language is not English, for example, someone like me?
13. Have you made any American friends? Have you made friends with individuals of other nationalities?
14. In what situations do you use English?
15. Tell me about your doctors and your mechanics, and other service providers. Are they English-speaking or Spanish-speaking?
16. Do you use English on the phone? With whom?

17. Describe a situation when people get impatient with you because you cannot speak English as quickly or as well as they do. What happened? How did you handle it?
18. What is your spouse's/significant other's attitude towards the use of English at home?
19. What kinds of TV programs do you watch? What kinds of magazines and books you read? Are they in English or in Spanish?
20. Would you like to improve your English? What do you think you could do to improve it?
21. Tell me about a situation in which using English would prove more effective than using Spanish.
22. If you were traveling to Europe and someone asked, "where are you from?" how would you respond?
23. Tell me if you have experienced any encounter with authorities that made you uncomfortable because you did not know enough English.
24. If you could do one thing right now to improve your English, what would you do?
25. If you're supposed to learn one thing about immigration, what did you learn? Would you do it all over again? Do you regret coming here?
26. How does the media characterize Puerto Rico and its inhabitants? How do you see this characterization?

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Determination of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Marcio Rubens Soares Gomes and Co-PI: Gergana Vitanova-Haralampiev**

Date: **June 27, 2018**

Dear Researcher:

On 06/27/2018, the IRB reviewed the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination, Category 2
Project Title: Identity and Second Language Acquisition: how identity-related issues can affect the acquisition of a second language.
Investigator: Marcio Rubens Soares Gomes
IRB Number: SBE-18-14071
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

This letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Renea C Carver".

Signature applied by Renea C Carver on 06/27/2018 03:31:06 PM EDT

Designated Reviewer

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